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## James Blair Historical Review Volume 13, Issue 2

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# James Blair Historical Review

Volume 13 • Issue 2



Viel Volk und Rainer Heinemann, der Amateur



und Rainer Schöne



und Ingolf C



Stammvater Perry Friedman aus Kanada mit einem Gast aus Afrika



und alle singen mit



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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

On behalf of the Editorial Board of the *James Blair Historical Review*, I am honored to present Volume 13, Issue 2 of the journal.

You may have noticed some changes in the Review's layout and general spirit over the past year. As an editorial board, we've been remodeling both the inner workings of our team and the way we present ourselves to our community. We hope that these efforts have created a more sophisticated and professional platform to showcase the work of our talented authors.

As a part of that mission, we've become interested in our namesake, James Blair, commissary of the Church of England in the Virginia colony and the College's first president from 1693 to 1743. As we evaluate his legacy, we'd like to involve you, our readers, in the process. Just a heads up that this editor's note will be a little longer than normal. With that said, let me get you up to speed.

When the *JBHR* was created in 2010, its first editorial team named it after Blair Hall, the home of the History Department. In its 2021 report, W&M's Working Group on Principles of Naming and Renaming indicated that Blair Hall would make an "ideal candidate" for renaming, a suggestion which never came to fruition. James Blair (1655-1743) was a powerful administrator in the Anglican Church during the colonial era and an instrumental force in securing William & Mary's royal charter in 1693, which authorized the creation of "a seminary of ministers of the gospel, and that the youth may be piously educated in good letters and manners, and that the Christian faith may be propagated amongst the Western Indians, to the glory of Almighty God." For more information on Blair, see our contextualization statement on this issue's Acknowledgements page, the work of the Committee for the Contextualization of Campus Landmarks and Iconography, and the Naming and Renaming Working Group's Report.

We have yet to make any official decisions, but we have been exploring different options, including a possible name change. Does James Blair still represent the goals and identity of our organization? If not, is there a better option? What obligations do we have to historical memory, and what practical hurdles

should we consider? Our team has been discussing these sorts of questions as we navigate this process. If you'd like to join this conversation, feel free to share your thoughts via email: jamesblairhistoricalreview@gmail.com.

And now, back to our regularly-scheduled programming. This semester, we are elated to present five spectacular essays. Imagine our shock when, at the end of our triple-blind review process, we realized that four of the five articles we selected were written by fellow William & Mary students! It is an immense pride and profound privilege to publish such high-quality original research from our own institution.

First, Mitzy Colligan's "Continuing Their Legacy: The Evolution of Representing Women of the Civil Rights Movement in Museums" analyzes of two Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) exhibits: "Freedom's Sisters" in 2008 and "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" in 2020 to discuss the need for portraying historically underrepresented groups in museums. Second, "The Hamitic Curse, Diodoran Hypothesis, and the Prussian Expedition: Intersections of Biblical, Classical, and Egyptological Visions of Ethiopia in American Racial Politics and Slavery Discourse" by JR Herman discusses the rise of Egyptology in the decades before the Civil War. Herman suggests that antebellum Americans seeking to defend enslavement were forced to confront longstanding ideas of African potentiality rooted in normative understandings of biblical and classical history. Third, David Porges's "Conflict and Supremacy in the Caroline Navy: Uncovering the Rationales of the Naval Mutiny of 1642" argues that King Charles I's leadership contributed to the mutiny of the Royal Navy in favor of Parliament in 1642, synthesizing naval and political histories of this period. Fourth, "'Fight and Sing with Us!': The *Singebewegung* (Singing Movement) as Propaganda in the German Democratic Republic" by Rose Shafer constructs an impressive account of East Germany's musical landscape within the context of art, culture, and official personality-building under state socialism. And finally, in "The Stories that Shape History: The Formation of the Pirate Myth in A General History of the Pyrates," Annika Vaugan analyzes the popularization of the pirate archetype in the eighteenth-century and its continued influence in modern media.

Volume 13, Issue 2 of the *JBHR* was made possible by a number of people who deserve recognition. To begin, I would like to congratulate our five authors. You have each crafted masterful works of history that address subjects that are often under-discussed in our world. Your work is creative, engaging, and

beautifully written. Thank you for the privilege of publishing your work. And to our peer reviewers: I want to thank you for your hard work this semester. Your reviews are consistently clear, informative, and thoughtful—we are so appreciative of the time, energy, and effort you put into reading the articles that are submitted to the *JBHR*.

Next, I'd like to welcome three new members to our Editorial Board for the upcoming academic year: Crystal Wang, Layout Editor and the inaugural Blog Editor; Sarah Kim, Managing Editor; and Josiah DeSarro-Raynal, Submissions Editor. Logan and I are so excited to continue to work with you next fall.

To our outgoing editors, Jack and Max: I have never seen two people more dedicated to making this journal succeed. Jack, thank you for constantly staying on top of our timeline and being a strong link between peer reviewers, writers, and the Editorial Board. Max, thank you for continuously suggesting new ways for the journal to expand and taking it upon yourself to accomplish projects like reinstating our blog, revamping our print and digital layout, and, of course, kicking off the re-evaluation of James Blair's legacy. I'm sad to see you both leave, but I know you will accomplish many wonderful things after you leave W&M.

I also want to take the time to recognize the support and guidance of Professor Joshua Piker, Editor of the *William & Mary Quarterly*, and Professor Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, our faculty advisor. Finally, a special thanks to W&M's Harrison Ruffin Tyler Department of History as well as the College's Media Council for their financial support, which is vital to the success of the journal.

And with that, I am delighted to share the *James Blair Historical Review's* Spring 2024 edition!

All my best,

Riley Neubauer  
*JBHR* Editor in Chief, 2023-2024  
April 14, 2024

# Acknowledgements

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The Reverend James Blair (1655-1743) was a commissary of the Church of England who served as an early leader of the College of William & Mary. As such, Blair played a significant role in establishing precedents which made William & Mary a slaveholding institution. He also helped found the Brafferton Indian School during his tenure as the first president of the College. As a historical organization, we acknowledge James Blair's complicated legacy and commit ourselves to an ongoing critical evaluation of our relationship with the past and its personages, in accordance with the interpretative efforts of our institution.

**FRONT COVER** "Hootenany-Klub Berlin," *Jugendmagazin Neues Leben*, July 1966, 16. Photos by Hans Pölkow. Republished by Thomas Neumann, *Musikgeschichte Online*, January 8, 2020, <https://mugo.hfmt-hamburg.de/de/media/55>.



## About the Authors

**Erin “Mitzy” Colligan** is a senior at William & Mary majoring in History, minoring in Classical Studies, and earning a certificate in Public History and Material Culture. Her primary research interests are women’s history, historical memory, and museum studies. She would like to thank the History Department for their support, especially Dr. Jody Allen for her guidance on this project and Tyler Goldberger for encouraging her to publish. This paper is dedicated to her mom.



**JR Herman** is a senior at the College of William & Mary double majoring in Classical Studies and Ancient Near East & Africa Studies. While most of her research is focused on religion and identity in the ancient world, especially Greece, Rome, Egypt, Israel, and Nubia, she is also interested in how the ancient past has been invoked in eighteenth and nineteenth-century America. Following graduation, she will be attending William & Mary Law School in the hopes of pursuing a career in cultural heritage law.





**David Porges** is a junior at Middlebury College majoring in History and minoring in Art History. David grew up in New York City and is currently studying at the University of Oxford's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, where he has been focusing his research on early modern naval history and imperial development in the Caribbean. At Middlebury, he is a member of the varsity swimming team and the finance committee of the Student Government Association. David will continue his academic career with an honors thesis at Middlebury this fall.



**Rose Shafer** is a senior at the College of William & Mary double majoring in History and German Studies. She spent the previous year studying abroad in Freiburg, Germany, where she interned at the German Federal Military Archive, and she currently works as a teaching assistant for the German Studies department. She is interested in twentieth century German history, particularly that of East Germany. She is currently writing an honors thesis about members of the East German Border Police who deserted to West Germany prior to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

**Annika “Nick” Vaughan** is a second-year History major in the Joint Degree Programme between William & Mary and the University of St Andrews. Her research interests surround maritime history in the Age of Sail with special focus on shipboard culture, sea-narratives and myth-formation. Her current project concerns maritime material culture in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions. She would like to offer her thanks to Dr. Fabrício Prado for his incredible mentorship and support throughout this project, which was originally written for a William & Mary capstone seminar.



ERIN COLLIGAN

## Continuing Their Legacy

### The Evolution of Representing Women of the Civil Rights Movement in Museums

The collective historical memory of women's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement is complex: it is rare for women to be acknowledged at all, and when they are, they are portrayed as helpmates to men. As scholarship continues to confront these gaps and biases in the historical record and in the context of larger social movements, museums must also reflect and progress. By comparing two Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) exhibits, this project considers how the representation of women during the Civil Rights Movement in museums has evolved over the past two decades. This project considers the historiography of the Civil Rights Movement as well as the unique ability of museums to disseminate history to the public. Uniquely able to impact more communities than traditional museum exhibits, SITES exhibits travel to a geographically diverse list of cities across the United States. This advantage presents an opportunity for this project to analyze developments across multiple museums by comparing just two exhibits—with fewer variables, more concrete analysis can be reached. Between the creation of “Freedom’s Sisters” in 2008 and “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” in 2020, the purpose of exhibiting the stories of women of the Civil Rights Movement in museums evolved from teaching the public their names and stories to more concentrated attempts to honor their legacy and continue their activism by inspiring the next generation.

“Freedom’s Sisters,” described as the “first and most comprehensive traveling exhibit on women in the Civil Rights Movement,” details the lives of twenty African American women and their contributions to the long Civil Rights Movement.<sup>1</sup> Curated by E. Selean Holmes, the exhibit toured twelve museums across the United States from 2008 until 2012 and featured biographies of each woman

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<sup>1</sup> Tracy E. K’Meyer, “Freedom’s Sisters: Museum Exhibits and the Memory of the Civil Rights Movement: A Review Essay and Commentary,” *Ohio Valley History* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 69.

on large panels on hinges that could be flipped through like an oversized picture book.<sup>2</sup> The design of the exhibit made clear both the audience and purpose of the exhibit: while anyone is welcome to attend, it is geared toward a younger audience and, like a storybook, provides them with basic information about the women on the covers. In addition to the informative panels, the exhibit also displayed multimedia materials relating to the featured Sisters women, including audio recordings of speeches from specific Freedom's Sisters, such as Fannie Lou Hamer, and a full-scale recreation of a bus for visitors to enter, with an accompanying video about Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott.<sup>3</sup> These interactive and digital tools made the exhibit inviting, engaging, and tangible for a young audience while not distracting from its ultimate purpose: to teach young people about the women of the Civil Rights Movement and their undervalued work.

Centering exclusively African American women's activism was innovative within the Smithsonian Institution itself, as "Freedom's Sisters" toured prior to the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture and before the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum was even in development. Without these museums open, the Smithsonian had no separate, central institution for the history of Civil Rights, but did feature the history of the Civil Rights Movement in several SITES exhibits. Before the creation of "Freedom's Sisters," SITES exhibits about the Civil Rights Movement overwhelmingly centered men's activism and experience; for instance, the exhibits "In the Spirit of Martin: The Living Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." (2002) or "We Shall Overcome: Photographs from the American Civil Rights Era," (1998) exclusively promoted the work of male photographers and primarily male subjects. Even in pre-"Freedom's Sisters" SITES exhibits that appeared to feature women more prominently, female activists received inferior treatment compared to their male counterparts. For instance, Rosa Parks also had a SITES exhibit created in her honor in 2005, just three years after MLK Jr.'s SITES exhibit, yet Parks' exhibit was not named for her; instead, the exhibit was entitled "81 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story." Even further, despite being dedicated to her, the exhibit omits mention of Rosa Parks' life or any other examples of her long career in activism. Instead, they framed Parks' act of resistance as merely a beginning for Martin Luther King Jr.'s rise "as a symbol of

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<sup>2</sup> K'Meyer, "Freedom's Sisters," 71; "Freedom's Sisters," Archived Exhibits, Smithsonian, <https://www.sites.si.edu/s/archived-exhibit?topicId=0TO3600000TzNLGA0>.

<sup>3</sup> K'Meyer, "Freedom's Sisters," 69.

international significance.<sup>4</sup> Thus, while SITES exhibits had, in some capacity, featured women in the Civil Rights Movement previously, “Freedom’s Sisters” marked a distinct change in the institution by being the first SITES exhibit to exclusively focus on female activists of the Civil Rights Movement without minimizing them in favor of men.

While “Freedom’s Sister” was a noteworthy display of progress in depicting women of the Civil Rights Movement in museum exhibits, SITES has continued to evolve in its representation of the Civil Rights Movement since the “Freedom’s Sisters” exhibit opened in 2008. Museums, like any cultural institution, are impacted by larger political and social movements and must adapt in response to continue achieving relevance with their community. Therefore, many museums have adapted into institutions that focus on creating emotional connections to history, thus becoming a space for “visitors to shape personal identity” based on their own experiences, as public historian Benjamin Filene argues.<sup>5</sup> For SITES, this evolution has manifested in the form of more nuanced depictions of the long Civil Rights Movement, including “IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas” (2009), which focuses on the history and intersection of two marginalized groups and specifically toured in locations with large Native American communities that the exhibit would more personally impact.<sup>6</sup> Further exhibits, such as “Ain’t Nothing wLike the Real Thing: How the Apollo Theater Shaped American Entertainment” (2010), or “Black Wings: American Dreams of Flight” (2011), complicate the common historical memory of the Civil Rights Movement by presenting the lesser-known histories of specific institutions, as opposed to the previous, more general exhibits (e.g., “We Shall Overcome”).<sup>7</sup> Appealing to specific identities and affinities, in this case, aviation enthusiasts, people interested in African American history, jazz fans, or any combination of these identities could result in a more personal relationship to the exhibit, making it more relevant to its potential audience.<sup>8</sup> However, no other SITES exhibit thus far responded to or revolutionized the concepts from

<sup>4</sup> “381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story,” Archived Exhibits, Smithsonian, <https://www.sites.si.edu/s/archived-exhibit?topicId=0TO36000000TzVtGAK>.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Filene, “History Museums and Identity: Finding ‘Them,’ ‘Me,’ and ‘Us’ in the Gallery,” *Oxford Handbook of Public History* (October 2017): 6.

<sup>6</sup> “Past Exhibitions,” Smithsonian, <https://www.sites.si.edu/s/exhibitions?tab-set-1394f=1a2ea>.

<sup>7</sup> “Past Exhibitions,” Smithsonian.

<sup>8</sup> Nina Simon, “How Do You Define Community?,” in *The Art of Relevance*, (Museum 2.0), <https://artofrelevance.org/2018/02/20/how-do-you-define-community/>.

“Freedom’s Sisters”—Black women’s experiences in fighting for political and social liberties—as effectively as the current exhibit “Girlhood (It’s Complicated).”

“Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” was originally created in 2020 as a collaboration between the National Museum of American History and SITES; so, when the exhibit’s tenure at the National Museum of American History ended in 2023, it was prepared to travel to several museums across the United States. Currently, “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” is on display at the Cincinnati Museum Center—the institution that had initially created “Freedom’s Sisters.” This demonstrates how an institution hosting previous exhibits about the Civil Rights Movement gives a basis of prior knowledge that can spark further interest in the topic of Civil Rights for their community. The exhibit is visually inspired by zines, using eye-catching colors and highlighted questions to elicit discussions on the vast diversity of girlhood experiences in the United States throughout the nation’s history up to the present day. The exhibit especially emphasizes girls’ involvement in political and social movements, refuting a common misconception and bias in the historical record that implies that girls’ actions are not politically impactful.<sup>9</sup> The exhibit features five sections: “News and Politics (Girls on the Front Lines of Change),” “Education (Being Schooled),” “Work (Hey, Where’s My Girlhood?),” “Wellness (Body Talk),” “Fashion (Girls Remix),” and “A Girl’s Life,” which all combine to provide an intricate view of girlhood in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

While the “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” exhibit focuses on a variety of women’s experiences, not exclusively the Civil Rights Movement, the activism of young African American girls is integral to the exhibit and cannot be separated from the overall message. In this sense, “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” is an evolution of “Freedom’s Sisters” because it resolves several critiques of “Freedom’s Sisters” while also expanding the legacy of the previous exhibit, creating a space for African American women in museums and continuing the fight for justice and racial equality. This analysis of the exhibits begins with their subject matter: the broader scope of “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” actually addresses a criticism in Tracy E. K’Meyer’s review of “Freedom’s Sisters,” published by the Cincinnati Museum Center. K’Meyer argues the “Freedom’s Sisters” exhibit

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<sup>9</sup> Marcia Chatelain, “Girlhood (It’s Complicated),” *Journal of American History* (June 2022): 121-122.

<sup>10</sup> “Girlhood (It’s Complicated),” Smithsonian, Wayback Archive, <https://wayback.archive-it.org/3340/20220913192656/https://americanhistory.si.edu/girlhood/>.

could have benefitted from the “context of other social movements,” including potentially naming non-African American women who were integral allies to the movement, allowing visitors of different races and identities to learn how their communities impacted the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>11</sup> While there is power in exclusively naming Black women as Freedom’s Sisters, as it creates space in an institution that is usually overwhelmed by maleness and whiteness, visitors to “Freedom’s Sisters” could still have benefitted from more context, which may have offered opportunities for better connection between the museum and the audience. By including a range of other social movements in addition to the long Civil Rights Movement and various ethnic identities, more visitors will be able to see themselves in “Girlhood (It’s Complicated).”

In comparison, a particularly revolutionary aspect of “Freedom’s Sisters” is honoring three women involved with the Black Power Movement: Kathleen Cleaver, Betty Shabazz, and Sonia Sanchez. The exhibit was created at the same time Peniel E. Joseph published his article “Black Power Movement: A State of the Field,” which stated that the Black Power Movement had largely been misunderstood since its conception and painted as a violent, corruptive force.<sup>12</sup> He argued that recent scholarship at the time the article was published (2009) demanded the field recognize and study Black Power as previously “unacknowledged and obscure strains of black activism” and include it in the scholarship and historical memory of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, the “Freedom’s Sisters” exhibit acted as a conduit for scholarship in the museum space by including these women, acknowledging their connection to Black Power, and honoring them as among the most influential women of the movement. The exhibit exemplifies that museums can be a space for learning and translating ideas from contemporary academic work into accessible information for a larger audience, who may not encounter these ideas anywhere else. This legacy of reflecting accurate, updated historiography is the legacy “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” inherited from “Freedom’s Sisters.”

The “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” exhibit begins powerfully by acknowledging girls’ inherent, ongoing involvement in activism in the section “News and Politics.” The exhibit intertwines girls of the past and present to create a powerful message recognizing the unique perspective of girls in social movements.

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<sup>11</sup> K’Meyer, “Freedom’s Sisters,” 74.

<sup>12</sup> Peniel E. Joseph, “Black Power Movement: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 3 (December 2009): 751.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph, “Black Power,” 751.



Specifically, the exhibit chooses to open with the work of three African American girls, affirming the importance of the Civil Rights Movement throughout the exhibit. By combining a quote from renowned Black author Toni Morrison, alongside the story and scarf of Naomi Wadler, a young activist bringing attention to the disproportionate effects of gun violence on Black women, and a portrait of the formerly-enslaved poet Phillis Wheatley, the exhibit puts all three of these women in conversation with one another.<sup>14</sup> This opening introduces visitors to the concept that Black girlhood will feature prominently along this exhibit and connects girls who protest for their rights today, such as Naomi Wadler, with other activists from this nation's history, such as Toni Morrison or Phillis Wheatley.

The next portion of the exhibit, "Education (Being Schooled)," discusses the history of girls' educations and the challenges they face while in school, especially the exclusion of African American girls from receiving an equal education (if an education at all). The subsection "Claiming Citizenship: Freedom Schools" teaches visitors about African American schools from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which Black educators opened to give Black students an opportunity for schooling. The exhibit displays a photograph of Mary McLeod Bethune and her students to explore her legacy in creating the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls.<sup>15</sup> Bethune, interestingly, was also one of the women honored in the "Freedom's Sisters" exhibit for her work in educating young Black people and helping them "expand their power," an example of overlap between the two exhibits.<sup>16</sup> After discussing Bethune, "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" then displays photographs of Freedom Schools for Black children during the Civil Rights Movement, which the Black Panthers created to increase access to education for Black children, and how these schools and their legacies continue today.<sup>17</sup>

Examining the role and controversy of education in the Civil Rights Movement continues in the subsection "Who Gets to Go to School and Stay in School?," shifting the focus from the necessity of creating schools for Black children to the process of desegregating historically white schools during the Civil Rights Movement. This section of the exhibit begins with the story of

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<sup>14</sup> "Girlhood (It's Complicated)," Smithsonian, Wayback Archive.

<sup>15</sup> "Girlhood (It's Complicated)," Smithsonian, Wayback Archive.

<sup>16</sup> "Freedom's Sisters Brochure," Smithsonian Institution, 2008, <https://www.museumoftolerance.com/assets/documents/freedom-sisters-brochure.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> "Girlhood (It's Complicated)," Smithsonian, Wayback Archive.

Minnijeane Brown, explaining her role as part of the Little Rock Nine, who, in 1957, desegregated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Instead of ending Brown's story there, as collective memory of the Civil Rights Movement often does, the exhibit explains that Brown continued to face horrific and violent racism from her white peers while attending the newly integrated school. The exhibit displays her original school records, which demonstrate that when Brown finally fought back against the cruelty she faced, she was suspended and later expelled. The exhibit then connects the racism and unfair suspension that Brown faced to the modern challenges that Black girls continue to experience in school. The exhibit tells visitors via an infographic that "Black girls are suspended 6x more often than white girls" in schools today, which demonstrates how society still, despite the integration of schools and the progress the nation has made, unjustly restricts Black students from receiving an education.<sup>18</sup> By comparing Brown's experience with the experience of young Black girls in school today, the exhibit invites visitors to make change and advocate against racism in schools, just as Minnijean Brown had.

These excerpts from the "Education (Being Schooled)" section of "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" demonstrate "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" continues to inspire and further the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement, as opposed to only teaching material about the past. For instance, while "Freedom's Sisters" undertook the challenge to educate visitors about the life and work of Mary McLeod Bethune, which is essential work, "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" goes further by continuing her legacy and encouraging action. Bethune's life's work was creating a space for Black girls to receive an education. Before her passing, Bethune celebrated the outcome of *Brown v. Board*, and though she died before Minnijean Brown and the Little Rock Nine integrated Central High School, she left behind a clear message to continue the fight for Black rights, especially the right to education.<sup>19</sup> This is the legacy that "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" continues when the exhibit encourages girls to change the present, in this case, to confront the over-policing of young Black girls that compromises their education.

Another evolution from the "Freedom's Sisters" exhibit to the "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" exhibit is in its approach to displaying the history of the

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<sup>18</sup> "Girlhood (It's Complicated)," Smithsonian, Wayback Archive.

<sup>19</sup> Audrey Thomas McCluskey, *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 64.

Civil Rights Movement. An inherent challenge with “Freedom’s Sisters” was, by only displaying twenty specific women, there were inevitably other women who were left out of the narrative. This implied to visitors that these twenty women were the most influential women of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet many other famous or noteworthy activists were not added to this list. Even further, this format inherently excluded any women who are not individually famous, and instead were a part of a larger group that fought through collective action. Essentially, “Freedom’s Sisters” takes a top-down approach to the history of women in the Civil Rights Movement, which excludes the vast majority of female activists during this time: lesser-known or unknown women who may not have been leaders but who nonetheless took part in collective actions such as boycotts, and made meaningful contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. Due to the approach they take, the “Freedom’s Sisters” exhibit is incapable of representing and educating its audience about these women.

“Girlhood (It’s Complicated),” however, does educate its audience about unknown women; the newer exhibit takes an approach that considers the work of girls who may not be commonly recognized in historical memory or the archive. This is especially apparent in the subsection “Girls as Domestic Workers.” This section discusses the “invisib[ility]” of domestic work and the adultification of young Black girls because they were forced to work as caretakers for white children before they could have childhoods of their own.<sup>20</sup> The exhibit supplements these explanations of African American girls as domestic workers with photographs of many different, unknown girls working and quotes from more famous domestic workers, such as the enslaved author Harriet Jacobs, to illustrate the broad experience of young Black domestic workers. Bringing these lesser-known categories of girls into the exhibit is important because it forces the audience to broaden their perspective of the types of women who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Domestic workers faced the triple constraint of classism, racism, and sexism, which makes them absent from the record despite being “formidable vice[s] against racist socio-political policies,” which is why they remain largely invisible in both the record and historical scholarship as compared to more famous activists.<sup>21</sup> “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” now honors domestic workers’ legacy and brings them into public memory of the Civil Rights Movement, which is in line with the evolution of the field.

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<sup>20</sup> “Girlhood (It’s Complicated),” Smithsonian, Wayback Archive.

<sup>21</sup> Trena Easley Armstrong, “The Hidden Help: Black Domestic Workers in the Civil Rights Movement” (MA Thesis, University of Louisville, 2012), 35.

Thus, while it was revolutionary for “Freedom’s Sisters” to feature women of the Civil Rights Movement in a space and top-down framework that was typically reserved for men, it was the next step for “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” to disregard this framework entirely and take a bottom-up approach which works best for representing a more extensive scope of women in the Civil Rights Movement.

