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Excavating an American Republic:  
An Analysis of John Adams’ Use of the Classics in