A further critique of how “Freedom’s Sisters” represented women of the Civil Rights Movement is, unfortunately, that the exhibit reinforced the common misconception that female activists were merely wives or helpmates to their more famous, influential male counterparts. This misconception has permeated the collective historical memory of the Civil Rights Movement, and despite making strides for women’s representation in SITES exhibits, “Freedom’s Sisters” still did not entirely overcome this rhetoric. It was especially apparent in the depictions of Kathleen Cleaver, Coretta Scott King, and Betty Shabazz, all of whom the exhibit introduces through a connection to their husbands. While the exhibit attempts to highlight their own activism along with their husbands’, it focuses more on how these women continued their husbands’ work or founded institutions in their husbands’ names.<sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately, this rhetoric in the exhibit impacted the visitors and their view of the subject, particularly affecting younger audience members, who were potentially learning about these women—and thus being exposed to this type of bias—for the first time. Newspaper and local media coverage of the exhibit exemplifies how deeply the helpmate concept was reinforced by the exhibit. For instance, as printed in an article from the *Columbus Dispatch* encouraging locals to view the exhibit before it moved, the prevailing narrative about Rosa Parks continued to be her “refusal to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery.”<sup>23</sup> The same sentiment was repeated about Rosa Parks in a Baltimore press release concerning the exhibit.<sup>24</sup> “Freedom’s Sisters” had the opportunity to complicate historical memory of some of the nation’s most famous female

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<sup>22</sup> “Freedom’s Sisters Brochure,” Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>23</sup> “Exhibit Honors ‘Freedom’s Sisters,’” *Columbus Dispatch*, March 15, 2008, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/2008/03/15/exhibit-honors-freedom-s-sisters/24091795007/>.

<sup>24</sup> “‘Freedom’s Sisters’: Extraordinary African American Women Celebrated in New Interactive Exhibit Opening at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum,” Baltimore Press Release, October 14, 2010, <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/014000/014745/unrestricted/20120581e-011.pdf>.

activists and instead repeated the same narrow narrative to its audience. There is a similar rhetoric issue concerning the newspaper's coverage of Septima Poinsette Clark. In a thoughtful tribute to the Freedom Sister, the *Columbus Dispatch* interviewed Yvonne Clark, Septima Clark's granddaughter, where Yvonne noted that Septima Clark "didn't think anyone should think big things of her."<sup>25</sup> While interviewing a living descendant of one of the women featured in the exhibit made the history more personal and tangible, it is unfortunate that the article used the pervasive rhetoric that African American women are undeserving of recognition for their role in the Civil Rights Movement despite the exhibit attempting to recognize these women and change the public's perception of them. The continued use of this rhetoric demonstrates that just one exhibit is not enough to overcome the public's collective historical memory of women in the Civil Rights Movement, and further exhibits and museum work must continue to represent these women as independent activists worthy of recognition. This focus on fair representation is reflected in "Girlhood (It's Complicated)." They argue that the activism of the girls featured in the exhibit is revolutionary in its own right, not merely as an extension of men's work, and communicates to the young female visitors that their actions can shape history.

Along with challenging the rhetoric surrounding women in the Civil Rights Movement, "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" also challenges common historical memory of the Civil Rights Movement by tactfully addressing difficult topics with a younger audience. Specifically, in the "Birth Control" and "Experimenting on Girls of Color" subsections of "Wellness," the exhibit does not shy away from explaining the long history of sexual violence in the United States, especially against girls of color. The exhibit educates viewers on the forced sterilizations of girls of color and disabled women, as well as the resistance from these communities against the practice. Displaying this within the exhibit is notable because, despite protests against forced sterilization being an aspect of the Civil Rights Movement, the topic is so sensitive that personal stories of forced sterilization often go unmentioned. For instance, Fannie Lou Hamer (notably named one of the Freedom's Sisters) protested against the 1964 Sterilization Bill, but she rarely discussed her own forced sterilization, even omitting it from her autobiography.<sup>26</sup> However, "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" faces the controversial topic by sharing the stories and photographs of the Relf sisters. The

<sup>25</sup> "Exhibit Honors 'Freedom's Sisters,'" *Columbus Dispatch*.

<sup>26</sup> Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (University of Illinois Press, 1999), 81.

display communicates to viewers that forced sterilization was not an abstract concept people protested against; it was a tangible, widespread issue which disproportionately affected Black, poor, and disabled girls.<sup>27</sup>

The final portion of the two exhibits presents an opportunity for visitors to create a personal connection to the exhibit materials. In both cases, the exhibit ends with a station containing art materials for the audience, specifically young visitors, to create their response to the exhibit. At “Freedom’s Sisters,” this station was designed so young people could create a booklet to keep, with one page for information about each Freedom’s Sister and the option of creating a page for themselves in the photo booth.<sup>28</sup> These take-home materials made the exhibit tangible, memorable, and personal for young audiences, encouraging visitors to take the history home with them, continuing their educational journey.

“Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” further expands on creating a personal relationship between viewers and the information in the exhibit. Similarly to “Freedom’s Sisters,” visitors to “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” have the option to create a physical response to the exhibit, specifically their own experiences and definitions of girlhood. Instead of taking their response home, visitors are given the opportunity to include their experience of girlhood as part of the exhibit.<sup>29</sup> Allowing visitors to contribute to the exhibit and see their experiences within the museum space employs the practice of “shared authority,” in which museum spaces are equally impacted by their community as the community is by the museum.<sup>30</sup> By sharing authority, “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” admits it cannot represent every diverse experience of girlhood in the United States and allows the visitors to educate as much as they learn. This concept of “shared authority” is woven throughout “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” with the personal questions posed by the exhibit, but best exemplified in the final response station. From 2020 to 2022, thousands of visitors utilized the response cards to share their unique experiences with girlhood, both positive and negative, ranging from

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<sup>27</sup> “Girlhood (It’s Complicated),” Smithsonian, Wayback Archive.

<sup>28</sup> K’Meyer, “Freedom’s Sisters,” 71.

<sup>29</sup> “New Exhibit, ‘Girlhood (It’s Complicated),’ Opening at Museum Center,” Fox19 News, October 29, 2023, <https://www.fox19.com/video/2023/10/29/new-exhibit-girlhood-its-complicated-opening-museum-center/>.

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth A. Duclos-Orsello, “From the Guest Editor: Shared Authority: The Key to Museum Education as Social Change,” *Journal of Museum Education* 38, no. 2 (July 2013): 122.

being told at school they were “less valuable,” to sharing anecdotes about the importance of female role models in their education, to many proclamations of “Girl Power!”<sup>31</sup> No matter the specific content of the card, many of the responses were impassioned in their tone, word choice, and decoration. Not only did thousands of visitors choose to partake in the response activity, but also it was so engaging that one visitor even shared a photograph on social media of a young woman crafting her response, using the caption “adding her voice to the #girlhooditscomplicated exhibit @smithsonian.”<sup>32</sup> This post provides a first-hand experience which demonstrates visitors truly viewed the response station as their opportunity to make their voice heard within the exhibit.

This is the main evolution between “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” and “Freedom’s Sisters”: the goal of exhibiting this history has changed. “Freedom’s Sisters” primarily intended to teach young visitors about women of the Civil Rights Movement that visitors may not know because historical memory prioritizes the narratives and legacies of male activists. Due to a shift in historical scholarship and museum practices, “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” can both educate visitors and create a space for audiences to respond to the exhibit and consider how they can continue the legacy of young women’s political action. Essentially, where “Freedom’s Sisters” tells girls who they could become one day, “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” is more concerned with the right now, asking girls who they already are and how they are politically and socially active in the present day.

A continued challenge overall for both the “Freedom’s Sisters” and “Girlhood (It’s Complicated)” exhibits, however, is a disconnect between the information in the exhibits and the local history of the communities they travel to. “Freedom’s Sisters” attempted to bridge this gap between the exhibit and local audience by hosting special programming in certain cities. In Baltimore, for instance, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum hosted a dinner honoring twenty local women as Freedom’s Sisters for Baltimore-based activism, as well as offering an essay contest about the exhibit’s impact for students in fourth through eighth grade with the chance to win 10,000 dollars.<sup>33</sup> Investing money into young peo-

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<sup>31</sup> Adara Woodcook, “Talking Back with Girl Power,” *National Museum of American History*, October 7, 2022, <https://americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/girl-power>.

<sup>32</sup> Joann Hill (@joannahillnyc), “Adding her voice to the #girlhooditscomplicated exhibit @smithsonian,” Instagram photo, February 22, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CaTYp2iARfZ/>.

<sup>33</sup> “Freedom’s Sisters,” Baltimore Press Release.

ple and recognizing local work are impactful practices to engage the local community, but regrettably, these actions have no lasting impact on the exhibit itself. Therefore, anyone who could not attend the program does not know who their local Freedom's Sisters are, and any students outside of the age range of the essay contest had no designated space to react to the exhibit. If "Freedom's Sisters" had connected with institutions specifically dedicated to some of the women named as Freedom's Sisters, this may have been a more impactful way to connect with local communities in a way that both benefited the community and furthered the impact of the exhibit. For instance, in her "Sites Seen and Unseen: Mapping African American Women's Public Memorialization," Alexandria Russell details the struggle amongst smaller, Civil Rights-related house museums to be recognized and preserved, specifically the Mary McLeod Bethune National Council House or the Ida B. Wells Museum (which opened only after the Wells Homes, the more notable site of Wells' memorialization, had been demolished).<sup>34</sup> Had SITES worked with these museums or other house museums dedicated to Freedom's Sisters, the partnership would have been mutually beneficial and built on the concept of shared authority, allowing the smaller museums to have access to the more expansive resources and audiences of the Smithsonian while giving the Smithsonian access to more specific materials, collections, and scholarship of each Freedom's Sister.

"Girlhood (It's Complicated)" similarly grapples with connecting with the local community, demonstrating that despite all of the strides made between "Freedom's Sisters" and "Girlhood (It's Complicated)," SITES can still grow in their representation of girlhood women in the Civil Rights Movement. While there is a large diversity of girlhood experiences displayed and many opportunities for visitors to make personal connections to the artifacts and the stories, the exhibit has yet to adapt to the specific museums it has visited. As the exhibit continues to tour, "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" could potentially benefit from highlighting current activism by local girls, similar to "Freedom's Sisters" honoring twenty local women in Baltimore. Aligning with current data about how the public interacts with museum spaces, "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" could also recommend movements and organizations to become involved with locally. According to the American Association of Museums, fifty-five percent of the public agree it is acceptable for museums to recommend actions to visitors if they relate to

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<sup>34</sup> Alexandria Russell, "Sites Seen and Unseen: Mapping African American Women's Public Memorialization" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2018), 101-102, 128.



the museums' purpose, and another eighteen percent agree it is acceptable on any issue.<sup>35</sup> Thus, not only would visitors likely find suggestions for how girls can become involved locally to be appropriate, this would also reinforce the exhibit's message that girls have the power to impact their communities.

This common challenge among both of these SITES exhibits demonstrates why temporary, traveling exhibits are just one form of connecting the public with the history of the long Civil Rights Movement. As Ashley Bouknight-Claybrooks notes in her article about the history of Black museology, the development of Civil Rights collections and museums were primarily created by Black museum professionals who would not be seriously recognized by larger institutions; thus, the creation of Black spaces in museums is "deeply rooted in archival/library science programs that primarily trained Black women how to reach underserved Black communities."<sup>36</sup> Even the act of displaying the Civil Rights Movement history in museums was created out of an act of resistance during the Civil Rights Movement; therefore, smaller institutions and house museums that contain the history of women in the Civil Rights Movement cannot be entirely replaced by these larger, traveling exhibits. It is essential to recognize the value in both: smaller institutions can protect more specific histories and local communities while larger, traveling exhibits can reach wider audiences.

Ultimately, when "Freedom's Sisters" was created, the exhibit was revolutionary for centering African American women and their contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. More importantly, however, the exhibit is also the foundation for further representation in the museum field. Due to the impact of "Freedom's Sisters" and exhibits similar to it, as well as evolving historical and museum scholarship and larger social movements, current exhibits have expanded beyond just teaching the lives of women in the Civil Rights Movement to now embracing and expanding on these women's legacies of creating political and social change. This is reflected in more modern exhibits, such as "Girlhood (It's Complicated)," which advocates for visitors to think critically about the world around them today. As society continues to move forward in how we collectively remember the women of the Civil Rights Movement, museums must continue to adapt, using both "Freedom's Sisters" and "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" as a foundation for further work.

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<sup>35</sup> "Museums and Trust," American Alliance of Museums, 2021 report, <https://www.aam-us.org/2021/09/30/museums-and-trust-2021/>.

<sup>36</sup> Ashley Bouknight-Claybrooks, "The Power of Preservation: Black Museology in the Early Twentieth Century," *The Public Historian* 43, no. 2 (May 2021): 23.

JR HERMAN

# The Hamitic Curse, Diodoran Hypothesis, and Prussian Expedition

Intersections of Biblical, Classical, and  
Egyptological Visions of Ethiopia in American  
Racial Politics and Slavery Discourse

While pro-slavery advocates would eventually deny the existence of culturally significant Black civilizations on a wide scale, seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth-century justifications for slavery in America were often predicated on the belief that Africans had once been powerful, a view corroborated by the Bible—indeed, the so-called “Ethiopians” appear to have been a significant enough force to credibly threaten Assyrian hegemony in the Levant. For example, 2 Kings 19:9 and Isaiah 37:9 mention an Ethiopian king named Tirhakah, identified today as the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty Nubian king Taharqa, who threatened to wage war against the Assyrian king Sennacherib around the time of Sennacherib’s advance upon Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah; while the biblical narrative overtly attributes the Deliverance of Jerusalem to God, it seems to hint Tirhakah was in some way at least partially responsible for the survival of the city.<sup>1</sup> 2 Chronicles 14:9-12 also details the Ethiopians’ significant military might and geopolitical influence: “And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah [in Judah].”<sup>2</sup> Many Christians believed that while Africans had once been strong, their pagan ways had condemned them to a “fortunate fall” from strength and prestige to enslavement and degradation,

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Aubin, “The Outcome of Prince Taharqa’s Military Expedition to Judah in 701 BCE,” in *Between the Cataracts: Proceedings of the 11th Conference of Nubian Studies, Warsaw University, 27 August – 2 September 2006*, eds. Włodzimierz Godlewski and Adam Łatjar, Part Two: Session Papers, Fascicule 2 (Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 2010), 477–82. See also 2 Kings 19:9 and Isaiah 37:9, King James Version, ed. Bible Gateway.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chronicles 14:9-12, King James Version, ed. Bible Gateway.

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the fall deemed “fortunate” by Christians because it placed Africans into the hands of Europeans who could deliver them into Christianity.<sup>3</sup> In this view, slavery was a divinely ordained and necessary tool to fulfill the Christian duty of evangelism, beneficial for both masters and slaves alike. The prominent Quaker George Fox, for example, interpreted Psalm 68:31 (“Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God”) as prefiguring both the Christian need to convert Ethiopians to Christ and the resulting appreciation of Ethiopians upon conversion—grateful for the Gospel, enslaved Africans would pray on behalf of their Euro-American proselytizers.<sup>4</sup> Fortunate Fall theology did not deny African equipotentiality by any means; rather, it almost definitionally affirmed it. Cotton Mather, a prominent Fortunate Fall advocate, even asserted that Africans’ capacity for both thought and ingenuity was in no way less than those of whites; Africans were simply victims of paganism in need of spiritual redemption.<sup>5</sup>

Pro-slavery advocates soon faced a conundrum: if slavery’s legitimacy derived from Africans’ paganism, conversion to Christianity logically should result in manumission. Indeed, calls to emancipate Christian slaves had been percolating as far back as the mid-to-late 1600s, especially among Quakers like Fox.<sup>6</sup> By the early nineteenth century, a time when the majority of enslaved people were Christian, the defense of slavery as a means of Christianization increasingly came under fire by abolitionists. Yet, at the same time that slavery and its religious justification were coming under attack, Southern planters’ demand for slave labor was exploding due to Eli Whitney’s 1793 invention of the cotton gin, a device that made cotton production far more efficient and profitable. Both cotton exports and the number of enslaved people in the American South would skyrocket as a result—cotton exports increased dramatically from 1.56 million pounds in 1790 to 1.9 billion pounds in 1860,<sup>7</sup> and the number of en-

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<sup>3</sup> Roy Kay, *The Ethiopian Prophecy in Black American Letters* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 48.

<sup>4</sup> Fox’s view on slavery, which seems to have been one of “interdependence,” can be seen as an odd combination of Aristotelian natural slavery, which saw slavery as mutually beneficial, and early Christian beliefs, which saw slavery as both punishment for sin and a part of God’s plan. For more on George Fox, see Kay, *The Ethiopian Prophecy*, 39-41. Some Protestants even believed that the conversion of Ethiopians would bring about the Second Coming of Christ; see Kurt Andersen, *Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire: A 500-Year History* (New York: Random House, 2017), 29-31.

<sup>5</sup> Kay, *The Ethiopian Prophecy*, 46.

<sup>6</sup> Kay, *The Ethiopian Prophecy*, 35-36.

<sup>7</sup> William Phillips and Robert Whaples, “The Cotton Gin,” *EH.Net Encyclopedia of*

slaved people in the South similarly rose from about 650,000 in 1790 to about 3.95 million in 1860.<sup>8</sup> Slavery, now both more profitable and contentious than ever, needed a new justification, and in such an environment, denials of African equipotentiality and promotions of racial hierarchy flourished. The denial of African equipotentiality, however, not only stood in stark contrast to biblical views on Ethiopia and Fortunate Fall theology but also directly contradicted Greco-Roman views on Ethiopia popular among educated elites in both America and Europe. Those seeking to defend slavery on the grounds of racial hierarchy though soon found a bulwark in their fight to overcome such views of African potentiality: Egyptology, specifically, Karl Richard Lepsius's 1844 expedition to Nubia.

The rise of Egyptology in the decades before the Civil War—a time when slavery was simultaneously at its most profitable and contentious—was far from coincidental, a correlation W. E. B. Du Bois astutely recognized.<sup>9</sup> Proslavery propagandists and anti-Black advocates, including the infamous American School of Ethnology, would expeditiously capitalize on Lepsius's denial of a Nubian civilization and claim of a Caucasian Egypt, both of which would become intimately connected to racial hierarchy justifications of slavery. However, pro-slavery advocates were not the only ones looking to Egypt and Nubia to support their preferred racial ideologies and political views: individuals across the spectrum of 19th-century American racial politics looked to the ancient past. Abolitionists and Black activists, for example, had been fighting for a Black Egypt at least as early as the 1820s, for in 1827, the New York-based Black newspaper *Freedom's Journal* published an anonymous article entitled “Mutability of Human Affairs,” in which the author, citing Herodotus, argued that the ancient Egyptians bore a striking resemblance to Africans and had “black skins and frizzled hair.”<sup>10</sup> Another anonymous article published in *Freedom's Journal* in 1828 lamented Africans' fall from greatness: the Black race, in the form of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, had been “for more than a thousand years ...

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*Economic and Business History*, February 10, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Jenny Bourne, “Slavery in the United States,” ed. Robert Whaples, *EHI.Net Encyclopedia of Economic and Business History*, March 26, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa and Color and Democracy*, The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous, “Mutability of Human Affairs,” in *Freedom's Journal* (New York), April 6, 13, and 20, 1827, 15.

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the most enlightened on the globe.”<sup>11</sup> Black American David Dorr asserted in his 1858 account narrating his travels to Egypt that the ancient Egyptians were Black, with thick lips, curly hair, and black skin.<sup>12</sup> Frederick Douglass, perhaps responding to claims to the contrary, explained that the ancient Egyptians “were not white people; but were, undoubtedly, just about as dark in complexion as many in this country who are considered genuine Negroes.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, whereas Black Americans invoked a Black Egypt and Ethiopia as a way to affirm African equipotentiality, bolster Black pride, and protest American slavery, especially its racial hierarchy justifications, pro-slavery advocates and mainstream Egyptology fought for a white Egypt. Early Egyptology should thus be seen as a pawn in the debate between Black activists and pro-slavery advocates—whereas the former invoked Egypt and Nubia to oppose slavery, the latter used Egypt and Nubia, especially Lepsius’s findings, to deny Black equipotentiality and buttress the racist theories that supported American slavery.

### The Diodoran Hypothesis & Nineteenth-Century “Ethiopianist” Philosophy

In addition to biblical claims of Ethiopian strength and civilization, Black Americans had another powerful, perhaps surprising, ally to bolster African equipotentiality and deny claims to the contrary: classical antiquity. Indeed, in the decades preceding Lepsius’s expedition, Greco-Roman-inspired views of Ethiopia—the Diodoran hypothesis especially—very much negated claims of African inferiority. The term Diodoran hypothesis, for the purposes of this paper, refers to the Greek historian Diodorus’ report of the antecedence of Nubian settlement and culture not only in relation to Egypt, which he claimed had originated as a Nubian colony, but the entire world.<sup>14</sup> Such references to Nubia

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<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, “On the Early History of the Negro Race,” in *Freedom’s Journal* (New York), December 5th, 1828, 285.

<sup>12</sup> David Dorr, *A Colored Man Round the World* (Cleveland, 1858), 11. On Dorr’s work as a form of “African American protest writing,” see Malini J. Schueller, “Introduction” to David Dorr, *A Colored Man Round the World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), XX.

<sup>13</sup> Frederick Douglass, “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered, address delivered at Western Reserve College, July 12, 1854,” in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writing*, eds. Phillip S. Foner and Yuval Taylor, The Library of Black America Series (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000), 288.

<sup>14</sup> Diodorus, *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian: in Fifteen Books*, Volume I, trans. George Booth (London: Edward Jones, 1700), 85-86.

as antecedent to and foundational for the later, derivative civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and/or Rome can also be found in the works of Chaeremon of Alexandria, Lucian, and Heliodorus. The Stoic philosopher Chaeremon of Alexandria, for example, attributed the origin of Egyptian hieroglyphs to Ethiopia, referring to hieroglyphs as “the symbolic Ethiopian characters,”<sup>15</sup> a claim Heliodorus echoed a few centuries later in his *Aethiopica*.<sup>16</sup> Book nine of the *Aethiopica* also portrayed Nubia as the origin of Egyptian life due to the Nile flowing south from Nubia into Egypt:

The people of Syene [i.e., Aswan, one of the southernmost Egyptian towns bordering Nubia] loudly praised their festival and extolled the Nile ... They extolled also its [i.e., Egypt’s] peculiar plants and flowers, and animals, and added a thousand other encomiums. ‘All these praises,’ said Hydaspes, ‘belong more to Ethiopia, than to Egypt. If you esteem this river as the father of waters, and exalt it to the rank of a deity, Ethiopia ought surely to be worshipped, which is the mother of your god?’<sup>17</sup>

The rhetorician Lucian also attributed the art of astrology to the Ethiopians, noting that they “first delivered this doctrine unto men.” This knowledge of lunar phases and planetary orbits, he claims, was “transmitted” to the Egyptians, who eventually further “advanced” their work.<sup>18</sup>

Such Greco-Roman “Ethiopianist” philosophy appears to have been popular during the decades before Lepsius’s expedition. For example, the Reverend Michael Russell remarked in his 1833 book *Nubia and Abyssinia: Comprehending their Civil History, Antiquities, Arts, Religion, Literature, and Natural History* that there was “no country in the world more interesting to the antiquary and scholar than that which was known to the ancients as ‘Ethiopia above Egypt,’ the Nubia and Abyssinia of the present day.” To Russell, Ethiopia was the “cradle” of the arts

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<sup>15</sup> See Fragment 12 in Pieter Willem van der Horst, ed. *Chaeremon, Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher: The Fragments* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 25, 62.

<sup>16</sup> Heliodorus, *Aethiopica*, trans. *The Greek Romances of Heliodorus Longus, and Achilles Tatius, Comprising the Ethiopics; Or, Adventures of Theagenes and Chariclea; The Pastoral Amours of Daphnis and Chloe; and the Loves of Clitopho and Leucippe* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), Book IV. See discussion in van der Horst, *Chaeremon, Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher*, 62.

<sup>17</sup> Heliodorus, *Aethiopica*, Book IX, n.p. See discussion in van der Horst, *Chaeremon, Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher*, 62.

<sup>18</sup> Lucian, “Astrology;” trans. A. M. Harmon (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 351.

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which would later cover Egypt with “so many wonderful monuments.”<sup>19</sup> Russell subscribed to Diodorus’ hypothesis regarding the antecedence of Nubian culture, but his belief in the antecedence of Nubian *monuments* constitutes an addition to the hypothesis—Diodorus himself never articulated that Nubian architecture and monuments predated those of Egypt.<sup>20</sup> This extrapolation, however, would become critical to attempts to (dis)prove Diodorus’ account. Not only is Russell’s attempt to prove cultural antecedence through monumental antecedence problematic from an epistemological standpoint, but he had never been to Nubia himself, and as such, his claims relied heavily on the work of French architect François Chrétien Gau, who hypothesized an early date for Nubian monuments based on the idea of an expected evolution toward architectural complexity. Gau argued that the earliest, most primitive form of architecture is that of buildings cut into mountains and hills and that detached edifices constitute a later, more complex form of architecture only possible with a greater understanding of physics and architectural techniques.<sup>21</sup> Because simpler structures are found in greater frequency in Nubia than in Egypt, Gau concluded Nubia’s monuments must predate those of Egypt. Interestingly, Russell presented his and Gau’s view of Nubian monumental antecedence as one of wide consensus in the scholarly community, claiming scholars are “nearly unanimous” that the “principles of architecture . . . have descended from Ethiopia to Egypt”<sup>22</sup>—indeed, the view is not questioned “by any writer whose studies have qualified him to form a judgment.”<sup>23</sup>

The Englishman George Alexander Hoskins, one of the first Europeans to travel to Nubia in modern times and an advocate of the Diodoran hypothesis, asserted in his 1835 travel account that Nubia was a “remarkable country” and the land “whence the arts and learning of Egypt, and ultimately of Greece and Rome, derived their origin,” additionally referring to Nubia as the birthplace of science and ingenuity.<sup>24</sup> Hoskins particularly sought to prove the nineteenth-century addition to the Diodoran hypothesis with his own on-the-

<sup>19</sup> Rev. Michael Russell, *Nubia and Abyssinia: Comprehending their Civil History, Antiquities, Arts, Religion, Literature, and Natural History* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1833), 7.

<sup>20</sup> Diodorus, *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian*, 85-88.

<sup>21</sup> Russell, *Nubia and Abyssinia*, 139-140.

<sup>22</sup> Russell, *Nubia and Abyssinia*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Russell, *Nubia and Abyssinia*, 139.

<sup>24</sup> George A. Hoskins, *Travels in Ethiopia above the Second Cataract of the Nile* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1835), v. For Hoskins citing Diodorus, see Hoskins, *Travels in Ethiopia*, 75.

ground observations about the pyramids at Meroë. Like Gau, Hoskins was unable to date monuments by reading their contents, and as a result, relied on a series of art-historical assumptions. For example, Hoskins assumed that since Meroë's pyramids were significantly more damaged than those at Giza, they had to be older. Hoskins also claimed that Meroë's pyramids were older than those at Giza because they were darker; in other words, they had been exposed to the sun longer.<sup>25</sup> As such, for Hoskins, the Fourth Dynasty, the dynasty during which the pyramids at Giza were built, represented the *terminus ante quem* for the construction of Meroë's pyramids. Hoskins also examined the hieroglyphs inscribed on Nubian monuments, and while he was unable to read them, noted they were not equal to Egyptian hieroglyphs in artistic or technical skill—a subjective assessment that led him to classify Nubian hieroglyphs and relief sculpture as a “corruption” and as “simple” and “pure.” For this reason, he concluded they must bear the “stamp of originality.”<sup>26</sup> Hoskins's interpretation of Nubian monuments' lack of technical skill is worth keeping in mind, as Lepsius and American pro-slavery advocates would eventually transform this lack of skill into the denial of Nubian culture, and in some cases, even the denial of African equipotentiality. In 1839, the American politician Edward Everett published the posthumous account of his friend John Lowell's journey to Nubia, similarly referring to Nubia as the “cradle” of Egypt.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, such views of the prevenience of Nubian architecture and monuments seem to be relatively popular among certain educated American and British elites through the 1830s.<sup>28</sup>

Anti-Black propagandist George Gliddon, the future co-author of *Types of Mankind*, was an early critic of the Diodoran hypothesis, writing in 1844 before Lepsius's expedition to Nubia that civilization “**could** not spring from Negroes, or from Berbers, and **NEVER DID**.”<sup>29</sup> Gliddon's refusal to accept the Diodoran hypothesis stemmed largely in part from his belief in racial hierarchy and the

<sup>25</sup> Hoskins, *Travels in Ethiopia above the Second Cataract of the Nile*, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Hoskins, *Travels in Ethiopia*, 74-75.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Everett, *A Memoir of Mr. John Lowell, Jun., Delivered as the Introduction to the Lectures on His Foundation, in the Odeon, 31st December, 1839; Repeated in the Marlborough Chapel, 2d January, 1840* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1840), 45.

<sup>28</sup> Worth considering is the potential impact that the Diodoran hypothesis had on reinforcing Fortunate Fall Theology. However, I have not yet found any concrete examples of Diodorus invoked in this sense.

<sup>29</sup> George Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt: Her Monuments, Hieroglyphics, History and Archaeology, and Other Subjects Connected with the Hieroglyphical Literature* (New York: J. Winchester, 1844), 58. Emphasis original.



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“science” of the races. To this end, Gliddon evidenced racist beliefs regarding the inferior “physical and mental capabilities” of Black individuals both in the present day and in antiquity, claiming that Nubian antecedence violated the “ordinations of Providence” and the “organic laws of nature.”<sup>30</sup> The belief among European and American elites like Russell, Hoskins, Gau, and Everett that Nubia was the font from which Egyptian culture sprang was the main obstacle to pro-slavery denials of African equipotentiality in America. After all, how could anyone deny African equipotentiality if Ethiopia were the birthplace of the civilization and culture eventually borrowed by Egypt, Greece, Rome, Europe, and America? Whereas Gliddon in 1844 leaned heavily on blatant racial contempt to evidence his denial of the Diodoran hypothesis and African equipotentiality, just a few years later, the findings of Karl Richard Lepsius—one of the most prominent and respected Egyptologists in the world—would lend his pro-slavery conclusions an air of archaeological and scientific legitimacy. As Gliddon somewhat eerily predicted in early 1844, “the prospective journey of the Prussian Scientific Mission [i.e., that of Lepsius] to Meroe [*sic*], in the ensuing winter, will probably set all Ethiopic questions at rest.”<sup>31</sup>

### Lepsius’s Prussian Expedition

Jean-François Champollion’s 1822 deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphs paved the way for Karl Richard Lepsius’s 1844 expedition to Nubia, which was indeed groundbreaking in the way Gliddon had hoped. Unlike all Westerners to travel into Nubia before him—and it is worth noting that several of the aforementioned authors like Russell, Everett, and Gliddon never stepped foot in Nubia themselves—Lepsius was a trained Egyptologist. Not only did he have extensive knowledge of the Egyptian language, a critical advantage given that the monuments of Nubia are covered in hieroglyphs, but he had also diligently studied the Ferlini loot and conducted museum studies before departing for Nubia. Lepsius explained in his letters that he had first become suspicious of the Diodoran hypothesis, particularly the nineteenth-century addition of monumental antecedence, after examining the artifacts taken from Meroë’s pyramids by Giuseppe Ferlini in 1834. Lepsius, knowledgeable in Egyptian art, dated the loot to around the first century BCE, seemingly due to the Greco-Roman elements of the jewelry.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the Greco-Roman period was the *terminus*

<sup>30</sup> Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, trans. Leonora Horn-

*post quem* for the pyramids' seal date; such a date would coincide with the tail end of Manetho's dynastic chronology and would place the pyramids at Meroë long after those at Giza. Whereas Gau and Hoskins took an architectural and art-historical approach focusing on the pyramids themselves, Lepsius's analysis was primarily based on the contents sealed within, a much more archeological approach. Just as the Ferlini loot had deepened Lepsius's doubt of Nubian monumental antecedence, so too did the Prudhoe Lion found at Gebel Barkal.<sup>33</sup> The Prudhoe Lion, Lepsius noted, bore two names: Amenhotep III and Amun Asru. Whereas Amenhotep III was attested in Manetho's king list as the name of an Eighteenth Dynasty Egyptian pharaoh, Amun Asru was unattested, leading Lepsius to deduce it belonged to a later Nubian king who had brought the lion from Soleb to Gebel Barkal.<sup>34</sup> In other words, Lepsius concluded that the Nubian king Amun Asru had appropriated the Egyptian king Amenhotep III's monument and brought it deeper into Nubia.

Already doubting the Diodoran hypothesis, Lepsius arrived in Nubia in 1844, becoming the first explorer to date Nubian monuments by consulting Manetho's *Aegyptiaca*. This technical advantage of being able to read monuments set his expedition apart; all previous expeditions simply lacked such specialized knowledge. While dating monuments in Nubia, Lepsius noticed a striking trend: the farther south he went, the later the earliest datable monument. Whereas monuments in Giza could be dated as early as the Fourth Dynasty, the Nubian cities of Semna, Soleb, and Kerma could only be dated as early as the Eighteenth Dynasty. Deeper south, Gebel Barkal could be dated as early as the Nineteenth Dynasty. Perhaps most interestingly, the southernmost Nubian cities of Meroë, Musawwarat es-Sufra, and Naga contained no names attested in Manetho, leading Lepsius to conclude these monuments were the youngest of all, dating sometime after the Thirtieth Dynasty, the last dynasty attested by Manetho. This conclusion was supported by the monumental inscriptions and art found from Meroë to Naga, which according to Lepsius, belonged to a "very late period" of art. For these reasons, Lepsius concluded it would henceforth be in vain to "endeavour to support the favourite supposition of an ancient, brilliant, and renowned Meroë, whose inhabitants were at one time the predecessors and the instructors of the Egyptians in civilisation, by the demonstra-

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er and Joanna B. Horner (London: H. G. Bohn, 1852), 152.

<sup>33</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, 222-223.

<sup>34</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, 223.

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tion of monumental remains.<sup>35</sup> Instead, Lepsius envisioned Egyptian culture spreading from Giza to Naga, with Nubia being a late culture derived from an earlier Egypt.

Lepsius seems to have assumed that Egyptian monumental antecedence precluded the possibility of Nubian cultural antecedence; however, such an interpretation has a variety of epistemological flaws. For example, Lepsius could only date monuments with the names found in Manetho's chronology of Egyptian kings, and because Manetho accounts only for those Nubian kings who also ruled Egypt, i.e., the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, it was theoretically possible that the names of Nubian kings found on the monuments at Meroë, Musawwarat es-Sufra, and Naga either predated the earliest Egyptian king names in Manetho's list or were chronologically equivalent to some of those earliest Egyptian rulers. In such a case, the oldest monuments would be found in these southernmost cities of Nubia, with architecture gradually spreading down the Nile to Egypt before eventually spreading back up through Egyptian invasion, something which would explain why Giza had earlier monuments datable through the *Aegyptiaca* than Kerma, Semna, Soleb, and Gebel Barkal. In this case, the southernmost cities like Meroë and Naga would be the most ancient but would also lack early datable monuments because Egyptian kings had never invaded that far south. Lepsius perhaps intuited this was not the case due to the Greco-Roman dating of the aforementioned pyramid at Meroë through its late period contents (i.e., the Ferlini loot) and his hypothesis regarding the Prudhoe Lion; yet, since Manetho's king list does not make chronological equivalencies between Nubian and Egyptian kings, Lepsius's dating system incorporates assumptions worth considering. Furthermore, even if Lepsius's theory regarding the age of Nubian monuments were correct, his larger argument is still flawed, as the antecedence of Nubian monuments is not a necessary precondition for the antecedence of Nubian culture—religion, law, writing, and other cultural norms could have spread to Egypt before monuments were constructed in either Nubia or Egypt.

### The Lepsius Hypothesis, Hamitic Curse, & African Equipotentiality

Diodorus' claims technically remained unaffected by Lepsius's conclusions, as only the nineteenth-century addition seemed to have been, if not disproven, significantly weakened. Lepsius, nevertheless, believed he single-handedly dismantled the hypothesis.<sup>36</sup> Lepsius even sought to explain away Diodorus' claims,

<sup>35</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, 152.

<sup>36</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, 152-153, 244.

suggesting that because Egyptian kings had fled to Nubia during the Hyksos invasion, the eventual return of Egyptian culture upon the reinstalment of these exiled kings was misremembered by Diodorus' Egyptian informants as Egyptian culture *originating* in Nubia rather than *returning* from it.<sup>37</sup> As if supposedly debunking the Diodoran hypothesis were not revolutionary enough, Lepsius also suggested that Egyptian culture had been appropriated by Nubia, in much the same way that the Nubian king Amun Asru had usurped Amenhotep III's lion. Unlike Hoskins who saw primitive Nubian inscriptions as evidence of their originality, Lepsius saw them as crude and pathetic copies. Indeed, Nubian culture was so derivative from that of Egypt that Lepsius wrote there was "every reason to deny ... completely" the idea of an "ancient Ethiopian national civilization," as the trappings of civilization like art, architecture, writing, and law which were found in Nubia were all the result of Egyptian invasion and subsequent, crude mimicry by Nubians.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, Lepsius's conclusions were soon embraced across the Atlantic by those seeking to justify slavery by denying African potentiality.

However, even if, as Lepsius claimed, Egypt spread its culture to Ethiopia and not the other way around, pro-slavery proponents still faced a problem, one which Frederick Douglass mockingly pinpointed: "Egypt is in Africa. Pity that it had not been in Europe, or in Asia, or better still in America!"<sup>39</sup> Perhaps ironically, the Curse of Ham, one of the strongest, purportedly biblical justifications for Black slavery in America, lay at the heart of this problem. According to Genesis 9, Ham witnessed the nakedness of his father Noah, prompting Noah to curse Ham's son Canaan: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant."<sup>40</sup> In the Israelite context, Noah's curse on Canaan served to justify the subjugation of the Canaanites in the Southern Levant. In the early Christian context, theologians like Ambrose and Augustine interpreted Genesis 9 as evidence that slavery was a divinely ordained punishment and part of God's larger plan for mankind; slavery was both natural and just because it was God's will.<sup>41</sup> Such early Christians, it should be noted, did not justify the enslavement

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<sup>37</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, 223, 244-245.

<sup>38</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, 244.

<sup>39</sup> Frederick Douglass, "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered, address delivered at Western Reserve College, July 12, 1854," 288.

<sup>40</sup> Gen. 9.25-26, King James Version, ed. Bible Gateway.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge

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of certain races in particular, but rather, sought to explain the existence of slavery broadly construed, perhaps unsurprising given that slavery in the Greco-Roman world was an omnipresent phenomenon, and unlike the Transatlantic Slave Trade, was not based on race. Nearly a millennium and a half later, Europeans and Americans reinterpreted Genesis 9 as a curse legitimizing the enslavement of Black Ham and his Black African descendants Cush, Mizraim, and Put, said to have founded Nubia, Egypt, and Libya, respectively. While proponents of the Hamitic curse claimed biblical legitimacy, in reality, they relied on a peculiar blend of the Bible, Euro-American racism, Aristotelian philosophy, and Augustinian theology. After all, there is no logical way to interpret Genesis 9 in this fashion. Canaan, the subject of the biblical curse, is the only son of Noah not linked to Africa. With this in mind, we can begin to understand the conundrum slavery proponents faced. After all, because Mizraim, the biblical founder of Egypt, was a son of Black Ham, the well-established Curse of Ham implied Egypt had been founded by a non-Caucasian race!

Slavery advocates thus had to choose between an African Egypt, which would maintain the Curse of Ham but would bolster Black equipotentiality through the concession that the West owed many of its cultural norms to the non-Caucasian Egyptians, or a white Egypt, which would concede the Curse of Ham but would deny African equipotentiality.<sup>42</sup> With the splendor of Egypt in the international limelight following Champollion's decipherment of hieroglyphs and the ensuing rise of Egyptomania in both Europe and America, slavery proponents and mainstream Egyptology chose white Egypt over the Curse of Ham, thereby invalidating what had been up to that point "the single greatest justification for Black slavery for more than a thousand years ... [J]ust about everyone, especially in the antebellum American South, understood that in this story God meant to curse black Africans with eternal slavery."<sup>43</sup> In such an environment, anti-Black propagandists worked overtime to undo the Curse of Ham, rendering Ham, and by extension, Egypt, white. As Gliddon explained in the wake of Lepsius's expedition, "[H]ow baseless is that theory (unsupported by a line in Scripture, and in diametrical opposition to monumental and historical

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University Press, 1996), 213-219. This view also has echoes of Aristotle's theory of natural slavery.

<sup>42</sup> Scott Trafton, *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 60-61.

<sup>43</sup> David Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1.

testimony), [sîc] which would make Canaan's immediate progenitor, Ham, the father of the Negroes! or his apparently blameless brother, Mizraim, an Ethiopian! [sîc]"<sup>44</sup> Indeed, according to Gliddon, Mizraim, the biblical founder of the Egyptian race, was "of the same blood with Noah himself, he was in physical conformation a Caucasian."<sup>45</sup> While Gliddon correctly noted that the Curse of Ham was illogical, his reason for doing so was just as nefarious as those who previously invoked it, for he sought to legitimize slavery by claiming Egypt for white civilization, thereby denying African equipotentiality.

While Lepsius supported Gliddon's claim of a "Caucasian" Egypt, he disagreed about the race of Ethiopians. In an 1844 letter that would be published a decade later, he asserted:

The ancient population of the whole Nile valley as far as Chartûm, and perhaps, also, along the Blue River, as well as the tribes of the desert to the east of the Nile, and the Abyssinian nations, were in former times probably more distinctly separated from the Negroes than now, and belonged to the *Caucasian* race.<sup>46</sup>

Lepsius thus claimed that both the ancient Egyptians *and* Ethiopians were white. This view that Ethiopians were Caucasian rather than Black constituted a radical, and arguably, bizarre shift from dominant seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth-century American thought. After all, Ethiopia had consistently and unequivocally been associated with Black individuals even outside of the Curse of Ham—"Ethiopian" (also spelled "Aithiopian" or "Aethiopian"), was the English rendering of the Greek and Latin term for Nubians and came to be synonymous with "Black" in America. Indeed, both Black and white Americans embraced "Ethiopian" as a reference to Africans and their slave descendants in the New World, as seen in the writings of George Fox, Samuel Sewall, Cotton Mather, Richard Allen, and Maria Stewart, to name a few.<sup>47</sup> Lepsius thus single-handedly rejected both societal consensus and Gliddon's claims that Ethiopians were Black. According to Lepsius, the Caucasian Ethiopians were "a red-brown people, similar to the Egyptians, but darker," a conclusion based on his observation that kings and queens were depicted with red pigment, an epistemologically

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<sup>44</sup> Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt*, 41.

<sup>45</sup> Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt*, 40.

<sup>46</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, 208. Emphasis original.

<sup>47</sup> Kay, *The Ethiopian Prophecy*, 21-65.

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flawed argument.<sup>48</sup>

Lepsius's novel findings would directly influence those of his friend Bayard Taylor, the American poet, novelist, and diplomat who himself traveled to Nubia in the early 1850s and published his Lepsius-inspired, anti-Black findings in newspapers across the American Midwest, North, and South in 1852. "Those friends of the African race, who point to Egypt as a proof of what that race has accomplished" were "wholly mistaken," Taylor claimed—the Egyptians were Caucasian, the only representations of Blacks in Egyptian sculpture were those of "slaves and captives," and Nubian monuments were simply the products of Caucasian Egyptian monarchs.<sup>49</sup> With this in mind, Taylor concluded there was "no evidence in all the valley of the Nile that the Negro race ever attained a higher degree of civilization than is at present exhibited in Congo and Ashantee," a view reminiscent of Lepsius's claim that there was no great Ethiopian civilization.<sup>50</sup> A year before Taylor's 1852 publication (and five years after the conclusion of Lepsius's expedition), John Campbell similarly asserted in his 1851 work *Negro-mania: Being an Examination of the Falsely Assumed Equality of the Various Races of Men* that "The idea that the negro race ever civilized Egypt, is now exploded among learned men," likely a reference to Lepsius's supposed debunking of the Diodoran hypothesis.<sup>51</sup>

Interestingly, in his 1852 announcement, Taylor suggested only the Egyptians were Caucasian. Two years later, however, Taylor asserted both Nubians and Egyptians were Caucasian: "The sculptures at Meroë [in Ethiopia] also establish the important fact that the ancient Ethiopians, though of a darker complexion than the Egyptians (as they are in fact represented, in *Egyptian* sculpture), were, like them, an offshoot of the great Caucasian race."<sup>52</sup> This evolution in thought was apparently due to the recent publication of Lepsius's letters, for Taylor explains that Lepsius's findings regarding the Caucasian nature of Ethiopians were published after his return from Africa and his 1852 announcement.<sup>53</sup> For Taylor, the whiteness of both Egypt and Nubia was a way to prove the timelessness of

<sup>48</sup> Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, 208.

<sup>49</sup> Bayard Taylor, "The Negro Race," in *The Cleveland Herald*, April 21, 1852: Issue 95, Column B, n.p.

<sup>50</sup> Taylor, "The Negro Race," Column B.

<sup>51</sup> John Campbell, *Negro-mania: Being an Examination of the Falsely Assumed Equality of the Various Races of Men* (Philadelphia: Campbell & Power, 1851), 10.

<sup>52</sup> Bayard Taylor, *Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile, Being A Journey to Central Africa* (New York: Sampson Low, Son, & Co. 1854), 236.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, *Life and Landscapes*, 236-237.

white supremacy, for on the last page of *Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile*, he explains that the “highest Civilization, in every age of the world, has been developed by the race to which we belong.”<sup>54</sup> Lepsius’s and Taylor’s views on the race of ancient Egyptians should also be viewed in the context of the growing disciplines of ethnology and physical anthropology, both of which attempted to “scientifically” back up claims of a Caucasian Egyptian race through craniometry and other pseudoscientific methods—for example, in 1844, two years into Lepsius’s Egyptian-Nubian expedition, Samuel George Morton argued in *Crania Aegyptiaca* that based on skull size, ancient Egyptians were Caucasian, both intellectually superior to and racially distinct from Africans and African Americans.<sup>55</sup>

### Egyptomania & Racial Propaganda

Lepsius’s findings would perhaps find no better anti-Black spokesmen than George Gliddon and Josiah Nott, authors of the now infamous 1854 ethnological work *Types of Mankind*. Even before Lepsius’s expedition to Nubia, Gliddon had denied the Diodoran hypothesis on the grounds of the natural and timeless inferiority of Africans.<sup>56</sup> Lepsius’s conclusions, based on archaeological, art-historical, and philological evidence, lent Gliddon and Nott’s claims an air of legitimacy, as did Lepsius’s reputation as a respected Egyptologist. With this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that Gliddon and Nott reference Lepsius 212 times in *Types of Mankind*.<sup>57</sup> More specifically, Lepsius’s conclusion about the lack of an Ethiopian civilization supported Gliddon and Nott’s claims that there had never been a great Black civilization in the history of the world. Meroë, so often “pointed out as an exception” was “proven [by Lepsius] to be the work of

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<sup>54</sup> Taylor, *Life and Landscapes*, 237.

<sup>55</sup> Morton claimed that a larger cranial volume signified a larger brain, and thus a higher intellectual capacity, whereas a smaller cranial volume conversely signified intellectual inferiority. Like many of his colleagues, he was a strong advocate of polygenism, i.e., that different races evolved separately from and as distinct species which merited different treatment. See Kent R. Weeks, “The American Contribution to an Understanding of Prehistoric Egypt,” in *The American Discovery of Ancient Egypt: Essays*, ed. N. Thomas, (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1996), 14.

<sup>56</sup> Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt*, 58.

<sup>57</sup> Josiah C. Nott and George Gliddon, *Types of Mankind; Or Ethnological Researches, Based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon Their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, Grambo & Company, 1854).



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Pharaonic Egyptians, and not of Negro races,” with the Egyptians constituting autochthonous Caucasians.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, Lepsius’s monumental twelve-volume *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien* provided an iconographic arsenal for anti-Black propaganda—Egyptian depictions of Nubians in chains as prisoners of war were interpreted by Gliddon and Nott as evidence that the enslavement of Africans was both primordial and natural.<sup>59</sup> Gliddon and Nott conveniently ignored the fact that foes of other ethnicities, including Near Eastern peoples, frequently appear in similar contexts in Egyptian art and that Nubians were by no means consistently depicted in this degrading manner. In other words, Gliddon and Nott cherry-picked images from Lepsius’s *Denkmäler* and divorced them from their original contexts to bolster their crusade against Black Americans. These images, when combined with Lepsius’s findings regarding the origins of Nubian monuments, were said to “prove” their hypothesis and the legitimacy of slavery: “The monuments of Egypt prove, that *Negro* races have not, during 4000 years at least, been able to make one solitary step, in Negro-Land, from their savage state ; [sic] the modern experience of the United States and the West Indies confirms the teachings of monuments and of history.”<sup>60</sup> As for the Ethiopian Twenty-Fifth Dynasty of Egypt, which seems to have played a role in seventeenth and eighteenth-century perceptions of Nubian greatness due to both the Bible and classical sources, Gliddon and Nott claimed they were Caucasians mistakenly labeled as Ethiopian because they ruled over Ethiopia: “the so-called ‘Ethiopian’ dynasty had no Negro blood in their veins.”<sup>61</sup> It is also worth noting that many of the skulls Morton analyzed for publication in *Types of Mankind* were unearthed during Lepsius’s expedition—Lepsius even mailed some to Morton for study.<sup>62</sup> These skulls and drawings of ancient Nubians, courtesy of Lepsius, were juxtaposed alongside those of Black Americans and chimpanzees as a means of “scientifically” demonstrating the intellectual and physical inferiority of Africans, an argument, which in turn, was also used to legitimize racial hierarchy and slavery.<sup>63</sup> *Types of Mankind* was no fringe work. Despite its “relatively expensive” price,<sup>64</sup> it sold out immediately, selling 3,500

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<sup>58</sup> Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 52.

<sup>59</sup> Karl Richard Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien*, 1849-1856.

<sup>60</sup> Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 95-96. Emphasis original.

<sup>61</sup> Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 150.

<sup>62</sup> Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 318.

<sup>63</sup> Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 459.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas C. Patterson, “Racial Hierarchies and Buffer Races,” *Transforming Anthro-*

copies in the first four months alone.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, demand was so high that it would be reprinted in nine subsequent editions. *Types of Mankind* even found its way to Washington: the United States Secretary of State for the Treasury, the Navy, and the State Department subscribed for both personal and departmental copies.<sup>66</sup>

Not only did Gliddon disseminate his Egyptological racial propaganda in book form, but he also performed it, taking his propaganda show to audiences in Portland, Bangor, Providence, Portsmouth, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New York, Washington, Richmond, Baltimore, and New Orleans.<sup>67</sup> During these theatrical lectures across the East Coast, so-called “oriental” music filled the hall as spectators were treated to a 1,720-mile view of the Nile, courtesy of a 900-foot long, nine-foot deep moving tableau.<sup>68</sup> Gliddon would then unwrap a mummy<sup>69</sup> while surrounded by tables: on one lay Egyptological works, including volumes of Lepsius’s massive *Denkmäler* (presumably to showcase his supposed scholarly legitimacy), and on the other, Egyptian artifacts.<sup>70</sup> During these lectures, Gliddon presented his supposedly scientific views on the inferiority of Black Nubians and the superiority of Caucasian Egyptians as proof of the validity of both racial hierarchy and modern American slavery.<sup>71</sup> Thus, through the theatrical atmosphere of exoticizing music, Egyptian artifacts, Egyptology tomes, and panoramic views of the Nile, Gliddon turned racial propaganda into entertainment for the masses. Gliddon almost certainly recognized and intentionally capitalized on the country’s Egyptomania in his endeavors; Gliddon’s colleague and co-author Nott admitted to his friend John Henry Hammond, the governor of South Carolina, eventual senator, and one of the biggest supporters of slavery in the years before the Civil War that “the negro question was the

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*pology* 5, no. 1–2 (1994): 24.

<sup>65</sup> Gloria Horsley-Meacham, “Bull of the Nile: Symbol, History, and Racial Myth in ‘Benito Cereno,’” *New England Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1991): 237.

<sup>66</sup> Robert A. Smith, “Types of Mankind: Polygenism and Scientific Racism in the Nineteenth Century United States Scientific Community” (Pittsburg, Kansas, Pittsburg State University, 2014), 85.

<sup>67</sup> S. J. Wolfe, “Bringing Egypt to America: George Gliddon and the Panorama of the Nile,” *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 8, no. 1 (2016): 3, 7, 10–11, 16, 18.

<sup>68</sup> See “Gliddon’s Egyptian Collection,” *Christian Inquirer*, December 8, 1849, 3, quoted in Wolfe, “Bringing Egypt to America,” 3.

<sup>69</sup> Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 51.

<sup>70</sup> John A. Wilson, *Signs & Wonders Upon Pharaoh: A History of American Egyptology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 41.

<sup>71</sup> Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 44.

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one that I wished to bring out and embalmed it in Egyptian ethnography, etc., to excite a little more interest.”<sup>72</sup>

Not all were convinced by Gliddon’s notions of racial hierarchy; for example, in 1845, the American author and poet Edgar Allan Poe wrote a satirical short story entitled “Some Words with a Mummy,” in which a group of scholars, including one named Mr. Gliddon, bring an ancient Egyptian mummy to life and interview him. The mummy, cheekily named Allamistakeo, mocks Gliddon and his colleagues for their idiocy, particularly their views on both ancient Egypt and race.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, as Trafton notes, Poe “does not, however, have his mummy endorse either the American School of polygeny or the Christian one of monogeny; rather, the mummy ridicules *both* schools, in fact collapsing them together and dismissing altogether the belief that humankind had one parent or set of parents *and* the belief that it had more than one.”<sup>74</sup>

Despite the skeptics, Egyptomania paid off; Gliddon’s spectacles were a hit. One lecture in Providence was said to have “already attracted more visitors and has elicited higher encomiums from those capable of appreciating its merits, than any exhibition of an intellectual order which has ever been [t]here.”<sup>75</sup> The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* lauded Gliddon’s lectures: “[N]othing in this city half as entertaining in the shape of popular lectures for years.”<sup>76</sup> Gliddon’s lectures were open to all ages: admission appears to have typically been twenty-five cents for adults, with children half-price. At least at some lectures, schools with twenty or more attending students would be admitted for ten cents each, and if a teacher attended with a class, attendance would be free.<sup>77</sup> In all, Gliddon’s lectures were an overwhelming financial success, grossing \$14,800, a significant amount in the 1850s.<sup>78</sup> If adult tickets typically cost twenty-five cents, and under the assumption that all revenue consisted solely of adult ticket sales, an estimat-

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<sup>72</sup> C. Loring Brace, “The ‘Ethnology’ of Josiah Clark Nott,” *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 50, no. 4 (April 1974): 516.

<sup>73</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Vol. III: Tales and Sketches, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 1175-1201. See also Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 133-139.

<sup>74</sup> Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 137. Citation original.

<sup>75</sup> “The Panorama of the Nile,” *Daily Evening Transcript*, April 9, 1850, in Wolfe, “Bringing Egypt to America,” 7.

<sup>76</sup> “Local Intelligence &c;,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 19, 1846, Brooklyn Newsstand, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Wolfe, “Bringing Egypt to America,” 7, 11, 16.

<sup>78</sup> Wolfe, “Bringing Egypt to America,” 18.

ed 59,000 tickets would have been sold. Considering that children and student prices were less than half of the adult fare (and sometimes free), the number of Gliddon's attendees would have likely been substantially higher. In other words, when taking ticket prices into account, tens of thousands of individuals, perhaps even up to a hundred thousand men, women, and children were exposed to Gliddon's racial propaganda at these events. This number, of course, does not account for those influenced either by *Types of Mankind* or Gliddon's other book *Ancient Egypt: Her Monuments, Hieroglyphics, History and Archaeology, and Other Subjects Connected with the Hieroglyphical Literature*, a multi-edition compilation of Gliddon's early Egyptological-based racial propaganda lectures that would prove enormously popular, selling at least 24,000 copies and entering its fifteenth edition by 1850.<sup>79</sup> In this sense, Egyptology and Egyptomania served as both the "evidence" for racial propaganda and as the means of indoctrination. George Gliddon's supposed Egyptological expertise, combined with his undisputed flair for the theatrical, allowed him to dominate the mid-nineteenth-century racial propaganda scene.

### Conclusion

The interplay of biblical, classical, and Egyptological visions of Ethiopia served as a complex, multifaceted element of American slavery discourse throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Such interpretations, ranging from the biblical vision of Ethiopia as a land of military might and geopolitical influence, to the classical vision of Ethiopia as the cradle of Egyptian civilization, to early Egyptological visions of Ethiopia as a crude by-product of Egyptian invasion, legitimized positions across the spectrum of racial politics. Such invocations, and more importantly, their impacts, underscore the enduring influence of religious and historical narratives on social attitudes and power dynamics and are perhaps best seen as simply a microcosm of the role the ancient past has played in shaping race and racism both in the past and present.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Wilson, *Signs & Wonders Upon Pharaoh*, 41. See also George Gliddon, *Ancient Egypt: Her Monuments Hieroglyphics, History And Archeology, And Other Subjects Connected With Hieroglyphical Literature*. 15th ed. (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson), 1850.

<sup>80</sup> For examples of appropriations of Greco-Roman antiquity by hate groups from 2017 through present, see Vassar College's website *Pharos*, <https://pharos.vassarspaces.net>.

DAVID PORGES

# Conflict and Supremacy in the Caroline Navy

## Uncovering the Rationales of the Naval Mutiny of 1642

### Introduction

After years of contention between parliament and King Charles I, on March 5, 1642, the Long Parliament directed the replacement of every Lord Lieutenant with statesmen loyal to parliament's supremacy in defiance of King Charles I. The final line of the ordinance defined the new relationship between these military leaders and parliament:

Persons as shall not obey in any of the Premises shall answer their Neglect and Contempt to the Lords and Commons in a Parliamentary Way, and not otherwise, nor elsewhere; and that every the power granted as aforesaid shall continue until it shall be otherwise Ordered or Declared by both Houses of Parliament, and no longer.<sup>1</sup>

Among other powers, King Charles lost authority as sovereign of the Royal Navy with the ability to directly appoint commanders loyal to him. Though he withheld assent on the bill, parliament applied the law and began replacing Charles's chosen commanders. One such move occurred when Lord High Admiral Northumberland appointed the parliamentarian Earl of Warwick to the post of Deputy Lord High Admiral over Charles's chosen successor, Sir John Pennington.<sup>2</sup> Northumberland had long been Lord High Admiral yet now decided to support the supremacy of parliament. The Earl would be the high-

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<sup>1</sup> "An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons in Parliament, for the Safety and Defence of Kingdom of England, and Dominion of Wales," March 5, 1642, in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, vol. 1, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911), 5.

<sup>2</sup> "E. Warwick to command under the Lord Admiral," March 15, 1642, in *Journals of the House of Lords*, vol. 4, 1629-42, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830), 645.

est-ranking member of Charles's council to side with parliament.<sup>3</sup>

In response to this betrayal, the royalist Pennington rode to Dover on July 1 to secure the fleet at the Downs—a crucial safe harbor that serviced the merchant fleets of Europe and the Royal Navy. Unfortunately for Pennington and Charles, the Earl of Warwick had beaten him to the fleet. He called all captains to swear allegiance to parliament as the supreme governing body of England. At this meeting, twelve of the seventeen captains swore their allegiance against the crown. Five decided they could not break their oaths to Charles. Warwick and the newly parliamentary captains relieved these officers of command.<sup>4</sup> On one ship, the crew seized the vessel from the royalist captain before Warwick sent the order to relieve the officer. In this relatively bloodless mutiny, the royalist navy had turned hands. The navy, which Charles had attempted to expand for nearly two decades, switched sides within a single day.

The history of how the English Navy evolved between the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the defeat of the Napoleonic fleet at Trafalgar in 1805 becomes murky through the lens of the English Civil War. Only recently have scholars begun to seriously explore the navy in the Civil War period using political history.<sup>5</sup> Prior historiography focused on the religious, constitutional, and absolutist conflicts that took precedence as the fault lines of conflict.<sup>6</sup> This divorced naval history from the narrative of pre-Civil War politics. Naval historians focused on the technical history of the vessels, shying away from the ramifications of Charles's naval administration. Such literature tends to leave the broader consequences of these ships by the wayside.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Blakemore and Elaine Murphy, *The British Civil Wars at Sea, 1638-1653* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), 50.

<sup>4</sup> "Ordinance for the Earl of Warwick to remain in his Command of the Fleet," March 5, 1642, in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, vol. 1, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911), 12.

<sup>5</sup> For further reading on the political history see: Richard Cust and Ann Hughes, *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics*, (Boston: Longman, 1989); Conrad Russell, *Origins of the English Civil War*, (London: Macmillan, 1973); J. P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England*, (Boston: Longman, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> For further reading on the histories of the English Civil War see Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, (Oxford, 1990), *The Fall of British Monarchies* (Oxford, 1995), and *Unrevolutionary England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> For further reading on naval history within the period see: Blakemore and Murphy, *British Civil Wars at Sea*, Andrew Derek Thrush, "The Navy under Charles I: 1625-40" (PhD diss., University College London, 1991); James Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas*:

Conflicts between Charles and Parliament serve as an essential context to the clash of the navy. This essay does not serve to cover the robust body of literature on the causes of the Civil War. Rather, by studying Charles's leadership of the navy, a new avenue of scholarship in the growth of tensions within the Civil War is uncovered.

Initial comprehension of the Civil War stemmed from the Whiggish tradition. Early scholars argued that the conflict arose from the "political struggle between the authoritarian, arbitrary monarchy and the rule of law, the property rights and liberties (or even the liberty in some modern sense) of individuals."<sup>8</sup> Conrad Russell summarized later scholars' rejection of this thesis in his revisionist perspective in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, calling the conflict "an accidental war."<sup>9</sup> Russell argues that the Civil War spiraled from a conflict between Charles and parliament, whose reconciliation strategies caused a deadlock, driving the two parties to civil war.<sup>10</sup> This interpretation of the causes of the war dilutes the personal failures of Charles as a leader, especially during his absolutist rule—the period of Charles's administration without a convened parliament between 1629-1640. Charles I's leadership of the navy stoked conflict that led to open opposition and contributed to the Civil War, imposing Charles as a direct actor in the so-called post-revisionist narrative. Peter Lake's countenance of Russell's apologist nature describes a crucial element as to why Charles's personal rule failed and spiraled into civil war: "Charles's peculiar capacity to alienate and annoy those closest to him is attributed to his temperament rather than to his abstract belief."<sup>11</sup> Charles's temperament impacted much of his rule, but it is his "particular, ideologically informed, view of what politics in a properly constituted monarchical state should be" that truly became the King's detriment.<sup>12</sup> This paper's framework must be understood as a convergence between the naval historiography detailing the service record of the early modern Royal Navy and the concurrent political history that affected its ability

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*The Seventeenth-century Warship* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Cust and Anne Hughes, *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642* (London: Longman, 1989), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Cust and Hughes, *Conflict in Early Stuart England*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Conrad Russell, *The Origins of the English Civil War* (New York: MacMillan, 1973), 29.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Lake, review of *The Causes of the English Civil War, The Fall of the British Monarchies, 1637-1642, and Unrevolutionary England*, by Conrad Russell, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (1994): 175, doi: 10.2307/3817756.

<sup>12</sup> Lake, review of *Causes of the English Civil War*, etc., 176.

to function. Since a significant lack of historiography brings these two disciplines together, this paper seeks to focus on the relationship Charles I had with his naval administrators as an example of his failed personal rule, demonstrating that naval history can be used as a foundation for understanding political trends in the early modern landscape.

Absolutism—the theory upon which Charles bases his rulership—solidified under his father, James I. James wrote that God had “entrusted him with sole and sovereign authority to govern their subjects.”<sup>13</sup> This combination of scholarly and religious sentiments was found in both the father’s and son’s rules. The difficulties of England’s powerful landowning class prohibited Charles from acting on these grounds. “Without a paid bureaucracy or a standing army the crown was dependent upon the co-operation of the gentry for the enforcement of good government... The early Stuart kings believed that they possessed absolute power, but were quite willing to promise that they would rule in the public interest and with the consent of their subjects.”<sup>14</sup> When applying absolutism for the “public interest” Lake expands and affirms this idea of absolutism: “Charles’s political style and the responses of others to it were surely predicated on divergent beliefs about what it was legitimate and prudent for monarchs to do in early seventeenth-century Britain.”<sup>15</sup> Ship Money, the system of levying taxes for the “protection of the coast” outside of parliamentary approval tested England’s tolerance of absolutism. While his rule over the naval administration did defy procedure, his temperament and leadership style of the navy only amplified concerns of absolutist rule. Charles’s actions reflected absolutist tendencies and stoked conflict within his administration rather than push the constitutional bounds of his rulership in more prominent cases such as Ship Money.

Two critical events in Charles’s personal rule shed light on his absolutist tendencies and his temperament as a leader. Documents from Charles’s administration in Whitehall, the personal autobiography of naval architect Phineas Pett, and the recent scholarship on the navy during this period to demonstrate these two faults of Charles’s rule. The conflict surrounding the construction of the *Sovereign of the Seas* led to the conflict between Charles and opposition by institutions to his personal strategy to build the great ship. Connecting these two events highlights Charles’s enforcement of his rule as naval administrator

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<sup>13</sup> Johann Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England 1603-1640* (Oxford: Routledge, 1999), 105.

<sup>14</sup> Somerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, 106.

<sup>15</sup> Lake, review of *Causes of the English Civil War*, 180.



and the reckless use of “ship money” levies to fund his costly ship. The second critical aspect of Charles’s reign are his machinations during the Battle of the Downs. The Battle of the Downs was fought a year after the construction of the *Sovereign*. The Downs acted as a crucial roadstead for commerce traveling through the English Channel. The Dutch fleet trapped the Spanish fleet within the Downs and a month later sank the majority of the fleet within the harbor. The action breached the neutrality of England’s roadstead and demonstrated that England could not defend its most crucial marina. The event did more to humiliate the Royal Navy than the damage the defeated Spanish fleet incurred. Charles’s leadership tested in this crisis only proved his ineffectiveness. This battle humiliated Charles’s reformed navy and his administration.

These two events precipitated the fall of Charles as both sovereign at sea and in England. Framing his absolutist ideals and his flawed temperament as a leader contributed to the swift mutiny of 1642. The intersection between Charles’s monarchical ideal and his temperament in the leadership of the navy serve as an unexplored sphere of conflict within the pre-civil war era.

### Construction and Controversy of the Sovereign of the Seas

Phineas Pett managed the shipyards of Chatham and Woolwich, where his son, Peter, directed the latter yard.<sup>16</sup> He had gained fame early on as the shipwright of the *Prince Royal*, the first great ship built by England in the seventeenth century under King James I.<sup>17</sup> Pressure mounted quickly for Pett even before the ship’s construction. He faced an inquiry by naval administrators into his actions taken in 1604. At the time, he built a small merchant ship, *The Resistance*, with wood from Charles’s property and sailed the ship south to Spain to sell weaponry and powder for his personal gain. The action caused an uproar in court where naval graft had become rife under James I’s reign during the construction of the *Prince Royal*.<sup>18</sup>

This inquiry began in 1608, just as Charles commissioned Pett, the otherwise inexperienced shipwright, to build the *Prince Royal*. Pett’s favor with King James enabled him to continue the construction of *Prince Royal* even after protests broke out amongst other experienced shipwrights on Pett’s ability.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, ed. William G. Perrin (Naval Records Society, 1918). Original published 1640.

<sup>17</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, lviii.

<sup>18</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, lxi-lxvi.

<sup>19</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, lxxviii.

However, James's belief in Pett never wavered as he supported Pett throughout the trial and maintained his commission to construct the *Prince Royal*. By 1610, *Prince Royal* launched successfully out of Woolwich; however, the inquiries colored Pett's reputation as a shipwright who overused material and inflated prices. This did not stop construction and the *Prince Royal* was launched. His success at Woolwich expanded the shipyard throughout the following decades. By 1634, Pett established himself as England's preeminent shipbuilder, albeit with a checkered reputation.

Charles arrived to review the construction of the *Leopard*—a ship constructed by Pett's son Peter at Woolwich. Charles, however, held ulterior motives for the visit; the King had ambitions for both Pett and a professional Royal Navy. Transcribed by naval administrator (and noted diarist) Samuel Pepys, Pett's autobiography was originally written as a personal journal that cataloged his life from 1570 to 1638, stopping abruptly near the end of his life.<sup>20</sup> Pett's grandson (also named Phineas) granted Pepys permission to transcribe the manuscript. Pett was an influential member of Charles's personal circle of naval administration. Pett remembers, "his Highness, calling me aside, privately acquainted me with his princely resolution for the building of a great new ship, which he would have me to undertake, using these words to me:— 'You have made many requests to me, and now I will make it my request to you to build this ship.'"<sup>21</sup> This personal conference between Charles and Pett demonstrates Pett's seniority in Charles's court as a longstanding official in service of the monarchy. Pett had known Charles since he was a child, constructing a model ship that the young prince would sail in the Thames.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Charles had been a consistent visitor in reviewing the construction of the fleet since the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham in 1629.<sup>23</sup> Charles's direct commissioning of Pett to build the *Sovereign* defied the norm of ship construction. The King used his visit to the *Leopard* to commission another vessel. As noted by parliamentary historian Andrew Thrush, "The order normally percolated down the chain of command, but... Charles bypassed this formal process altogether."<sup>24</sup> This breach of proto-

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<sup>20</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, ix.

<sup>21</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, 157.

<sup>22</sup> David Armine Horwath, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Story of British Sea Power*, (Collins, 1974), 185.

<sup>23</sup> Horwath, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Story of British Sea Power*, 186.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Derek Thrush, "The Navy under Charles I: 1625-40" (PhD diss., University College London, 1991), 24, <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1317789/>.

col from the inception of this process became the norm throughout the construction of the *Sovereign*. This personal approach by Charles peeved many, most specifically those outside his personal entourage.

In response to the announced construction and dimensions of the great ship, Trinity House published an official complaint to Charles I. Henry VIII formed Trinity House in 1514 to forge professionalism within the English merchant marine.<sup>25</sup> The institution trained officers to navigate sailboats within the narrow inlets of the English river system. The organization expanded under Queen Elizabeth I to be responsible for all lighthouses, beacons, and seamarks off the coasts of England. The House quickly became the central school training professional sailors and captains to be commissioned by the Royal Navy.<sup>26</sup> Being the primary provider of able officers gave Trinity House considerable influence on the naval decisions in court.

A written complaint about the *Sovereign's* construction sent Sir John Coke, the principal secretary, to Charles's court illustrates how open and incensed the opposition to Charles's naval policy had become. Coke was the closest direct line of communication within the court that those on the outside could muster.<sup>27</sup> Penning a direct and public letter demonstrates early fears of Charles's absolutist tendencies as a leader. The complaint argued two chief concerns. Foremost, Trinity House argued the strategic mission of the royal navy would not be well served by a ship as large as the *Sovereign of the Seas*, "but if it be force that his Majesty desireth, then shall he do well to forbear the building of this ship, and with the same cost or charge to build two ships of 5 or 600 ton a piece, either ship to have 40 pieces of good ordnance, and these two ships will be of more force and for better service and will beat the great ship back and side."<sup>28</sup> Commerce raiding was the paramount strategy in naval combat; thus, a slow battleship would be of little use to the faster, moderately gunned ships that could be made with the same money allocated for the construction of the *Sovereign*. The capability of these medium-sized ships with the ability to be manned with smaller crews returns in a later incident directly caused by Charles's personal rule over the navy. The house further argued that the ship would have no port large enough to dock the *Sovereign*. "In a desperate estate she rides in every storm in peril she must ride...her anchors and cables her safety. If either of them fail,

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<sup>25</sup> Horwath, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Story of British Sea Power*, 186.

<sup>26</sup> Horwath, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Story of British Sea Power*, 186-187.

<sup>27</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, 216.

<sup>28</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, Appendix VII.

the ship must perish, 4 or 500 men must die, and Charles must lose his Jewel; and this will be the state of this ship.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, it would require tremendous manpower even to tie her to a natural harbor—with a fear of “fail[ing]” and the ship perish[ing].” This amounted to tremendous risk and diversion in both finances and manpower. The authors cited the *Mary Rose*, a former great ship under Henry VIII that sank due to her size and the draught of her lower gun deck flooding in a storm—an issue the Trinity House previously brought up during the earlier stages of Pett’s creation. The response from Charles never materialized.<sup>30</sup> Trinity House raised valid points on the strategic use and the practicalities of maintaining such a large ship. The lack of response reveals the despotic nature of Charles’s hold over the navy—conflict throughout the construction of the *Sovereign* derived from the nature of the King’s perceived absolutist leadership.

Correspondence between Charles’s administration and the constructors and artisans of the *Sovereign* gives credence to Charles’s uncompromising authority. Charles wrote in his own hand directly about the exact tonnage and timing of the construction.<sup>31</sup> Most correspondence at the time trickled down between secretaries of state to those officers present—as seen in his letters during the Downs Crisis. Charles personally intervened in the construction multiple times. One such instance had Charles directly articulate the gilding and designs that would become synonymous with the ship, saying, “the head with all the carved work thereof, and the rails to be all gild, and no other colour used thereupon but black. The stern and galleries to be gild with gold and black in the same manner, with the rails on them to be all likewise gold with gold....the badges of carved work answerable to be gilt answerable to the rest.”<sup>32</sup> While this personal note did not cause an uproar within the cabinet, the mass gilding and ornamentation of the already expensive warship contributed to the growing concerns with Charles’s finances and his use of Ship Money. Even during the beginning of construction, the price of the *Sovereign* soared to 16,000 pounds from the initial 13,650-pound estimate from Pett.<sup>33</sup> By the end of construction, the price of the

<sup>29</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, Appendix VII.

<sup>30</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, Appendix VII.

<sup>31</sup> “Lords of the Admiralty to the Officers of the Navy,” January 7, 1635, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/282 f.46.

<sup>32</sup> James Septhorn, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Seventeenth-Century Warship* (Stroud: Amberley, 2011), 37. Not to be confused with David Horwath, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Story of British Sea Power*.

<sup>33</sup> “Estimate, probably intended to be that of the Officers of the Navy, but signed only by Phineas Pett, of the expense of materials of all sorts for building the great new

*Sovereign* and its outfitting of victuals and arms would amount to the engorged 65,586 pounds. Modern academics have argued that such a sum would account for ten ships of a middling class.<sup>34</sup> Ships such as those would have been easier to maintain and service in times of crisis. While no vocal opposition materialized during the process of adorning and embellishing the *Sovereign*, it likely caused consternation to those in opposition to the Ship Money prerogatives due to the incredibly high prices.

As the *Sovereign* neared completion, its launch became another topic of conflict within Charles's retinue. The King's handling of the launch advances the argument of his inherent divisiveness as a naval administrator. Pett intended to launch the *Sovereign* in September of 1637, although he himself opposed this launch date, arguing in a direct letter to Charles that he was "as against the fixing of so early a day, it is suggested that if Charles resolves to send her to sea next summer, she will in the meantime grow very foul underwater, and it will consequently be necessary to have her into dock again to grave and clean."<sup>35</sup> In the margins, Charles replied to the letter, "I am not of your opinion."<sup>36</sup> This response set the tone for increasing conflict regarding the *Sovereign's* launch. Charles demanded an immediate launch, regardless of Pett's opposition. Thus, when the time for launching arrived, Pett wrote on September 25 1637:

His Majesty, accompanied with the Queen and all the train of lords and ladies, their attendants, came to Woolwich, for the most part by water... the tackles were set taut and the ship started as they heaved, till the tackles failed and the water pinched, being a very poor tide, so that we gave over to Strain the tackles and began to shore the ship. Then his Majesty with the Queen took their barge and returned to Whitehall, being very sorry the ship could not be launched.<sup>37</sup>

The launch, a celebratory summation of Charles's years of direct planning and excessive spending through his uncompromising leadership, soured. Pett attempted to launch the *Sovereign* a handful more times before Charles ordered experts from Trinity House to execute the launch without Pett; calls against the *Sovereign* re-emerged as news spread of the failure. Pett bore the brunt of

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ship propounded by his ....." April 1635, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/287 f.142.

<sup>34</sup> Septhon, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Seventeenth-Century Warship*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> "Estimate, probably intended to be that of the Officers of the Navy," April 1635, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/287 f.142.

<sup>36</sup> "Estimate, probably intended to be that of the Officers of the Navy," April 1635.

<sup>37</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, 165.

these attacks, since it was public knowledge that Charles entrusted him with the construction. The shipbuilder was not pleased, writing in his autobiography that “any malicious reports were raised to disable the ship, and to bring as much disgrace upon me as malice itself could possibly invent.”<sup>38</sup> He criticizes the “Masters of the Trinity House and other roughhewn seamen,” saying that they “all professed enemies to the building of the ship, and more to myself, joined together to cast what aspersions upon both as far as they durst (for fear of Charles’s displeasure).”<sup>39</sup> Sir Robert Mansell, an agent of Charles, attempted to reconcile the opposition by inviting masters of Trinity House to lead the ship’s launching. However, Pett found an opportunity to successfully launch the *Sovereign* without the King and the Trinity House the night of October 14, 1637.<sup>40</sup>

With the *Sovereign* successfully in the water, provisions and stores were brought aboard for a shake-down cruise in the Downs. Sir John Pennington sailed with Pett and approved the *Sovereign* for service. However, this service would be short-lived. The number of men needed to serve—three hundred at its peak—was too costly for the already stretched navy.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Charles decided that his prestige ship would lay in anchorage with a shell crew of sixty to manage it.<sup>42</sup> The ship he spent over 60,000 pounds on and caused years of conflict over was ashore for nearly 15 years. Laying up the *Sovereign* led to a concerning lack of assets for the Royal Navy. Charles’s inability to heed the council and impatience in his actions as the administrator for much of the *Sovereign*’s construction demonstrated a temperament that many scholars argue ushered the Civil War. Even with Charles’s first-hand knowledge of Pett’s financial improprieties and a history of inflating ship prices, the King still chose Pett to build the *Sovereign*. Furthermore, the lack of tact when dealing with both the Trinity House protest and the launching of the *Sovereign* demonstrates how Charles’s absolutist rule over the navy alienated all parties involved. Conflict did not end with the *Sovereign* laid up as the Battle of the Downs only a year later continued to generate tension within his navy.

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<sup>38</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, 166.

<sup>39</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, 166.

<sup>40</sup> *Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, 166.

<sup>41</sup> “Officers of the Navy to the Lords of the Admiralty,” November 13, 1637, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/371 f.172.

<sup>42</sup> “Lords of the Admiralty to Officers of the Navy,” January 17, 1638, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/353 f.79.

### **The Battle of the Downs and the Humiliation of the Royal Navy, 1639**

The Royal Navy did not directly engage in the Battle of the Downs, since Charles's indecisiveness severely affected the prestige of his navy as the Dutch breached the sovereignty of England's most crucial harbor. Breach of sovereignty altered the national view of Charles and his new navy; the shattered reputation led to the repeal of the Ship Money prerogative by the Long Parliament in 1641.<sup>43</sup> The internal conflict stemming from the Downs demonstrates the ineffectiveness of Charles's leadership in times of crisis. This measure of Charles's disposition only proves how fraught his naval administration had become. Moreover, the crisis demonstrates how conflict emerged between the burgeoning professional sailors and officers of his navy. Looking into the letters between Sir John Pennington, Theophilus Earl of Suffolk, and representatives of Charles defines the lack of a strategy and the failed machinations of Charles.

When Charles's first set of orders arrived, Sir John Pennington's position in the Downs was severely compromised with only a minor naval presence. Pennington had served as a sailor and admiral of the Royal Navy for decades, and his position as Admiral had given him command to much of the navy's fleet. Now, his small flotilla that Charles's failed campaign in Scotland had whittled down was all that stood between two great fleets.<sup>44</sup> The Dutch geared on attacking the Spanish, who positioned their fleet within the Downs. By Autumn 1639, Charles's fleet had been reduced to seven serviceable ships. Pennington himself transferred his command to the *Unicorn* after his previous ship became unserviceable and required repairs.<sup>45</sup> Arriving at the Downs, Admiral Tromp of the Dutch Navy set a blockade around the channel. Tromp's decision not to attack the Spanish on the open seas acknowledged English sovereignty over the roadstead. This action opposed the Dutch legal theory of the high seas known as "Mare Liberum."<sup>46</sup> Hugo Grotius proposed the theory in 1609, declaring the ocean open and accessible passage to any ship under any flag. For Grotius, no nation can claim any part of the sea, making the entity sovereign less. While

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<sup>43</sup> "Chapter XIV.: An Act for the declaring unlawful and void the late proceedings touching Ship money and for the vacating of all Records and Processe concerning the same," in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628-80* (1819), published by Great Britain Record Commission, 116-117.

<sup>44</sup> Blakemore and Murphy, *Civil War at Seas*, 39-40.

<sup>45</sup> Blakemore and Murphy, *Civil War at Seas*, 40.

<sup>46</sup> Hugo Grotius, *Mare Liberum 1609-2009: Original Latin Text and English Translation*, ed. Robert Feenstra (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2009).

this legal practice applied commonly to merchant travel, Tromp's later decision to engage the Spanish armada anchored at the Downs made use of the Dutch *Mare Liberum*.

The English crown so directly opposed both the action and the theory of *Mare Liberum* applied by the Dutch Navy that James I commissioned legal scholar James Seldon to write a counter-legal work, "*Mare Clausum*." Published in 1638 though written prior, Seldon argued that seas surrounding nations and national interest belong to the sovereign.<sup>47</sup> When Sir John Pennington first positioned his fleet between the Dutch and Spanish navies, Pennington acted on the legal basis of *Mare Clausum*. Being the littoral water just off the coast of Dover, The Downs Roadstead had long been claimed by the English Crown as a territory. Sir John Pennington's title, "Admiral of the Downs," filled the role of a Lord Lieutenancy on land, with the added complication of maintaining warships rather than regiments. Just as Lord Lieutenants raised militias in the service of Charles in times of war, Pennington raised English merchant ships armed with cannons for their own self-protection. The mobilization of pressing merchantmen for service fell under the medieval practice of "maritime potential."<sup>48</sup> This archaic system had become outdated by warships' growing professionalization and specialization. Merchant ships armed with a few dozen guns and built to haul cargo were no match for the purpose-built frigates being produced by sea-faring nations.<sup>49</sup> Through his secretaries, Charles ordered Pennington to press these under-classed vessels into his diminutive flotilla.<sup>50</sup>

Instructions from Northumberland and Charles arrived on September 12 and erred on the side of nonchalance in the face of imminent threat:

I desire you still to have a watchful eye upon them, and to give me advertisement from time to time of all that shall occur in this affair. His Majesty, whom I have acquainted with all particulars that have passed therein, is very well satisfied, as with your deportment so with the Hollanders' civility at this time, and doubts not but that they will continue their fair respects to his Majesty in the place where they now are, so that I believe there will not

<sup>47</sup> Blakemore and Murphy, *Civil War at Seas*, 25-6.

<sup>48</sup> Louis Sicking, "Naval warfare in Europe, c. 1330-c. 1680," in *European Warfare, 1350-1750*, ed. Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 236-263.

<sup>49</sup> Blakemore and Murphy, "Warfare at Sea in the Early Modern Period," in *Civil War at Sea*, 12-34.

<sup>50</sup> "Algernon Percy Earl of Northumberland to Sir John Pennington," September 12, 1639, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/428 f.137.



as yet be any occasion of further directions to you concerning the present business.<sup>51</sup>

The initial letter from Northumberland presses more detailed instructions for Pennington for the transportation of his sister to France than the impending battle of the navies.<sup>52</sup> Pennington vied for support in any way from his Majesty and Northumberland who came from the merchant ships, which did little to support the middling English force. Pennington strapped together his force of ships by pressing in merchant ships and rallying other small royal navy vessels in the vicinity of the Downs. Meanwhile, Charles desperately schemed for monetary gain from this crisis by negotiating with the Dutch and Spanish in London.

Charles's failed campaign in Scotland left his Kingdom financially untenable. Seeing an opportunity, he wished to meet with both commanders in the hopes that either Spain or Holland would pay the English for protection, or assent to an attack respectively. This machination resulted in indecisiveness to his commanders on the ground. For weeks Charles entertained the Spanish emissary Don Alonso de Cardenas. The King also entertained Endymion Porter, who acted as a go-between for the crown and the Spanish fleet. By October 9 these talks stalled, most likely due to Charles's lack of tact. Secretary Windebank wrote Porter to reflect Charles's feelings on the failed talks:

He commanded me to let you know that he would have you make answer to the resident, if he require it, that Charles has shewed his care of the Spanish fleet with all the kindness that could be expected, and that if the wind set where it does it will be impossible for his ships to come to protect them against the Hollander...It seems the Spaniards regard nothing but their own accommodation, nor will they look about them until Charles assign them a day to set sail, the which will be required from him; and when they are out of the port they must trust to their own force, for his Majesty will protect them no farther. As for their making any proposition, I think they are such dull, stupefied souls that they think of nothing, and when I acquainted his Majesty with their negligence in that particular he told me that the resident was 'a silly, ignorant, odd fellow.'<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> "Algernon Percy Earl of Northumberland to Sir John Pennington," September 12, 1639.

<sup>52</sup> "Algernon Percy Earl of Northumberland to Sir John Pennington," September 12, 1639.

<sup>53</sup> "Endymion Porter to Sec. Windebank," October 9, 1639, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/430 f.121.

Charles's derogatory comment about Windebank being a "silly, ignorant, odd fellow" lends credence to the narrative of the King's ill temperament for leadership. While this letter assured that England would attempt to retain sovereignty over the Downs, the country essentially had no control over the situation. Charles understood this by sending a letter to the Earl of Suffolk who commanded the Cinque Ports, a series of ancient fortifications overlooking the Downs. Secretary Windebank wrote the commander on Charles's behalf on the possible internment of Spanish sailors washed up on the English shore:

His Majesty considering that if the Holland fleet should commit any act of hostility upon the Spaniards in the Downs, whereby the latter may be driven on shore for preservation of their lives, and so finding themselves in want of victuals and lodging may perhaps become unruly and disorderly, as soldiers in distress and necessity use for the most part to be, to the prejudice and damnifying of his Majesty's subjects, his Majesty commanded me to signify his pleasure to you that as well you as the deputy-lieutenants of Kent, in such case of necessity, shall cause provision to be made for the billeting of the Spaniards as strangers, in places most convenient, in such sort as for their money they may have all necessaries of meat, drink, and lodging.<sup>54</sup>

The crucial line to this letter remains "for their money," alluding to Charles's evident need for cash which could be gained by his fortresses along to coast billeting the marooned Spaniards. Secretary Windebank copied the letter to Porter to relay to the Spanish fleet as well.<sup>55</sup> These two letters provide a serendipitous pronouncement of the extortion of the soon to be marooned Spanish soldiers.

Within two days, Tromp split his force in three groups. The first held the blockade of The Downs. The second group lured the flotilla of Sir John Pennington out of the Downs. The force led by Admiral Pennington engaged and chased this diversionary force, while the Earl of Suffolk watched helplessly as "the Spaniards and the Hollanders [engaged] in a bloody fight in the Downs. The Admiral of Holland began the fight. There are six Lubeckers already run ashore, and it is probable that more will follow."<sup>56</sup> These particulars became

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<sup>54</sup> "Sec. Windebank to Theophilus Earl of Suffolk, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, October 10, 1639," Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/430 f.127.

<sup>55</sup> "Endymion Porter to Sec. Windebank," October 10, 1639, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/430 f.130.

<sup>56</sup> "Theophilus Earl of Suffolk to Sec. Windebank," October 11, 1639, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/430 f.138.

evident, by the end of the day the Spanish fleet laid mauled on either the shores of Dover or captured by the third wing of the Dutch navy - led by Tromp himself. As the capabilities of communication was poor between the court and the Downs, the threat of further Dutch attack loomed. With Charles's position as sovereign of the Downs severely threatened, Northumberland ordered ten ships to arrive in support of Pennington's fleet at the Downs.<sup>57</sup> In the wake of the climactic engagement, the Downs turned into a hub of scavengers and misinformation. The perceived threat of the Dutch fleet returning spurred Charles to write to Sir John Pennington through Northumberland two days later: "If they shall refuse to yield obedience to this his Majesty's commandment, then you shall endeavour with all the power and strength you can make to force them out of that place."<sup>58</sup> However, Pennington is not to execute this plan until he is fully prepared with ten more ships, that way the fleet is stronger. And, "his Majesty" reminds Pennington that "you must not fail, as you will answer the contrary at your uttermost peril."<sup>59</sup> This letter stands in contrast to others sent by Northumberland. The consistent use of "his majesty" reflects how the message came straight from Charles. The "plan" as it called does point to Charles's desperation to maintain his perceived sovereignty over the Downs. Fortunately for both Admiral Pennington and Charles, the Dutch force would not engage the English flotilla. The defeat of the Downs for the English reinforced the Dutch "Mare Liberum" and their naval supremacy until the end of the English Civil War.

This humiliation of the English Navy that had previously so impressively defeated the Spanish Armada, left a bitter feeling for many in the ever-professionalizing force. This too further spurred the rising opposition to fight the wasteful and useless Ship Money levies, as England was clearly threatened by any large naval presence and could not muster a force to retain its coastal sovereignty. The fleet that Charles I promised under the guise of levying Ship Money constructed behemoth vessels like the *Sovereign of the Seas*, which proved to be ineffective at the Battle of the Downs due to the shifting tactics of warfare. Charles's inability to even control the most crucial roadstead in England demonstrated to many the hypocritical use of his funds. The Navy's loss of faith in the King was demonstrated when they mutinied and abandoned Charles's cause

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<sup>57</sup> "Algernon Earl of Northumberland to Sir John Pennington," October 13, 1639, Gale: *State Papers Online*, SP 16/431 f.17.

<sup>58</sup> "Algernon Earl of Northumberland to Sir John Pennington," October 13, 1639.

<sup>59</sup> "Algernon Earl of Northumberland to Sir John Pennington," October 13, 1639.

during the first days of the English Civil War.

### Conclusion

The construction of the *Sovereign* and the Battle of the Downs presented Charles with a navy that was fundamentally incapable of fighting against faster, leaner boats and a personnel that were utterly humiliated. Charles's actions had led to sovereignty over the English Channel—England's most precious roadstead—being breached. The ship meant to demonstrate the protection of the seas for English mariners laid at rest with a skeleton crew to maintain her. The navy Charles promised with the Ship Money levies arrived undelivered. This fleet, or lack thereof, joined with parliament in 1642 when opportunity presented itself. The navy that had dutifully served Charles was disillusioned with his rule and, quite literally, abandoned ship.

By linking the consequences of early modern naval history with the political history of personal rule, scholars gain a broader insight into the history of Charles's reign. Expanding these arguments to understudied fields such as the Caroline Navy can provide greater insight into the different theaters where conflict presented itself in England. Great works of scholarship have been done in the field of naval history. Yet, more can be done to bridge the gaps between these two historical narratives. The inability to maintain internal security of the trading and fishing fleets within the English littoral should be further studied as it caused the frustration of the sailors with their King that eventually led to their mutiny. This field bridges the political and naval histories that engaged in parliament and the court in the run-up to the conflict. The lack of a robust and active fleet enabled commerce raiding in many forms to take place and soon became a fixture of the English Civil War.<sup>60</sup> The political engagement by the professional sailors and officers of England serves as another form of understanding the navy's motivations in the outbreak of the conflict.

These events do not serve as a one-off footnote in the political history of the Civil War or the naval overviews of the Royal Navy. Instead, this mutiny summarizes years of internal conflict and controversy surrounding the senior service in the Caroline Navy. Understanding why the Royal Navy so quickly switched sides and how this conflict contends with the greater aspect of Charles's personal rule must be examined when understanding the mutiny at the Downs in 1642.

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<sup>60</sup> Blakemore and Murphy, *Civil War at Seas*, 44.

ROSE SHAFER

## “Fight and Sing with Us!”

### The *Singebewegung* (Singing Movement) and the History of Propaganda Songs in the German Democratic Republic

#### Prologue: Background to the *Singebewegung*

In 1959, a Canadian folk singer named Perry Friedman moved to the German Democratic Republic, bringing with him a banjo, a vast repertoire of left-wing political songs, and a novel North American concept: the “Hootenanny,” an informal, open-stage gathering where participants play folk music together.<sup>1</sup> The musical landscape in the GDR at this time was notoriously constrained. The ruling Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, hereafter SED) had a vested political interest in controlling its musical output. They sought to suppress Western genres like rock and roll, which were seen as embodying “capitalist decadence” and “Western imperialism,” and to promote music which reflected socialist ideology.<sup>2</sup> Toward this end, the state “set up a gigantic bureaucratic apparatus to administrate the music scene and to guarantee total control.”<sup>3</sup> All musicians needed a government license to perform, all institutions responsible for the production of music were directly subordinate to the Ministry of Culture, and their success was dependent on their recognition by state-owned media and the state’s (only) popular music record label, *Amiga*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carsten Beyer, “Aufstieg und Niedergang der Folkszene in der DDR,” *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, April 6, 2016, <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/cd-box-hootenanny-in-ost-berlin-aufstieg-und-niedergang-der-100.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Georg Maas and Hartmut Reszel, “Whatever Happened to...: The Decline and Renaissance of Rock in the Former GDR,” *Popular Music* 17, no. 3 (1998): 267–77, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/852957>; Michael Rauhut, “Conflicting Identities: The Meaning and Significance of Popular Music in the GDR,” in *Made in Germany: Studies in Popular Music*, ed. David-Emil Wickström, Martin Ringsmut, and Oliver Seibt, (New York; Routledge, 2021), 49.

<sup>3</sup> Rauhut, “Conflicting Identities,” 50.

<sup>4</sup> Olaf Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen zur Musikkultur der FDJ: Ein Erziehungs-*

However, despite this litany of restrictions, several characteristics of the GDR musical landscape proved advantageous for Perry in introducing the “Hootenanny” to East Germany. First, his arrival coincided with a phase of “policy liberalization” in the GDR, during which new currents in music and youth culture were increasingly, albeit cautiously, tolerated.<sup>5</sup> This was particularly apparent in the folk music scene, where the rising popularity of Western folk revival artists, such as Bob Dylan and Pete Seeger, inspired German imitants.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the East German state enthusiastically nurtured and promoted the nation’s rich tradition of folk and political songs to serve its political purposes.<sup>7</sup> One such institution was the Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, hereafter FDJ), the official youth movement of the SED. In addition to publishing and distributing songbooks, whose repertoire drew from various folk music traditions, and cultivating group singing as both a social activity and means of “political education,” the FDJ hosted and organized events that involved music, poetry and other live performances.<sup>8</sup>

In 1960, in the midst of this tentatively open climate, Friedman began to organize “Hootenannies” across East German cities. These events were so successful with young East Germans that, in 1966, Perry and a group of young singers founded the Hootenanny-Klub-Berlin with the support of the youth radio station DT 64 and the Berlin district leadership of the FDJ.<sup>9</sup> From the be-

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*ngswissenschaftlicher Beitrag zur Totalitarismusforschung*, (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1998.), 114; Maas and Reszel, “Whatever Happened to...,” 269.

<sup>5</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 261.

<sup>6</sup> Lutz Kirchenwitz, “Singebewegung,” Musikgeschichte Online, <https://mugo.hfmt-hamburg.de/de/topics/singebewegung>, *Musikgeschichte Online: DDR documents the musical landscape of the GDR*. It is a collaboration between historians Lars Klingberg, Nina Noeske and Matthias Tischer in cooperation with several organizations including the Akademie der Künste (Berlin), Deutsches Musikarchiv, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv and GEMA (Gesellschaft für musikalische Aufführungs- und mechanische Vervielfältigungsrechte).

<sup>7</sup> David Robb, “Playing with the ‘Erbe’: Songs of the 1848 Revolution in the GDR,” *German Life and Letters* 63, no. 3 (2010): 295, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0483.2010.01500.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Goll, “Lieder Aus Der DDR Als Quellen Im Historisch-Politischen Unterricht,” Sowi-Online, 2005, [https://www.sowi-online.de/praxis/methode/lieder\\_aus\\_ddr\\_quellen\\_historisch\\_politischen\\_unterricht.html](https://www.sowi-online.de/praxis/methode/lieder_aus_ddr_quellen_historisch_politischen_unterricht.html); Thomas Freitag, “Alles Singt Oder Das Ende Vom Lied? Liederbe Und Singekultur Der Ehem. DDR,” *Jahrbuch Für Volksliedforschung* 38 (1993): 52, doi: 10.2307/848947; Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 266; Kirchenwitz, “Singebewegung.”

<sup>9</sup> Kirchenwitz, “Singebewegung.”

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ginning of its involvement, the FDJ saw a political opportunity in its connection to the Hootenanny-Klub, with the secretary of the FDJ Central Council declaring that "Singing clubs must be political instruments of the youth association!"<sup>10</sup> Several additional Hootenanny clubs were founded that year.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately for the Hootenanny-Klub, however, their founding coincided with the dawn of a new era of "cultural-political regressions" in the SED's attitudes toward popular music.<sup>12</sup> The 11th Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED, held in December 1965, instituted a crackdown on various art forms deemed subversive, banning so-called "Beat music," (*Beatmusik*) a term used to describe Western rock 'n' roll as embodied by artists like the Beatles.<sup>13</sup> In 1966, a ministerial directive to combat "political and ideological deviations and underground activities among youth groups in the GDR" laid the groundwork for the Stasi's surveillance and intimidation of suspicious youth music cultures.<sup>14</sup> In 1967, the Secretariat of the SED Central Committee instituted a "decisive fight against the tendencies of Americanization in the field of culture," which involved a crackdown on "anglicisms" and other manifestations of "imperialist unculture."<sup>15</sup>

The SED's newfound enthusiasm for policing allegedly threatening Western cultural imports spelled trouble for the Hootenanny-Klub. The leftist themes in their protest-folk-rock-inspired repertoire were agreeable to the state: after all, "the American folk movement...turned against the consumer ideology of the American way of life and could only be interpreted in the context of the union, civil rights and peace movements,"<sup>16</sup> making it a "capitalism-critical counter-cul-

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<sup>10</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 266. "Singeclubs müssen politische Instrumentes des Jugendverbandes sein!"

<sup>11</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 265.

<sup>12</sup> Kirchenwitz, "Singebewegung." This roughly coincided with the end of the so-called "Khrushchev Thaw." See Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 108.

<sup>13</sup> Knut Holtsträter, "Beatmusik," Musikgeschichte Online, December 1, 2022, <https://mugo.hfmt-hamburg.de/de/topics/beatmusik>.

<sup>14</sup> Rauhut, "Conflicting Identities," 51.

<sup>15</sup> Kirchenwitz, "Singebewegung"; Theresa Beyer, "Der Staat Singt Mit – Die Liedpolitik in Der DDR," Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (SRF), June 1, 2013, <https://www.srf.ch/kultur/musik/musik-der-staat-singt-mit-die-liedpolitik-in-der-ddr>. "entschiedener Kampf gegen die Tendenzen der Amerikanisierung auf dem Gebiet der Kultur."

<sup>16</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 261. "die Amerikanische Folkbewegung ... wandte sich gegen die Konsumideologie des *american way of life* und kann nur im Zusammenhang mit Gewerkschafts-, Bürgerrechts- und Friedensbewegung interpretiert

ture”<sup>17</sup>—a category which found more favor with the GDR establishment than other Western imports.<sup>18</sup> However, the Hootenanny-Klub’s brazen American influence and “anglicisms”—even the word “Hootenanny” in their name—and the “unusual degree of looseness”<sup>19</sup> inherent to the “Hootenanny” practice were viewed with suspicion by the SED.<sup>20</sup>

Instead of taking measures to disband the Hootenanny-Klub, however, the SED and the FDJ usurped it and repurposed it to serve its own political goals. The FDJ was in crisis in the early 1960s: membership was in decline, in no small part due to its conservative attitude towards youth subcultures such as *Beatmusik*.<sup>21</sup> In the midst of its crusade against *Beatmusik*, the FDJ had begun to realize it needed a “counter-strategy” to channel youths’ musical energy in an acceptable form, lest the organization be relegated to cultural irrelevance.<sup>22</sup> The Hootenanny-Klub was the perfect vessel for this. The SED Central Committee ordered the club to change their name to Oktoberklub and replace the term Hootenanny with *Sing-Mit-Verstaltung* (sing-along event) and instituted a new management structure that ensured the FDJ’s full control of the club.<sup>23</sup>

### Genesis of the Singebewegung

In January 1967, the FDJ passed the resolution “Kämpft und singt mit uns!” (“Fight and sing with us!”), officially appropriating the relatively informal “Hootenanny” movement into the so-called *Singebewegung* (singing movement).<sup>24</sup> Using the Oktoberklub as its blueprint, the FDJ promoted the development of similar *Singeklubs* (singing clubs) throughout the GDR.<sup>25</sup> Here, young people

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werden.”

<sup>17</sup> “kapitalismuskritische Gegenkultur”

<sup>18</sup> Michael Rauhut, “Jugendkulturen und populäre Musik in der DDR,” in *Jugendkultur in Stendal: 1950–1990: Szenen aus der DDR – Porträts und Reflexionen*, (Berlin: Hirnkost, 2018), 4.

<sup>19</sup> “ungewöhnliches Maß an Lockerheit”

<sup>20</sup> Lutz Frühbrodt, “Hartmut König: Der Singende Funktionär,” *Die Zweite Aufklärung*, July 17, 2022, <https://www.zweite-aufklaerung.de/hartmut-koenig-der-singende-kulturfunktionaer/>; Beyer, “Aufstieg und Niedergang der Folkszene in der DDR.”

<sup>21</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 137.

<sup>22</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 153.

<sup>23</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 270, 272–273.

<sup>24</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 276.

<sup>25</sup> German terms appearing frequently in this work, such as “Singebewegung” and “Singeklubs,” are left unitalicized after first reference.



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could gather to sing, perform, and write songs which parroted the party line. The Singebewegung hereafter comprised both “a dilettante part, which mainly functioned as a leisure activity and celebration framework, and a professionalized part, e.g. the Oktoberklub.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, Singeklubs could be either small local social groups or semi-professional performance groups whose musical output was aired on the radio and issued on records. To promote the movement, the FDJ hosted workshops and talent competitions, aired a Singebewegung “hit parade” on the youth radio station DT64, published Singebewegung songbooks, and hosted various concert series, including a yearly international showcase concert called the “Festival of Political Song.” By the mid-1970s, the Singebewegung comprised over 4,000 Singeklubs.<sup>27</sup>

If the origin story of the Singebewegung seems convoluted, listening to its output only adds to the confusion. The Singeklubs’ original compositions incorporate musical elements from folk to skiffle to “beat” to *schlager*, and their covers range from Italian, Russian, Irish and Spanish revolutionary and workers’ songs to Weimar-era *Kämpflieder* (fight songs). Let us examine the extensive discography of the Oktoberklub, the flagship *Singeklub*, as a representative example. Many songs, like their breakaway hit “Sag mir wo du stehst” (“Tell me where you stand”) and “Wir sind überall” (“We are everywhere”), the anthem of the 1973 “Weltfestspiele der Jugend”, combine a classic 1960s folk-rock sound with conveniently vague lyrics that imply a call to action.<sup>28</sup> Others, however, contain more explicit political content, making for a jarring listen: “Weg mit dem NATO-Raketenbeschluss” (“Get rid of the NATO missile decision”) protests NATO’s armament to an ominous drum beat; “Oktober Song” (“October Song”) recounts the story of the October Revolution; “Lied vom CIA” (CIA Song) sets a sarcastic criticism of the American CIA to the tune of a folk melody; “Lied vom Vaterland” (“Song of the Fatherland”) is a rousing rock ode to the GDR,

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<sup>26</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 316. “eine Zweiteilung der Bewegung in einen dilettierenden Teil, der hauptsächlich als Freizeitgestaltung und Feierumrahmung fungierte, und einen professionalisierten Teil, z.B. den Oktoberklub.”

<sup>27</sup> Beyer, “Der Staat Singt Mit – Die Liedpolitik in Der DDR.” “Mit Propagandakampagnen macht die FDJ die Bewegung einer breiten Masse schmackhaft und investiert in eine umfangreiche Infrastruktur: Mitte der Siebziger gibt es in der DDR 4000 Singeklubs, jährliche Werkstattwochen und Talentwettbewerbe, eine eigene Hitparade im Jugendsender DT64, Liederbücher und Konzertreihen und als internationales Schaufenster das «Festival des politischen Liedes».”

<sup>28</sup> Lutz Kirchenwitz and Fred Krüger, *Lieder und Leute: Die Singebewegung der FDJ*, Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1982, 18.

“the land where the factories belong to us”; “Mach doch mal eine Verbesserungsvorschlag” (“Just make a suggestion for improvement”) is an infectious banjo tune which compels workers to instill a culture of socialist camaraderie and perfectibility in their workplaces; “Alle sagen drüben DDR” (“Everyone over there is saying GDR”) celebrates, to a vigorously strummed solo guitar, the political victory that transpired when West German chancellor Willy Brandt referred to the country as the “GDR” instead of “East Germany,” a major development in *Ostpolitik*, Brandt’s policy of normalizing relations between East and West Germany.

How did this erstwhile “Hootenanny” club metamorphose so rapidly and completely into a socialist propaganda hit machine? To answer this question, we must situate the Singebewegung in the broader context of GDR music history. The Singebewegung was a novel experiment: for the first time, young artists themselves were called upon to contribute to the GDR’s body of propaganda music, something that had previously been the domain of pioneer songbooks assembled by adults.<sup>29</sup> However, it was not a historical oddity. The Singebewegung reflected existing patterns in the GDR’s relationship to music: its use of political music as a propaganda tool, their cultivation of “mass singing” as a means of *sozialistische Persönlichkeitsbildung* (socialist personality building), its tug-of-war between suppressing and tolerating subversive music cultures, and its ongoing curation of a canon of *Massenlieder* (mass songs) of diverse origin. Examining the methods and goals of the institutions that orchestrated the Singebewegung and the way the participants of the Singebewegung expressed themselves within its infrastructure provides an illuminating glimpse into the complicated confluence of music and politics in the GDR.

### The Tradition of the Massenlied

Since the early years of the GDR, text-based music played a significant role in the SED’s efforts towards the “socialist (re-)education of the population.”<sup>30</sup> To this end, the state enthusiastically cultivated a corpus of so-called *Massenlieder* (mass songs),<sup>31</sup> a catch-all term including *Kampflieder* (fight songs),

<sup>29</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 258.

<sup>30</sup> Andreas Lucken, “Chorwesen,” Musikgeschichte Online, November 15, 2022, <https://mugo.hfmt-hamburg.de/de/topics/chorwesen-folgt>. “sozialistischen (Um-)Erziehung der Bevölkerung.”

<sup>31</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 235-236. The term *Massenlied* (plural: *Massenlieder*) reflected the ideal that the “masses” would embrace these songs and “spontaneously” start singing them at events. However, in practice, they were mostly performed in

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*Agitationslieder* (agitation songs), and *Arbeiterlieder* (workers' songs)—in short, all songs which supposedly “had [their] origins in the revolutionary struggle of oppressed classes.”<sup>32</sup> *Massenlieder* were dispersed through state-published song-books and performed in settings like schools, the army, and assemblies of the FDJ and its younger age cohort, the Thälmann Pioneers.<sup>33</sup>

The songs that comprised the *Massenlieder* canon were of diverse and eclectic origin. Part of this canon consisted of songs by well-known socialist composers in the style of “socialist realism,” for instance the work of Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Busch, Hanns Eisler and others.<sup>34</sup> Many *Massenlieder* written in the early decades of the GDR, known as *neue deutschen Volkslieder* (new German folk songs) had lyrics explicitly referencing the GDR's political situation and espoused patriotic themes: Louis Fürnberg's “Lied der Partei” (“Song of the Party”) served as a hymn to the Party with its notoriously unsubtle chorus, “Die Partei, die Partei hat immer recht!” (“The Party, the Party is always right!”).<sup>35</sup> The 1947 song “Jugend erwach” (“Youth, wake up!”), which became the unofficial anthem of the FDJ, evoked the postwar reconstruction of East Germany with its refrain of “Bau auf, bau auf” (“Build up, build up”).<sup>36</sup>

Not all *Massenlieder* originated in the East German political context, however. Most of the *Massenlieder* canon consisted of older songs that “had been oppositional in their particular period of history”.<sup>37</sup> songs of the 1848 revo-

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an official capacity at “party conferences, torchlight processions and controlled rallies.”

<sup>32</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 234. “... hat seinen Ursprung in revolutionären Kampf unterdrückter Klassen in der antagonistischen Klassengesellschaft”; Annette Diester, “‘Die Partei hat immer recht’: Sozialistische Massenlieder in der DDR,” *Geschichte Lernen* 50, no. 9 (1996): 59.

<sup>33</sup> Gert Hagelweide, *Das publizistische Erscheinungsbild des Menschen im kommunistischen Lied: Eine Untersuchung der Liedpublizistik der KPD (1919-1933) und der SED (1945-1960)*, (self-pub., Bremen, 1968); Siegfried Bimberg, *Seid bereit! Liederbuch der Thälmann-Pioniere*, (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1985); David Robb, “Political Song in the GDR: The Cat-and-Mouse Game with Censorship and Institutions,” in *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s*, ed. David Robb, (Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 228, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt81x98.12>.

<sup>34</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Diester, “‘Die Partei hat immer recht,’” 59.

<sup>36</sup> Maren Köster, *Musik-Zeit-Geschehen: Zu den Musikverhältnissen in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1952*, (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2002), 7.

<sup>37</sup> Robb, “Political Song in the GDR,” 238.

lution,<sup>38</sup> songs of anti-fascist resistance<sup>39</sup> (including those written by concentration camp prisoners)<sup>40</sup> and especially songs from the “worker’s movement” (*Arbeiterbewegung*) of the 1920s, a musical tradition fostered with particular zeal in the GDR.<sup>41</sup> The corpus of “revolutionary” songs extended even beyond the horizons of German history and language, however; German translations of Spanish civil war songs<sup>42</sup> and Russian revolutionary songs became staples of the Massenlied repertoire, and even such ephemera as Greek, Korean, French, Polish and Czech partisan songs made their way into songbooks.<sup>43</sup> As scholar Olaf Schäfer observes, these songs “were generously included in song collections in the GDR without any particular attention being paid to their origin.”<sup>44</sup> All of these songs took on new meanings when the GDR appropriated them for its own propaganda purposes: regardless of origin, the GDR viewed this assemblage of songs as its “sacred cultural heritage,” and it took great care to nurture this heritage through official institutions.<sup>45</sup>

In the early 1960s, the Massenlied entered a period of crisis. Massenlieder with themes of optimism, solidarity, and resistance had genuinely resonated with the FDJ membership in the early years of the GDR, when citizens faced material hardship and the challenge of rebuilding their country and society after the war. Lines like “the new time moves with us!” (“Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit!”)<sup>46</sup> had powerful implications when young people sang them while “ventur[ing] out from their bomb-destroyed cities to go hiking.”<sup>47</sup> By the 1960s, how-

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<sup>38</sup> Robb, “Playing with the ‘Erbe.’”

<sup>39</sup> This category had considerable overlap with the aforementioned songs of Brecht, Eisler and Busch, all of whom were active in the 1920s and 30s (periods of anti-Nazi resistance) as well as in the GDR.

<sup>40</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 254.

<sup>41</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 253.

<sup>43</sup> Alexander Ott, *Leben, Singen, Kämpfen: Liederbuch der deutschen Jugend*, 9th ed., (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1958), 90-91, 109, 121-122.

<sup>44</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 231. “In diesem Sinne ist es nicht verwunderlich, wenn auch in der DDR großzügig Arbeiterlieder in die Liedersammlungen aufgenommen wurden, ohne sich im einzelnen darum zu kümmern, welche Herkunft diese Lieder hatten. Man verführt hier, wie an vielen anderen Stellen, nach der Maxime ‘Gut ist, was uns nützt.’”

<sup>45</sup> Robb, “Playing with the ‘Erbe,’” 296.

<sup>46</sup> Lyrics from the song “Wann wir schreiten Seit’ an Seit’,” 1913.

<sup>47</sup> Juliane Brauer, “Feeling Political by Collective Singing: Political Youth Organi-

ever, the “rebuilding” of East Germany was no longer imminent and the GDR’s propagandistic self-image fell flat. “Fight songs” from contentious political moments in the early 20th century no longer resonated because, as Singebewegung songwriter Regina Scheer explained, “War and fascism were not part of [the young generation’s] experiences because they were born in peace. The GDR [had] been their reality for as long as they could remember.”<sup>48</sup> The popularity of the Massenlieder, which had been predicated on historical moments of intense trauma and insecurity, declined precipitously.<sup>49</sup>

The SED cherished the Massenlied tradition, however, and were disinclined to let it fade away. The Singebewegung provided the perfect venue through which to bring it back to life. Through the Singebewegung, the FDJ systematically promoted the production of new “mitsingbare Lieder” (“sing-along-able songs”) in order to revive the Massenlied in a fresher, more timely, and more politically useful form.<sup>50</sup> Under the slogan “DDR-Konkret” (“GDR concrete,” or “GDR realism”), young people were encouraged to write songs which “dealt positively” with issues of socialism and everyday working life.<sup>51</sup> The FDJ made the connection between the *DDR-Konkret* initiative and the revival of the Massenlied tradition explicit in the “Kämpft und singt mit uns!” decree which inaugurated the movement: “We have never let them fade away, the immortal songs of the people, of the German and international revolutionary workers’ movement[.] ... The FDJ Singebewegung joins the great mass movement of the working people who are making socialist culture the culture of the entire people.”<sup>52</sup>

Participants of the Singebewegung eagerly took up the task of contributing to socialist cultural heritage. The young songwriters perceived themselves as the inheritors of the work of early GDR Massenlied-writers, the *Arbeiterlied*

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zations in Germany, 1920–1960,” in *Feeling Political: Emotions and Institutions since 1789*, (Palgrave, 2022), 277, doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-89858-8\_10.

<sup>48</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 67. “Tatsächlich war die Situation in der die Gründer der ersten FDJ-Singeklubs sich befanden, eine neue. Krieg und Faschismus gehörten nicht zu ihren Erlebnissen, da sie im Frieden geboren wurden. Die DDR war, seit sie denken konnten, ihre Realität.”

<sup>49</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 239-40.

<sup>50</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 241.

<sup>51</sup> Robb, “Playing with the ‘Erbe,’” 296.

<sup>52</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 277. “Wir haben nie sie verklingen lassen, die unvergänglichen Lieder des Volkes, der deutschen und internationalen revolutionären Arbeiterbewegung ... Die FDJ-Singebewegung reiht sich ein in die große Massenbewegung der Werktätigen die sozialistische Kultur zur Kultur des ganzes Volkes machen.”

tradition, and the various other strains of political song stemming from revolutionary moments.<sup>53</sup> In the anthology “*Lieder und Leute: Singebewegung der FDJ*,” numerous songwriters draw parallels between their work and the work of beloved revolutionary songwriters such as Bertold Brecht and Hanns Eisler.<sup>54</sup> As songwriter Konrad Wolf declared: “We must ensure that the political song finds a place in everyday life under the new conditions of our struggle (which are of course different from the time when people were still fighting on the barricades...)—that it hits the nerve of the people, their emotions, and appeals to their consciousness.”<sup>55</sup> Covers and reinterpretations of many old and beloved Massenlieder formed a significant part of their output, and many original Singebewegung compositions borrowed tropes from the classic Massenlieder (e.g. the lyrical motif of the “red flag”).<sup>56</sup>

However, the songwriters were also intentional about fusing this tradition with the new, diverse musical influences to create a new genre for a new era. As Konrad Wolf explains:

Growing up under the conditions of developed socialism, the young generation in the sixties and seventies created a new type of song and new ways of dealing with it. The self and the world, everyday life and politics, entertainment and agitprop merged into a new unity. National traditions were learned from (particularly Brecht, Eisler, Busch), and international developments served as suggestions (Hootenanny, Beat).<sup>57</sup>

In addition to inheriting the form and function of the old Massenlieder, the songwriters of the Singebewegung mirrored the GDR’s Massenlied songbooks by drawing from a wide array of influences, spanning all manner of cultures,

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<sup>53</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 35.

<sup>54</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 5. “Wir müssen erreichen, dass das politische Lied unter den neuen Bedingungen unseres Kampfes (die natürlich andere sind als zu der Zeit, wo noch auf den Barrikaden, an den Fronten oder in der Illegalität gekämpft wurde) einen Platz im Alltag findet, genau den Nerv der Leute, ihre Emotionen trifft und ans Bewusstsein appelliert.”

<sup>56</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 56.

<sup>57</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 8. “Unter den Bedingungen des entwickelten Sozialismus aufwachsen, schuf sich die junge Generation in den sechziger und siebziger Jahren einen neuen Liedtyp und neue Formen des Umgangs damit. Ich und die Welt, Alltag und Politik, Unterhaltung und Agitprop gingen darin eine neuartige Einheit ein. Aus der nationalen Tradition wurde gelernt (insbesondere Brecht, Eisler, Busch), internationale Entwicklungen dienten als Anregungen (Hootenanny, Beat).”

languages and genres. To name a few examples: songwriters wrote "He Li Lee Lo," a ditty about the Singebewegung to the melody of a folk tune from the Bahamas,<sup>58</sup> "Olympialied," a song mocking America's boycott of the Moscow Olympics to the melody of a Soviet song from the 1920s,<sup>59</sup> put their own spin on "We Shall Overcome,"<sup>60</sup> covered the Italian communist anthem "Bandiera Rossa" with extra verses (in German) about the 1919 Spartacist uprising and (in English) the foundation of the American communist party that same year, and even composed an ode to Bob Dylan which lamented that the world had not heeded his calls for world peace.<sup>61</sup>

When describing the political and cultural context of their work, Singebewegung artists drew connections to and expressed solidarity with movements as diverse as the American civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam War protests, the fight against fascism in Greece, and the Chilean Revolution.<sup>62</sup> Young songwriters viewed their socialist ideology in a global context and placed themselves in conversation with anti-imperialist and anti-fascist movements across the globe. Just as the compilers of the canon of GDR Massenlieder collected songs of geographically and temporally diverse origin—any song could become a Massenlied, as long as its lyrics and themes were conducive to propaganda—so too, did the songwriters of the Singebewegung synthesize the global developments of the 1960s and 70s into their repertoire in order to craft political songs which spoke to their time.

By the late 1970s, the output of the Singebewegung was inducted into the SED's official canon of Massenlieder. In addition to being disseminated into the GDR through records, radio and live performances, the songs of the Singebewegung were published in the FDJ youth magazine *Neues Leben* (New Life) and in the state-sponsored songbooks themselves after 1979.<sup>63</sup> In this way, the Singebewegung's repertoire—a body of work inspired by the Massenlieder that young people had grown up singing in the FDJ—entered the FDJ songbooks of the next generation.

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<sup>58</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 97.

<sup>59</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 89.

<sup>61</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 302.

<sup>62</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 38.

<sup>63</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 257-258. See also DDR *Konkret: Lieder der Singebewegung*, 1978.

### The Tradition of “Mass Singing” as a Form of Indoctrination

The political value of the *Massenlied* lay not only in its lyrical content, but in the application of “mass singing” for community-building and “political education.” The practice of communal singing as a means of fostering solidarity and political engagement had been a part of German political and cultural life since the early 20th century.<sup>64</sup> Singing was used as a tool of political indoctrination by youth organizations and at official state functions in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany. The GDR was not unique in using a cultural apparatus to enact its agenda; rather, it simply carried the tradition into a new era.<sup>65</sup>

GDR ideologues harbored a sincere conviction in the power of mass singing.<sup>66</sup> It correlated well with their conviction that music should “contribute to the upbringing of a new kind of human being” and that “the ‘socialist personality’ must accept a subordinate role to the collective, and complete the metamorphosis ‘from I to we.’”<sup>67</sup> To this end, as discussed previously, group singing of propaganda songs took place in schools, the army, the FDJ, at state-sponsored events and in other community spaces.<sup>68</sup> In particular, ideologues were interested in the idea of a choir as a “collective” that could foster socialist art and cultivate socialist personalities simultaneously. A speech by Wolfgang Beyreuther, an executive board member of the Free German Trade Union Federation interested in promoting amateur singing groups within companies, demonstrates this idea.<sup>69</sup>

We address the following questions to [choir] members and their leaders: Is the artistic activity in the choir closely linked to the political and economic tasks in the company, in the residential areas and in our fully cooperative villages? Do the choirs support the struggle of workers and farmers to fulfill their production plans? Does their repertoire reflect the newness of our socialist life? Do they support the movement to work, learn and live in

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<sup>64</sup> Freitag, “Alles Singt Oder Das Ende Vom Lied?” 50.

<sup>65</sup> Freitag, “Alles Singt Oder Das Ende Vom Lied?” 49-50.

<sup>66</sup> Brauer, “Feeling Political by Collective Singing.”

<sup>67</sup> Rauhut, “Conflicting Identities,” 56. Similar policies of socialist personality-building through social policy were common in Marxist-Leninist states.

<sup>68</sup> Robb, “Political Song in the GDR,” 239.

<sup>69</sup> This speech was given at the “First Congress of the socialist singer movement, from the 1st to 4th of December 1960 in Leipzig,” (1. Kongress der sozialistischen Sän-gerbewegung vom 1. bis 4. Dezember 1960 in Leipzig).



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a socialist way to help shape the spiritual face of socialist man?<sup>70</sup>

The Singebewegung provided a perfect vehicle for shaping a community through collective singing. GDR Minister of Culture Klaus Gysi spoke of the Singeklubs as fulfilling “the need of young people, especially working class youth, to get involved in shaping socialist cultural life in their residential areas.”<sup>71</sup> Although part of the purpose of the Singebewegung as prescribed by the FDJ was to produce new songs (“*DDR-Konkret*”), its primary purpose lay in its social engineering aspect. (Recall that the Singebewegung comprised two components: professional ensembles like the Oktoberklub, and local “dilettante” social clubs. The majority of Singeklubs were the latter.)

Singeklubs were seen not only as a tool of local community-building, however, but also as capable of shaping the “socialist personality” on an individual level. An article by scholar Heinz Tosch at the Department of Marxist-Leninist Cultural and Art Studies at the state-run Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED illustrates this view. Tosch declares: “The singing clubs are, above all, a form of personality development for young people.”<sup>72</sup> The

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<sup>70</sup> Wolfgang Beyreuthers, “Die Sangerbewegung Mit Neuem Leben Verbinden,” in *Dokumente Zur Kunst-, Literatur- Und Kulturpolitik Der SED*, ed. Elimar Schubbe, (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1984), 691. “Wir richten daher an die Gruppenmitglieder und ihre Leiter folgende Fragen: Ist die kunstlerische Tatigkeit im Chor eng verbunden mit den politischen und okonomischen Aufgaben im Betrieb, in den Wohngebieten und in unseren vollgenossenschaftlichen Dorfern? Unterstutzen die Chore den Kampf der Arbeiter und Genossenschaftsbauern um die Erfullung ihrer Produktionsplane? Widerspiegelt sich in ihrem Repertoire das Neue unseres sozialistischen Lebens? Unterstutzen sie die Bewegung, auf sozialistische Weise zu arbeiten, zu lernen und zu leben, um mitzuhelfen, das geistige Antlitz des sozialistischen Menschen zu formen?”

<sup>71</sup> Klaus Gysi, “Die nachsten Aufgaben zur Entwicklung der sozialistischen Nationalkultur in der DDR,” in *Dokumente Zur Kunst-, Literatur- Und Kulturpolitik Der SED*, ed. Elimar Schubbe, 1631. “Gemeinsam mit der Freien Deutschen Jugend mussen alle gesellschaftlichen und staatlichen Krafte noch starker darauf hinwirken, dass dem Bedurfnis der Jugend, insbesondere der Arbeiterjugend, sich in die Gestaltung des sozialistischen Kulturlebens im Wohngebiet einzuschalten, tatsachlich Rechnung getragen wird. Nach dem Beispiel der Singeklubs, der Klubs Junger Talente und der Klubs an kulturellen Einrichtungen sind durch die staatlichen und gesellschaftlichen Einrichtungen entsprechende Moglichkeiten und Voraussetzungen geschaffen, die es der Jugend gestatten, ihr kulturelles Leben vielseitig und differenziert selbst zu gestalten, die es der Jugend gestatten, ihr kulturelles Leben vielseitig und differenziert selbst zu gestalten.”

<sup>72</sup> “Die Singeklubs sind vor allem eine Form der Personlichkeitsbildung junger Menschen.”

article provides an exhaustive exploration of the Singeklubs' interpersonal dynamics with a scientific attention to detail, full of romantic notions of Singeklubs as a means of "organizing society" according to socialist ideas. He optimistically claims that "by developing personality values in the singing movement such as pronounced collectivity, creative behavior, self-discipline, willingness to make an effort, imagination, sociability, enjoyment and others, it undoubtedly contributes to the fact that man, as Marx described it in the broadest sense, enters as an 'other subject' from free time into the planned spiritual and material production of society."<sup>73</sup> Tosch admits that there is a conflict between the Singebewegung's social and artistic components, and that sometimes the output of amateurish Singeklubs lacks artistic merit—but ultimately, he concedes that this is not a major concern, as long as clubs are fulfilling their social function.

Whether or not Singeklubs initiated a socialist personality transformation in their participants is debatable. However, it is evident that the Singebewegung attracted many young people for social and ideological reasons, not just an interest in singing. As Tosch observes: "Quite a few young people gave priority to political and other interests that initially had nothing to do with singing."<sup>74</sup> Many young people said they joined the club because of a desire to get politically involved, or to be "among like-minded friends"<sup>75</sup> and to "feel validated in the club – I can express my opinion here."<sup>76</sup>

In the 1982 anthology *Lieder und Leute: die Singebewegung der FDJ* (Songs and People: The Singing Movement of the FDJ), a collection of essays, interviews and ephemera compiled by Singebewegung members, numerous participants express the opinion that the most important aspects of the Singeklubs were

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<sup>73</sup> Heinz Tosch, "Singeklubs der Freien Deutsche Jugend und Sozialistische Persönlichkeitsbildung," in *Erkundung der Gegenwart: Künste in unserer Zeit*, (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1976), 280. "Indem sich in der Singebewegung Persönlichkeitswerte herausbilden, wie eine ausgeprägte Kollektivität, schöpferisches Verhalten, Selbstdisziplin, Bereitschaft zur Anstrengung, Phantasie, Kontaktfreudigkeit, Genussfähigkeit und andere, trägt sie unbedingt dazu bei, dass der Mensch, wie Marx dies im weitesten Sinne darstellte, als ein 'andres Subjekt' aus der freien Zeit in die planmäßige geistige und materielle Produktion der Gesellschaft eintritt."

<sup>74</sup> "Nicht wenige junge Leute gaben politischen und anderen Interessen den Vorrang die mit Gesang zunächst nichts zu tun haben[.]"

<sup>75</sup> "Ich bin unter Freunden, Gleichgesinnten"

<sup>76</sup> Tosch, "Singeklubs der Freien Deutsche Jugend," 286. "Ich fühle mich im Klub bestätigt – kann hier meine Meinung sagen."

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their social and political elements.<sup>77</sup> Many participants recall that their ensembles were dilettantish and most of them were amateur artists, but that was no matter: the essential components of a *Singeklub* are “the folksiness, vitality and joy in performing, the *joie de vivre*, and the certainty of victory.”<sup>78</sup> Testimonials from individuals expressing these views indicate that the state’s goal of fostering a politicized community through collective singing more or less became reality in various small communities, even though it never caught on in GDR society at large. Thus, the GDR succeeded in creating a small subculture of enthusiastic young socialist musicians, but the movement never achieved its intended long-term cultural impact.

**The Cultivation of Pro-State Art**

The concept of a state-controlled subgenre of pop music with lyrics containing explicit propaganda may sound peculiar to capitalist ears. However, it reflected long-established traditions of state patronage of political art in the GDR. Since its inception, the GDR had been in search of a “socialist national culture.” As such, it was eager to ensure the production of art which reflected its self-image as the “workers’ and peasants state” and supported the *Aufbau des Sozialismus* (building-up of socialism) and an *antifaschistische-demokratische Erneuerung* (antifascist-democratic renewal).<sup>79</sup> The state targeted art that was seen as contrary to these ideals, and policed art through official decrees: for example, the notorious “Formalismus-Plenum” of 1951 denounced “formalism”—a broad category generally defined as the antithesis of socialist realism, and encompassing “most of the modernist movements of the first decades of the twentieth century.”<sup>80</sup> The plenum decreed it a symbol of “Western decadence,” and demanded that only art in the style of “socialist realism” be produced.<sup>81</sup>

The SED’s directives were not only reactive, however: they also actively promoted art that contained favored themes. The state undertook numerous initiatives to support *Volkskunstgruppen* (folk art groups) among working people and in “work brigades” as part of their master plan for “the further development of the socialist consciousness of the working class.”<sup>82</sup> One specific cultur-

<sup>77</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*.

<sup>78</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 30.

<sup>79</sup> Maas and Reszel, “Whatever Happened to...,” 267.

<sup>80</sup> David G. Tompkins, “The Rise and Decline of Socialist Realism in Music,” in *Composing the Party Line*, (Purdue, 2013), 15-93.

<sup>81</sup> Köster, *Musik-Zeit-Geschehen*, 67.

<sup>82</sup> Kurt Hager, “Grundfragen des geistigen Lebens im Sozialismus,” in *Dokumente*

al policy directive, which somewhat mirrors the Singebewegung, was the 1958 “Bitterfelder Weg.” Spurred on by the motto “Pick up your pen, buddy, the socialist nationalist literature needs you!”<sup>83</sup> artists and writers of the working class were encouraged to produce art that reflected a “socialist national culture” and were provided with the infrastructure to do so.<sup>84</sup> Musicians were no strangers to state patronage, either: there were so many official ceremonies that called for pro-state music that “there was always enough work for musicians,” provided they were willing to conform to the party line.<sup>85</sup>

The *DDR-Konkret* project—the component of the Singebewegung which involved writing and performing original songs—was a quintessential example of the SED’s cultivation of pro-state art. Heinz Tosch’s essay illustrates how thoroughly party ideologues scrutinized the text of the *DDR-Konkret* songs, carefully considering lyrical minutiae to ensure the songs expressed the optimal political message:

[Questions like] “Is it enough to simply be ‘against’? Isn’t some of what we sing simply pacifism?” were asked. And the discussions about songs suddenly turned into conversations about philosophy, world views, attitudes and thought processes. The search began for our own traditions, our own problems, our own ways of expressing ourselves.<sup>86</sup>

The songwriting process was controlled by means of regular “workshops” administered by FDJ functionaries, who oversaw every part of the songwriting project, and which took place in *Singezentren* (singing centers) established for this purpose.<sup>87</sup> The Singebewegung also established a network of “advisors,” the

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*Zur Kunst-, Literatur- Und Kulturpolitik Der SED*, ed. Elimar Schubbe, 1452. “die weitere Entwicklung des sozialistischen Bewusstseins der Arbeiterklasse”

<sup>83</sup> “Greif zur Feder, Kumpel, die sozialistische deutsche Nationalkultur braucht dich!”

<sup>84</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 106.

<sup>85</sup> Maas and Reszel, “Whatever Happened to...,” 268-269.

<sup>86</sup> Tosch, “Singeclubs der Freien Deutsche Jugend,” 273. “Genügt es, einfach dagegen zu sein? Ist nicht manches, was wir da singe, schlichtweg Pazifismus?” wurde gefragt. Und aus den Diskussionen um Lieder entstanden plötzlich Gespräche um Philosophie, um Weltanschauung, um Haltung, um Denkprozesse. Es begann die Suche nach unseren eigenen Traditionen, nach unseren eigenen Problemen, nach unseren eigenen Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten. Der Streit um die Inhalte, die Verantwortung, die junge Leute füreinander übernahmen, und das Engagement für die Sache formte die Persönlichkeit und ihre Einsichten.”

<sup>87</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 266-268.

highest group of which comprised an honorary organ of the Cultural Department of the Central Council of the FDJ, a body which consisted of both functionaries and established GDR musicians who lent their credibility and expertise to young musicians.<sup>88</sup> This ensured full FDJ control over all Singebewegung material.

An in-depth textual analysis of the output of the Singebewegung lies outside the scope of this essay, but even a cursory listen to the discography of Singeklubs such as Oktoberklub and Jahrgang 49 makes it apparent that their works were the epitome of pro-state art, espousing the virtues of socialism, internationalism, and unflinching patriotism towards the workers' and peasants' state. This ensured a steady career for the professional Singeklubs, who performed their "*DDR-Konkrete*" songs at all manner of official state celebrations, including the annual "Festival of Political Song," the "30th Anniversary of the *Befreiung*,"<sup>89</sup> the "450th Anniversary of the German Peasants' War,"<sup>90</sup> and even Erich Honecker's birthday celebration.<sup>91</sup>

### **The Singebewegung as a "Pressure Valve" for Youth Music Culture**

The GDR spent much of the 1950s and 60s at war with Western music. As former Singebewegung participant Bernd Roth recalls, "[In] the fifties and sixties, the GDR didn't have a lot to offer young people. A lot of things were lacking and there were no discotheques. In the West, the flower power movement and bands like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones emerged at around the same time. People were eager for something new like that, but none of that was allowed in the East."<sup>92</sup> Indeed, genres such as rock 'n' roll, Beat, and jazz were at various points viewed by the government as representative of "capitalist

<sup>88</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 264.

<sup>89</sup> "Liberation," the East German term for Nazi Germany's defeat by the USSR.

<sup>90</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 264.

<sup>91</sup> Robb, "Political Song in the GDR," 233.

<sup>92</sup> Bernd Roth, "Ich Bin Völlig Ausgegrenzt," Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, April 24, 2020, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutschlandarchiv/308228/ich-bin-voellig-ausgegrenzt/>. "In der Nachkriegszeit, in den Fünfziger- und Sechzigerjahren, hatte die DDR jungen Leuten nicht viel zu bieten. Es mangelte an vielem und es gab keine Diskotheken. Im Westen entstanden zu ungefähr der gleichen Zeit die Flower-Power-Bewegung und Bands wie die Beatles und die Rolling Stones. Die Leute waren gierig auf so etwas Neues, aber im Osten war das alles nicht erlaubt. Es wurden zwar Ostbands gegründet, aber, ich sag das einfach mal so, die haben im Grunde genommen die West-Musik gecouvert."

decadence” and “the cultural barbarism of American imperialism.”<sup>93</sup> The SED’s worst fears about rock’s subversive influences on the youth were seemingly confirmed when, in 1965, some 2,500 youths protested against the restrictions on Beat music with a violent protest later dubbed the “Leipzig Beat Riots,” which spooked the SED with its resemblance to the infamous workers’ revolt of June 17, 1953.<sup>94</sup> Fearing the revolutionary potential of the Beat movement, the SED henceforth doubled down on its repression of the genre.<sup>95</sup>

Toward the end of the 1960s, however, the state began a cautious detente with Western popular music. As the popularity of *Beatmusik* endured in East Germany and underground music scenes continued to thrive despite government restrictions, it became clear that official decrees were powerless against young people’s enthusiasm.<sup>96</sup> The state began adopting a conciliatory attitude, easing its repressive measures toward subversive music genres while keeping a tight leash on them and skillfully repurposing them to suit their own goals.<sup>97</sup> Out of necessity, the state began taking measures to integrate beat and rock music into the cultural-political landscape of the GDR by monopolizing and promoting a rock music industry of its own, ensuring the production of a brand of homegrown GDR rock that accorded with their sensibilities.<sup>98</sup> As historian Michael Rauhut summarizes: “Sooner or later, even the trends [the state] had fought most vehemently were authorized and embraced by the bureaucracy’s tentacled arms; it had simply become impossible to ignore their real importance in everyday life. In retrospect, the relationship between popular music and state power could be described as a permanent back and forth, as a pendulum swing between aversion, prohibition, and recognition.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Maas and Reszel, “Whatever Happened to...,” 267.

<sup>94</sup> Holtsträter, “Beatmusik.”

<sup>95</sup> Holtsträter, “Beatmusik.” This culminated in the aforementioned 11th plenum of the SED Central Committee in December 1965 where chairman Walter Ulbricht uttered the infamous words: “Ist es denn wirklich so, dass wir jeden Dreck, der vom Westen kommt, kopieren müssen? Ich denke, Genossen, mit der Monotonie des ‘yeah, yeah, yeah’ und wie das alles heißt, sollte man doch Schluß machen.” [“Is it really the case that we have to copy every piece of dirt that comes from the West? I think, comrades, we should put an end to the monotony of ‘yeah, yeah, yeah’ and whatever it’s called.”]

<sup>96</sup> Rauhut, “Conflicting Identities,” 49.

<sup>97</sup> Katharine White, “East Germany’s Red Woodstock,” *Central European History* 51, no. 4 (Dec. 2018): 603.

<sup>98</sup> Maas and Reszel, “Whatever Happened to...”

<sup>99</sup> Rauhut, “Conflicting Identities,” 50. These developments did not represent a

The Singebewegung was a prime encapsulation of the GDR's attempt to harness Western musical influences for their own political purposes. Party functionaries had their finger on the pulse of youth music cultures, and were well aware of youth interest in the American folk revival, guitar-based music, and "the Beat."<sup>100</sup> The SED made use of this knowledge and crafted the infrastructure of the Singebewegung as strategically as possible in order to provide, as former Singeklub participant Bernd Roth described, a "pressure valve" for youth culture that could simultaneously "promote socialist cultural policy."<sup>101</sup>

Although the American folk revival was not as high up on the SED hit list as Beat music, it was also viewed with suspicion and seen as having subversive potential.<sup>102</sup> The Singebewegung was an explicit effort to co-opt this genre—hastily taking advantage of the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and pacifist undertones of the folk revival genre to steer it in the direction of pro-state propaganda, before its anti-establishment themes could be turned against the GDR and spawn protest songs against the dictatorship.<sup>103</sup> Of course, the government was far from able to quell all musical rebellion by channeling it into the Singebewegung. The ranks of the youth opposition in the GDR continued to grow, rejecting the Singebewegung and scorning its propagandistic ditties. However, among those youths who were loyal to the GDR and considered themselves, in the words of Oktoberklub member Reinhold Andert, "one hundred percent red, honestly convinced,"<sup>104</sup> the movement found enthusiastic participants.<sup>105</sup>

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linear trajectory towards greater tolerance for subversive genres of music, however. The repression of unorthodox music genres ebbed and flowed, until in the 70s and 80s, this accelerated into an outright witch-hunt: as more "subversive" youth cultures associated with Western music genres sprang up, the Stasi began waging a vicious campaign of persecution and espionage against them, viewing them as "politically negative" and "asocial" elements who posed a threat to the state. See Rauhut, "Conflicting Identities," 56.

<sup>100</sup> Tosch, "Singeklubs der Freien Deutsche Jugend," 269.

<sup>101</sup> Roth, "Ich Bin Völlig Ausgegrenzt." "Die FDJ hat daraufhin die Singebewegung ins Leben gerufen, als eine Art Ventil und um die Jugendkultur zu kanalisieren. Mit den Singeklubs sollte die sozialistische Kulturpolitik gefördert werden."

<sup>102</sup> Frühbrodt, "Hartmut König."

<sup>103</sup> Tosch, "Singeklubs der Freien Deutsche Jugend," 270.

<sup>104</sup> "... hundertprozentig rot, überzeugt, ehrlich."

<sup>105</sup> Kirchenwitz, "Singebewegung."

### Epilogue

The Singebewegung reached its zenith with performances in 1973 at the “X. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten” (“Tenth World Festival of Youth and Students”), a massive state-sponsored event which brought thousands of youths from the Eastern Bloc to East Berlin for nine days of festivities under the banner of “anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship.”<sup>106</sup> Hosted by the FDJ, this event was a successful venture, and it encapsulated the simultaneously cosmopolitan and bombastically propagandistic spirit of the Singebewegung.<sup>107</sup> After this point, however, the unresolvable tensions inherent in a state-controlled artistic movement created the conditions for the Singebewegung’s decline. When dissident singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann was expatriated in 1976—a watershed event which sent the artistic world of the GDR spiraling into crisis and “destroyed artists’ trust in the political leadership”—the musicians of the Singebewegung declined to stand in solidarity with Biermann.<sup>108</sup> This tarnished their reputation among critical-minded artists, who already viewed them as sell-outs whose repertoire was nothing but propagandistic window-dressing for a corrupt regime.<sup>109</sup>

Eventually, as the Singeklubs receded into irrelevance, other musical subcultures associated with resistance to the GDR dictatorship such as punk and the *Bluesmessen* (blues masses) rose to prominence.<sup>110</sup> Many members of the Singebewegung “found their critical voices” during this period and distanced themselves from their erstwhile agitprop ensembles, eventually maturing into the “the critically-minded *Liedermacher*” who gained cultural relevance in the 1980s.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, the GDR’s carefully cultivated “heritage” of folk song, previously the domain of the Oktoberklub and its ilk, passed into the hands of new groups such as Folkländer, Wacholder and Liedehrlich, who built on the oppositional elements of the tradition and “invert[ed] it in such a way as to criticize the GDR,” thereby joining the ranks of the musical resistance.<sup>112</sup> The rise of the opposition in music was both a symptom of, and a contributing factor to,

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<sup>106</sup> White, “East Germany’s Red Woodstock,” 585.

<sup>107</sup> White, “East Germany’s Red Woodstock.”

<sup>108</sup> Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen*, 113.

<sup>109</sup> Beyer, “Der Staat Singt Mit.”

<sup>110</sup> Rauhut, “Conflicting Identities,” 55.

<sup>111</sup> Robb, “Political Song in the GDR,” 235.

<sup>112</sup> Robb, “Political Song in the GDR,” 238; Kirchenwitz, “Singebewegung.”



the decline and eventual toppling of the East German regime.<sup>113</sup>

With the fall of the GDR, the Singebewegung became obsolete. The Oktoberklub's vast repertoire of propaganda anthems for a state that no longer exists has become anachronistic, relegated to the doldrums of *Ostalgie* ("nostalgia for the East.") Listening to songs like the Oktoberklub's "Da sind wir aber immer noch" ("But we are still here") evokes a melancholic irony now that the state which it praises has vanished from the map. Yet this obscure episode of music history encapsulates the confluence of artistic influences, culture wars and political tensions that shaped East Germany's musical landscape in the 1960s and 70s. The SED worked tirelessly to promote the singing of "mass songs," mold its youth into "socialist personalities" through agitprop and camaraderie, and micromanage all aspects of its musical output, all while walking a cautious tightrope between tolerating and censoring allegedly subversive Western musical trends.

With the benefit of hindsight, these efforts were destined to fail: demands for freedom in the musical world would gather steam, and this tightrope would snap with the fall of the Berlin Wall. But the Singebewegung is a reminder that the toppling of an out-of-touch, oppressive state is not the only story which GDR music history has to tell. At the 1973 Weltfestspiele, a stadium crowd clapped and sang along to the Oktoberklub's "Wir sind überall": "We are everywhere on the earth. ... Shine, red star, and give me courage! Shine, my star, far and wide!"<sup>114</sup> For some young East Germans—between conformity and deviance, experimentation and tradition, sincerity and propaganda—a red star shone briefly and brightly as they found their niche making music for the state.

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<sup>113</sup> Rauhut, "Conflicting Identities," 52.

<sup>114</sup> Kirchenwitz and Krüger, *Lieder und Leute*, 31. "Wir sind überall auf der Erde. Auf der Erde leuchtet ein Stern, leuchtet mein Stern. ... Leucht, roter Stern, und gib mir Mut. Leuchte, mein Stern, weit hinaus!"

ANNIKA VAUGHAN

## The Stories That Shape History

The Formation of the Pirate Myth in

*A General History of the Pyrates*

The pirate's tale has never struggled to capture our attention. In particular, modern culture holds a fascination with rediscovering the pirate: searching for a swashbuckler with more depth than kitschy Halloween costumes and acknowledging diverse historical realities that stretch back to antiquity. However, there remains a very specific and popular image of the pirate that exists beyond this nuanced understanding. There is a perception of how he looks, how he acts, and what his world feels like. Imagine the black fabric of the jolly roger, streaming from a masthead. Feel the roll of a ship beneath you and smell the brine of the sea. It's easy, in turn, to picture the dashing buccaneer who promises the thrill of dangerous adventure. This is the expectation that *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl* subverts when the audience first meets Captain Jack Sparrow. Before the camera pans down to his sad, sinking lifeboat, triumphant music swells as Sparrow poses at the top of a mast with wind whipping through his dreadlocks and a tropical sky over his shoulder. "This," says the film, "is a pirate."<sup>1</sup> That's what gives the realization of his plight such comedy: the filmmakers understand their audience's image of the pirate and play against that conception perfectly. This image relies on an archetype that blends historical reality and fiction together. I will evaluate the origins of this archetype, the historical context that gave birth to it, and how it still forms the backbone of the modern fictional swashbuckler.

Perhaps the most fundamental source concerning the popular pirate is *A General History of the Pyrates*, first published in 1724 in London under the name Captain Charles Johnson. *A General History* was one of the first works to publicize, romanticize, and mythologize the lives, deaths, and exploits of the infa-

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<sup>1</sup> Gore Verbinski, dir. *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl* (Burbank, California: Walt Disney Pictures, 2003), Digital, 0:08:50.

mous Anglo-Caribbean pirates who operated in the early eighteenth century. In a voice of uncompromising authority, each chapter relays both major events and minute details about specific pirates. Headliners include Edward Teach (Blackbeard), Bartholomew Roberts (Black Bart), and John Rackham (Calico Jack). Despite the source's pretense of historical accuracy, recent scholarly work has demonstrated the erroneous and dramatized reality of *A General History's* pirate stories.<sup>2</sup>

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw the publication of a myriad of non-fiction voyage-narratives within the British Isles. William Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697) details treacherous South Pacific crossings. Alexander Esquemeling's *Buccaneers of America* (1684) follows Welshman Henry Morgan's privateering reign of terror throughout the Spanish Main. These are both notable early installments of the English voyage-narrative genre that swept through Great Britain over the following century and kept readers enthralled.<sup>3</sup> When *A General History* entered the literary scene in 1724, fictional voyage-narratives were rising in popularity alongside their non-fiction counterparts, seeking to satisfy an audience hungry for more trans-oceanic adventure. Captain Charles Johnson, the author of *A General History*, is most commonly thought to be a pseudonym of one of these fictional voyage-narrative authors, Englishman Daniel Defoe. In 1719, Defoe published *The Strange Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, which was financially successful and avidly read throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Defoe's literary background as the author of *Robinson Crusoe* offers good evidence to suggest him as the author of *A General History*. While many details of *A General History* can be corroborated with surviving historical sources (such as reports of piracy, court transcripts, and journals), the voice that weaves these facts together is also concerned with the excitement of the story, which indicates that the author had a talent for both the literary and the historical.<sup>5</sup> His choice to publish under the pseudonym "Captain Charles Johnson" also serves a purpose: distancing *A General History* from his

<sup>2</sup> Noel Chevalier, "Creative Accounting: Alternative Facts in the History of the Pirate, John Gow," *Humanities* 9, no. 2 (2020): 2; Manuel Schonhorn, "Editor's Introduction," in *A General History of the Pyrates*, (Garden City: Dover Publications Inc., 1999), xxxiii.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea-narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> John Richetti, *The Life of Daniel Defoe: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), vii.

<sup>5</sup> Schonhorn, "Editor's Introduction," in *General History*, xxxiv-xxxv.

reputation as a novelist offered Defoe the best of both sides of the voyage-narrative genre: the freedom to craft a story that would be perfectly catered to a non-seafaring audience while also carrying the authority of a purportedly true, biographical account.

Historian Matthew Restall suggests that historical myths may be understood as collections of “misconceptions and convenient fictions” about larger groups or events.<sup>6</sup> A historical myth may also be considered as a popular story that is accepted at a societal level, and as with many stories, carries both truth and fiction. To understand Defoe’s potential influences and motivations when writing *A General History*, one must consider the greater historical moment that surrounded him. In the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the British Empire succeeded in implementing more defined legal systems for categorizing and prosecuting piracy. It captured and executed hundreds of individuals convicted of piracy from the years 1717 to 1726.<sup>7</sup> This wave of pirates operated differently from earlier versions of Anglo-Caribbean piracy. Unlike their predecessors, these pirates divorced themselves almost unanimously from religious and stately loyalties, and in so doing they created a distinctly piratical identity for their group.<sup>8</sup> This rendered the last Anglo-Caribbean pirates uniquely vulnerable to coordinated elimination from the Empire.<sup>9</sup>

This essay will go beyond challenging or debunking the historical reliability of *A General History* and will instead seek to understand the undeniable role it has played in creating the mythological pirate figure. I will examine the myth-making that is at play in these narratives and investigate the rationale for Defoe’s deviations from and adherence to different aspects of his subjects. I argue that his accounts of characters such as Edward Low, Bartholomew Roberts, and Edward Teach form the foundation of our modern popular pirate. This archetype is rooted in three core myths: the pirate is dastardly, the pirate is democratic, and the pirate is dramatic. This triad, crafted to sell the Anglo-Caribbean pirate fantasy to an audience of eighteenth century English readers, still governs

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), xi.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Norton, “Classification and Coercion: The Destruction of Piracy in the English Maritime System,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 119, no. 6 (May 2014): 1538, 1572-73.

<sup>8</sup> Kris Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Global Piracy on the High Seas, 1500-1750* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 176.

<sup>9</sup> Norton, “Classification and Coercion,” 1571.

modern media's portrayal of pirates and the escapism they provide today. These myths constitute the archetypal pirate. His different aspects appear throughout the stories analyzed within this essay, both in modern and historical examples.<sup>10</sup> As these pirates were abruptly committed to memory, Defoe capitalized on the vacuum they left behind in the Western societal imagination and sold his readers an invented memory of the swashbuckling fantasy.

### A Pirate is Dastardly

Everyone knows that the pirate is a vindictive criminal. He makes his victims walk the plank, he maroons them, and if he's having a bad day, he might just keelhaul them. In January of 2014, the first episode of the television show *Black Sails* aired on the American cable network Starz. Today, *Black Sails* boasts three Primetime Emmy Awards and a considerable fanbase as an example of memorable scriptwriting, storytelling and piratical adventure. The show follows the fictional Captain James Flint and a young Long John Silver in a modern prequel to Robert Louis Stevenson's novel about the selfsame characters: *Treasure Island* (1883). From its very first moments of screen time, *Black Sails* delights in the on-screen cruelty of its pirates. The pilot episode begins *in media res* with a pirate attack that builds from tense and anticipatory to visceral and violent with very few words, letting the audience fixate on the blood and steel flashing across the screen. The first few moments are perhaps the most crucial in any work of film for establishing tone and hooking viewers, and *Black Sails'* choice here suggests graphic brutality as a core piece of the pirate story which the filmmakers are promising.<sup>11</sup> A pirate's dastardly deeds are a necessary part of his status as a proper buccaneer in the eyes of the popular imagination, and this is a truth that traces its ancestry to *A General History*.

*A General History* is very intentional in the types of violence it highlights to create the archetypal pirate. The narrative tends to focus on intimate displays of interpersonal shipboard violence. A modern audience will recognize walking the plank, marooning, and keelhauling as textbook examples of piratical punishments. Notably, none of these punishments are enacted on a large scale. At

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<sup>10</sup> My gendering of the archetypal pirate is not to erase the historical evidence for non-male participants in Anglo-Caribbean piracy. Pirates such as Anne Bonny and Mary Read are notable as women pirates described in *A General History* because of their anomalous nonconformity to the expected masculine pirate. So, I argue that the archetypal pirate, in this context, is a fundamentally male figure.

<sup>11</sup> *Black Sails*, season 1, episode 1, "I," created by Robert Levine and Jonathan E. Steinberg, aired January 24, 2014, Starz, Digital, 0:00:12.

most, a mutinous crew or a group of problematic rebels might all suffer such a fate together. For example, the pirate Edward England, upon encountering his old merchant-marine captain, takes great delight in beating and lashing him with the help of his crewmates before finally executing the man with a pistol shot when boredom sets in.<sup>12</sup> *A General History* also reports that Edward Teach, when asked why he shot one of his officers through the leg over dinner, replied that if he did not kill one of them every now and then, the company would forget who he was.<sup>13</sup> The pirate's violence has a personal twist that renders his cruelty, while often lesser in scale, far more sadistic. It further develops his myth and colors him as an agent of destruction.

Perhaps the strongest example of the dastardly pirate is found within the tale of Englishman Edward Low. Low is defined by his cruelty from childhood, described as a prolific bully to smaller children. After raising a black flag and having "declared War against all the World" his violent career began in earnest.<sup>14</sup> Many of his crimes are relayed in a surprisingly anecdotal style, with some victims only being offered a sentence or two in allusion to their sufferings. After Low and his crew seize a French vessel and decide to light her aflame, Defoe writes:

They took all the Crew out of her, but the Cook, who, they said, being a greazy Fellow, would fry well in the Fire; so the poor Man was bound to the Main-Mast, and burnt in the ship, to the no small Diversion of Low and his Mirmidons.<sup>15</sup>

In this case, the entirety of this cook's excruciating fate is relegated to a few sentence fragments, which offers a sense of minimal importance to the whole event. The reader wonders how many other innocents met similar, unmentioned fates at the hands of this crew. Other accounts are more detailed in their descriptions of Low's brutality. For example, after capturing a Spanish vessel, the pirates spend several sentences murdering all the company and hunting down those who tried to swim away. Special attention is given to a single Spaniard who survives long enough to confront the pirates and beg them for quarters, at which point, "One of the Villains took hold of him, and said, God damn him, he would give him good Quarters presently, and made the poor *Spaniard* kneel down on his Knees, then taking his Fusil, put the Muzzle of it into his Mouth,

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<sup>12</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 115.

<sup>13</sup> Defoe, 84.

<sup>14</sup> Defoe, 318-19.

<sup>15</sup> Defoe, 323.

and fired down his Throat.”<sup>16</sup>

Both the detailed and broad examples serve Low’s dastardly characterization. The anecdotes offer disturbing normalcy to the violence of Low’s world, while the more detailed storytelling inspires stronger feelings of disgust and fear from the reader. A biography filled with little cruelties such as these paints a terrifying image of a man who seems more akin to a monster, in league with a rabble of criminals who all together “make Mischief their Sport, Cruelty their Delight, and damning of Souls their constant Employment.”<sup>17</sup> Ascertaining the reality of Low’s personality is impossible, so perhaps the man was just as, if not more sadistic than *A General History* reports. However, the demonization of piracy has clear economic motivations that belie a purpose beyond historical veracity. To demonstrate this, consider another dastardly story that appears in *A General History*: the tale of Scottish pirate John Gow. Gow, referred to as Smith, first appears in the third edition of Volume I, published in 1725. Gow hailed from the Orkney Islands and engaged in piracy from November of 1724 to the beginning of February in 1725 before being captured, imprisoned, and finally executed on July 11, 1725.<sup>18</sup>

Gow’s tale evolved noticeably between different editions of *A General History*. In the third edition, his story is short, clumsy, and struggles to stand out in comparison to tales of Blackbeard or Henry Avery.<sup>19</sup> This was remedied in a 1728 rewrite of Gow’s story for a later edition, which greatly expanded upon his villainy. He was now reported to have been the mastermind of the mutiny which began his pirate career. This claim, taken from another newspaper covering the trial, directly conflicted with more substantiated facts about the mutiny. Perhaps the most striking change, however, comes from the new account of the rape of two girls and the murder of their mother which purportedly occurred on the banks of a small island in the Orkneys, just before Gow’s capture. There is no source that corroborates this set of facts, but the closest is a report stating that Gow’s crew abducted three women from their homes on the island, raped them, and eventually returned them to the shore.<sup>20</sup> In *A General History*, however, the women taken now number only two, they are suddenly sisters, and their mother is fatally pistol-whipped in their home by Gow’s boatswain as she begs for her

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<sup>16</sup> Defoe, 327.

<sup>17</sup> Defoe, 334.

<sup>18</sup> Chevalier, “Creative Accounting,” 4.

<sup>19</sup> Chevalier, 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> Chevalier, 8.

daughters to be spared.<sup>21</sup> This choice to include this account—dubious in the truth of its details—suggests that Defoe’s readers were indeed captivated by stories of piratical violence, an interest which inspired the bloodier rewrite of Gow’s narrative.<sup>22</sup>

As in the case of Edward Low, the truth of John Gow and his crew’s brutality will never be known for certain. However, *A General History’s* stories of cruelty were crafted with the intention to outrage and engage; as a result, the dastardly became one of the pirate’s archetypal tenets. These stories hold unmistakable weight in defining the pirate and his violence in a way that still underlies how he is represented and understood today through modern media such as *Black Sails*.

### A Pirate is Democratic

Let us return to 2003’s *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl*. When Elizabeth Swan (portrayed by Kiera Knightly) is attacked by pirates in her father’s manor, she screams out for parley. In accordance with a nebulously defined pirate honor code, she demands to be taken to their captain and given a chance to plead her case to him.<sup>23</sup> In many other scenarios, the sudden reveal of this pirate code would likely come across as frustratingly lazy, plot-convenient storytelling. However, in this instance, the filmmakers use their audience’s pre-existing ideas of the pirate to inform clever, efficient storytelling. That moment is successful because the audience already holds an understanding of a roughly democratic pirate culture. The mention of the pirate code isn’t introducing a new concept, it is affirming a well-known concept’s place in the film’s universe.

An investigation of the myths and history that inform the pirate code uncovers evidence for legal articles that existed on at least some Anglo-Caribbean pirate vessels. Evidence for these articles dates earlier than *A General History*. One such example of pirate articles is found within the 1684 voyage-narrative *Buccaneers of America*, first published in Dutch by Alexander Esquemeling. These articles were binding rules and expectations which, according to Esquemeling, Anglo-Caribbean pirates swore to when establishing a company. Items of the articles often included agreement on the salary of the captain, shipwright, and surgeon. They also clarified the expected compensations for lost limbs or other

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<sup>21</sup> Defoe, 365.

<sup>22</sup> Chevalier, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Verbinski, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl*, 0:34:21.



permanent wounds in both currency and enslaved individuals.<sup>24</sup> By the time Defoe began work on *A General History*, *Buccaneers of America* had been translated into several different languages and widely circulated.<sup>25</sup> This famous voyage-narrative and its discussion of pirate articles likely influenced *A General History*'s own pirate articles, though, notably, it has no mention of compensations being paid with enslaved people. The similarities and differences between voyage-narratives like *Buccaneers of America* and *A General History* also highlight the collaborative myth-making that contributed to early ideas of the popular pirate. Defoe was not creating his archetypal pirate from scratch; rather, he took advantage of contemporary work and preexisting ideas to empower his own stories.

*A General History*'s most detailed set of articles is in the account of the pirate Bartholomew Roberts, wherein Defoe outlines nine specific rules that made up part of the company's legal system. Defoe explains Captain Roberts' reasoning for the articles as "finding hitherto they had been but as a Rope of Sand, they formed a Set of Articles, to be signed and sworn to, for the better Conservation of their Society, and doing Justice to one another."<sup>26</sup> These rules included instructions for the division of shares after a prize was taken, mandating that "The Captain and Quarter-Master [were] to receive two Shares of a Prize; the Master, Boatswain, and Gunner, one Share and a half, and other Officers one and a Quarter." Another notable item concerned the settlement of disputes among members of the company, declaring "no striking one another on board, but every Man's Quarrels to be ended on Shore, at Sword and Pistol."<sup>27</sup>

This sense of structure and order introduces an interesting new dimension to the pirate. If he is simply a brutal, dastardly "villain," as *A General History* often calls him, then what place do these articles have in his culture? The pirate's roughness still certainly colors the articles—after all, the distributed prizes are stolen goods, and arguments are settled with public duels—but they offer a new perspective to his character. An examination of the pirate's democracy beyond his articles helps illuminate how this tenet informs the archetype. In his description of Captain Roberts' judicial council, Defoe blatantly critiques the English

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<sup>24</sup> Alexandre Olivier Esquemeling, *The Pirates of Panama or, The Buccaneers of America; a True Account of the Famous Adventures and Daring Deeds of Sir Henry Morgan and Other Notorious Freebooters of the Spanish Main*, ed. George Alfred Williams (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1914), 29.

<sup>25</sup> Esquemeling, *Buccaneers of America*, iv.

<sup>26</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 210.

<sup>27</sup> Defoe, 212.

legal system, writing:

Here was the Form of Justice kept up, which is as much as can be said of several other Courts, that have more Lawful Commissions for what they do.—Here was no feeing of Council, and bribing of Witnesses was a Custom not known among them, no packing of Juries, no torturing and wasting the sense of the Law, for bye Ends and Purposes, no puzzling or perplexing the Cause with unintelligible canting Terms, and useless Distinctions; nor was their Sessions burdened with numberless Officers, the Minister of Rapine and Extortion, with ill boding Aspects.<sup>28</sup>

Despite his clear disdain for the pirate's lawlessness, Defoe openly suggests that these thieves and murderers have a more impartial sense of legal proceedings than the systems that govern the lives of his readers.<sup>29</sup> In particular, he attacks the honor and righteousness of judges and jury officials. Perhaps here we find another reason for his authorial anonymity. This insult would be driven home among an English audience who read about and supported the many pirate executions of the early eighteenth century. Placing figures of authority morally beneath pirates suggests, alongside a potent insult, a longing for systems free of corrupt elites. Within *A General History*, some characters echo noticeably similar sentiments to Defoe's own political opinions. For example, Defoe reports that Mary Read delivered a scathing beatdown of those who cheat and extort before her execution. Where it not for the threat of hanging, she argues:

Every cowardly Fellow would turn Pyrate... That if it was put to the Choice of the Pyrate, they would not have the Punishment less than Death, the Fear of which kept some dastardly Rogues honest; that many of those who are now cheating the Widows and Orphans, and oppressing their poor neighbors, who have no Money to obtain Justice, would then rob at Sea.<sup>30</sup>

Not only does she suggest that these unfriendly actors, were they not cowards, would all become pirates, but she also places pirates in a morally superior position by declaring that pirates would rather have the threat of death looming over them than have to share the seas with those who rob their poor neighbors. There is a clear denouncement of those who have standing and take advantage of it to beat down upon the common folk. Defoe brands them as cowardly and

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<sup>28</sup> Defoe, 222.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Frohock, "Satire and Civil Governance in "A General History of the Pyrates (1724, 1726)," *The Eighteenth Century* 56, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 470.

<sup>30</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 159.

not cut out for the perils of piracy, undeserving of the opportunity for a better life at sea. The pirate's democracy exists to offer readers the escapist fantasy of a system where poverty and birthright do not determine their worth. Just as with the dastardly, this tenet has become a core piece of the archetypal pirate.

The popular imagination isn't the only space that has been influenced by *A General History's* democratic rhetoric. Academic circles have found themselves fascinated with the democratic pirate for nearly a century; Defoe's work has influenced decades of scholarly research to create a sense of authority behind claims of the pirate's democracy.<sup>31</sup> An early example of this interest can be found in the words of literary critic Malcolm Cowley, who argued in 1933 for the pirate as a revolutionary force that rebelled in ways reminiscent of the French Jacobins and was even supported, albeit privately, by most honest sailors.<sup>32</sup> More recently, in his 1987 book *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*, historian Marcus Rediker cites pirate articles as evidence for a democratic maritime system that intentionally defied the hierarchies of the Royal Navy and the merchant marine service. In an examination of the various articles concerning the distribution of plunder, Rediker describes the system of distributing shares as one of the most equitable to be found worldwide in the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Concerning the system of on-shore duels, Rediker finds that such a rule surely encouraged a cooperative ship-board environment by relegating conflicts to dockside.<sup>34</sup> Both of these points are in service of his larger argument, that "pirates express[ed] the collectivistic ethos of life at sea by the egalitarian and comradely distribution of life chances, the refusal to grant privilege or exemption from danger, and the just allocation of shares. Their notion of justice – among themselves and in their dealings with their class enemies – was indeed the foundation of their enterprise."<sup>35</sup> Rediker's most recurring citation for this argument is *A General History*.

Historian Mark Hanna discusses Rediker's conclusions in his essay "Well

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<sup>31</sup> Mark Hanna, "Well Behaved Pirates Seldom Make History: A Reevaluation of the Golden Age of English Piracy," in *Governing the Sea in the Early Modern Era: Essays in Honor of Robert C. Ritchie*, eds. Peter Mancall and Carole Shammas (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 2015), 132.

<sup>32</sup> Malcolm Cowley, quoted in Hanna, "Well Behaved Pirates Seldom Make History," 129-30.

<sup>33</sup> Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*, (Cambridge, 1987), 261-64.

<sup>34</sup> Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 265.

<sup>35</sup> Rediker, 287.

Behaved Pirates Seldom Make History: A Reevaluation of the Golden Age of English Piracy.” Hanna states that much of the analysis around the democracy of piracy has been colored by a pursuit of the political pirate.<sup>36</sup> He further argues that Rediker’s analysis of pirates aligns with a modern worldview by rejecting “nearly every form of early eighteenth century social inequality that modern readers find repulsive.”<sup>37</sup> Hanna questions the conclusion that Rediker draws, and calls for an examination and dismantling of the popular imagination’s pirate in academic circles.<sup>38</sup> A major issue surrounding arguments like Rediker’s is the tendency to rely on *A General History* as an accurate manifestation of the pirate.<sup>39</sup> It is crucial to understand the myriad ways in which Defoe’s pirate has fundamentally influenced not only the popular imagination, but also our body of scholarly work concerning Anglo-Caribbean piracy. In viewing *A General History* as literature that drew from voyage-narratives such as *Buccaneers of America* to sell its myth, we must reconsider the democratic pirate’s place in academia. Thankfully, historians like Hanna are calling attention to this in critiques of arguments such as Rediker’s.

Ultimately, the democratic pirate serves to provide readers with another avenue of escapism. Defoe uses him to critique the English political system and offer the dream of a meritocracy. In developing the pirate’s legal and moral systems, *A General History* invites readers to cast their imaginations far beyond their day-to-day lives in Georgian England. Perhaps pirate democracy lacked proto-marxist sentiment, but the suggestion of shipboard egalitarianism remains an undeniable aspect of the archetypal pirate.<sup>40</sup>

### A Pirate is Dramatic

This tenet is found in the triumphant swell of a pirate’s theme song, or in his dazzling-yet-rugged smile. A pirate’s dramatics are the magic that makes him a compelling protagonist despite the violence and dirtiness that are inherent to his profession: without the larger-than-life charisma, said violence is much harder to overlook and every pirate becomes as deplorable as Edward Low. Likewise, the pirate’s democracy is bland and bureaucratic without a rousing speech and a fiery glow in his eyes. The pirate’s dramatics shine through clearly in modern

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<sup>36</sup> Hanna, “Well Behaved Pirates Seldom Make History,” 130.

<sup>37</sup> Hanna, 129.

<sup>38</sup> Hanna, 130-32.

<sup>39</sup> Frohock, “Satire and Civil Governance,” 467-68.

<sup>40</sup> Frohock, 479.

pirate media. They are a necessary component alongside *Black Sails*' violence or *Pirates of the Caribbean*'s pirate codes. However, when it comes to the dramatic, no medium excels quite like the video game.

2013's *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, developed by Ubisoft Entertainment, revels in its dramatics through a gripping story trailer. The animated scene opens on the historical pirate Blackbeard, sitting in the darkened corner of a Caribbean tavern. He is spinning a yarn to eager listeners about a fearsome new pirate captain named Edward Kenway: the game's player character. Blackbeard asks, "can this new captain promise you a life of prizes, plunder, and adventure?"<sup>41</sup> Visuals of epic shipboard battles and glimpses of our enigmatic protagonist offer an enthusiastically affirmative answer. In conclusion, Blackbeard declares, "so, if it's fortune and adventure you seek, then Captain Edward Kenway's your man."<sup>42</sup> Adventure is the driving promise and *AC: Black Flag* is noteworthy in how it delivers on this promise. The passivity of reading is replaced with the direct action and control offered by a video game. The reader becomes the player who, in turn, becomes Edward Kenway. *AC: Black Flag*, and other similar titles, constitute a progression of Defoe's own vision.<sup>43</sup> Through *A General History*, he immortalized the pirate's adventurous derring-do and used it to draw the reader into the fantasy.

Blackbeard's appearance as the narrator in the *AC: Black Flag* trailer was no accident. He is one of history's most notorious pirates, and this notoriety traces straight back to *A General History*. His chapter constitutes the most vivid biography of the entire narrative. Edward Teach's striking visual description is a key part of how *A General History* crafts Blackbeard's dramatics.<sup>44</sup> The beard takes a central role here, as Defoe acknowledges that it would be remiss of him to gloss over the story behind the moniker.

That large Quantity of Hair, which, like a frightful Meteor, covered his whole Face, and frightened *America* more than any Comet that has appeared there for a long Time. This Beard was black, which he suffered to grow

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<sup>41</sup> GameSpot, "Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag - World Premiere Trailer," YouTube Video, 0:20, March 4, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdKIQSwkYHI>.

<sup>42</sup> GameSpot, "Assassin's Creed IV" 1:20.

<sup>43</sup> Other notable recent pirate titles include *Sea of Thieves*, released by Rare Games in 2018 or *GreedFall*, developed by the French game studio Spiders and released by Focus Home Interactive in 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Teach is sometimes also stylized as "Thatch," such as in the first edition of *A General History*. The second edition onwards uses the familiar "Teach."

of an extravagant Length; as to Breadth, it came up to his Eyes; he was accustomed to twist it with Ribbons...In Time of Action, he wore a Sling over his shoulders, with three Brace of Pistols, hanging in Holsters like Bandaliers; and struck lighted Matches under his Hat, which appearing on each Side of his Face, his Eyes naturally looking fierce and wild, made him altogether such a Figure, that Imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury, from Hell, to look more frightful.<sup>45</sup>

The specificity of Teach's hairstyle, outfit, and outlandish intimidation tactics given in this passage find a curious parallel with the visual storytelling used in the costume design for modern action heroes and villains. Not only does the reader learn what Teach looks like, but every visual description also serves a literary goal. The description of his beard, for example, offers the connotations of a wild-eyed, destructive madman. The theatrics of his hidden firecrackers are unconcerned with the logistics of lighting hair or clothing on fire, instead focusing on the creation of an image so terrifying that it calls to mind the horrors of Hell.

A distinction must be drawn between the dastardly and dramatic. Edward Low's story is gripping because of his fearful presence. His dastardly inclinations are what define him in *A General History*; his story exists to flesh out the pirate's brutality. When he treats captured New Englanders with sadistic glee, his violence intentionally shocks and frightens.<sup>46</sup> Defoe understands the disgust that readers will feel towards Low's story, and he acknowledges that contempt at the chapter's end by expressing his hope that Low and his crew are somewhere at the bottom of the ocean, shipwrecked and soggy.<sup>47</sup> Blackbeard, conversely, is not marked by this same disdain.

Defoe recounts Blackbeard's demise with none of the scorn that he employs when writing about Low. On November 22nd, 1718, Lieutenant Robert Maynard successfully located Teach off the coast of North Carolina. Lieutenant Maynard, being in command of two sloops, engaged with Teach in a gunfight that resulted in a boarding party and eventually culminated in Teach's death and his crew's surrender. As the narrative of *A General History* leads up to his death, Teach cuts an admittedly dastardly figure. Before the fight with Lieutenant Maynard begins, Defoe describes how Teach raises a glass of liquor, "and drank to him [Maynard] with these Words: *Damnation seize my Soul if I give you Quarters, or*

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<sup>45</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 84-85.

<sup>46</sup> Defoe, 326-328: "Low's irreconcilable Aversion to *New-England Men*," and "Low let none of that Country depart without some Marks of his Rage."

<sup>47</sup> Defoe, 336.

*take any from you.*<sup>48</sup> Once the fight itself breaks out, Teach fights brutally and displays a fearsome resilience (withstanding a purported twenty-five wounds before finally collapsing) before Manyard is finally victorious.<sup>49</sup> Despite this, Defoe does not celebrate Teach's death in the same way he wishes for Low's. Instead, Defoe remarks that, "Here was an End of that courageous Brute," and that in another life, Edward Teach "might have pass'd in the World for a Heroe."<sup>50</sup> He is carefully neutral in his description of Lieutenant Maynard's choice to sever the pirate's head and hang it from his bowsprit as a macabre figurehead. There is clear, if not quiet space left for the reader to mourn Teach's death.<sup>51</sup> This clearly separates his characterization from the likes of Edward Low. Unlike Low, Teach's dastardly streaks are in service of creating his larger-than-life persona that draws the reader into his narrative and might even inspire sympathy.

*A General History* had good reason to inspire sympathy from its readers. By developing compelling protagonists such as Teach, the narrative encouraged readers to commit further time, imagination, and money to future editions. The manipulation of Teach's life and appearance through these different editions of *A General History* also reveals Defoe's economic motivations in creating the dramatic pirate. Recall the vivid description of Teach's appearance: they lead readers to understand that he is fearsome, outlandish, and awe-inspiring. In the text, this description is accompanied by an artistic representation of Teach in his aforementioned outfit; in the second edition of *A General History*, that image received an overhaul. Teach's hat, which was originally drawn as a fur cap, was transformed into a classically piratical black tricorne. Rather comically, his physique was also tweaked to remove the suggestion of a rounded belly in favor of a flatter, more toned form. The two contrasting depictions demonstrate how *A General History* refined its myth-making between editions, in this case by developing the pirate's dramatic flair.

This tendency in artistic representation shines through again when Teach's crew encounters the infamous British man-of-war, the *Scarborough*. Defoe attests that the thirty-gun *Scarborough* encountered the pirate and "engaged him for some Hours; but she finding the Pyrate well mann'd, and having try'd her

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<sup>48</sup> Defoe, 80.

<sup>49</sup> Defoe, 82: "yet he [Teach] stood his Ground, and fought with great Fury, till he received five and twenty Wounds, and five of them by Shot."

<sup>50</sup> Defoe, 82.

<sup>51</sup> Defoe, 83. "The Lieutenant caused *Black-beard's* Head to be severed from his Body, and hung up at the Bolt-sprit End..."

Strength, gave over the Engagement.”<sup>52</sup> While there is substantial literature which references this event as a highlight of Teach’s career, there is no surviving evidence from the *Scarborough’s* logbook to support such an encounter. Similarly, there are no naval records of a court martial or other punitive measures being taken against the *Scarborough’s* captain, actions which would have occurred if the *Scarborough* had run from a fight with a pirate vessel.<sup>53</sup> However, Blackbeard the pirate battling the fearsome *Scarborough* to a stalemate is incredibly dramatic, to the point that *A General History* couldn’t pass up the opportunity to report on it. Just as Teach’s image was manipulated to build a striking visual narrative, this reality was manipulated to build a narrative of Blackbeard’s fearless, dramatic strength.

Despite all the historical pirates available to them, the development team of *AC: Black Flag* used Blackbeard to establish the opening tone of their trailer. They relied on his infamy to lend weight to the title’s promise of a quintessential pirate adventure and then delivered on that promise through over twenty hours of critically and popularly acclaimed gameplay. *AC: Black Flag* offers a vivid, memorable world and one of gaming’s most recognizable fictional pirates, Edward Kenway. It is through the dramatic that *AC: Black Flag* delivers a pirate narrative that has inspired such engagement and devotion for its world and swashbucklers. This theatrical bombast is a foundational aspect of the archetypal pirate and the literary role he plays in offering readers a means of escapism. As such, the dramatic joins the dastardly and the democratic in forming the base of the Anglo-Caribbean pirate myth, all claiming Defoe’s *A General History* as ancestor.

### The Truth of A Story

After four seasons and over three years of runtime, the television show *Black Sails* came to a close. In the final moments of the finale, the show’s version of the historical pirate John Rackham delivers a reflective monologue. “A story is true. A story is untrue. As time extends it matters less and less,” he remarks.<sup>54</sup> “The stories we want to believe...those are the ones that survive, despite up-

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<sup>52</sup> Defoe, 72.

<sup>53</sup> David D. Moore, “Captain Edward Thatch: A Brief Analysis of the Primary Source Documents Concerning the Notorious Blackbeard,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 95, no. 2, (April 2018): 166.

<sup>54</sup> *Black Sails*, season 4, episode 10, “XXXVIII,” created by Robert Levine and Jonathan E. Steinberg, aired April 2, 2017, Starz, Digital, 1:03:22.



heaval and transition, and progress. Those are the stories that shape history. And then what does it matter if it was true when it was born?<sup>55</sup> Emotional music swells as the camera cuts to a mother reading from *A General History* as a bedtime story to her children. Rackham concludes, “Until all that remains of any of it...are stories bearing only a passing resemblance to the world the rest of us lived in.”<sup>56</sup>

The Anglo-Caribbean pirates of the early eighteenth century did not survive the upheaval, transition, and progress of the English naval and legal systems. Their stories, however, thrived in their absence. Through *A General History*, the myth of the Anglo-Caribbean pirate took on a life of his own. The formation of that archetypal pirate in Daniel Defoe’s *A General History* is understood through his three tenets of the dastardly, the democratic, and the dramatic. I have explored the importance of these particular tenets and illuminated factors that influenced their creation. *A General History* built upon the work of other successful voyage-narratives, such as the reports of pirate articles in Esquemeling’s *Buccaneers of America* and the literary style of Defoe’s own *Robinson Crusoe*. Through exaggeration and invention, *A General History* transformed from another voyage-narrative to a unique piece of biographical writing that still fascinates readers today. Finally, this paper has connected these tenets to contemporary representations of the popular pirate to argue for *A General History*’s preeminence in shaping how Western audiences view the Anglo-Caribbean pirate.

The pirate myth is often understood in contrast to either historical truth or historical untruth. This research offers an investigation into the historicity of the myth itself and the process that developed it. The many traits that constitute today’s popular pirate are rooted within a complex historical moment of authorial competition, the development of the English literary tradition, and the burgeoning mythology of the British Empire. The archetypal swashbuckler is inextricable from this weave of historical forces and actors, furthermore, the lack of historical veracity in the pirate’s myth does not detract from the reality of his story. In contemplating what allows art to survive, *Black Sails*’ Rackham states that “it must transcend. It must speak for itself. It must be true.”<sup>57</sup> In examining the historical and literary context that created the popular pirate, we find a myth that indeed speaks for itself, and in doing so, reveals much about the

<sup>55</sup> *Black Sails*, “XXXVIII,” 1:03:52.

<sup>56</sup> *Black Sails*, “XXXVIII,” 1:05:48.

<sup>57</sup> *Black Sails*, “XXXVIII,” 1:09:33.

historical forces that shaped it. When we consider the truth of these myths in their own right, we reveal new perspectives about the ways in which they have shaped history.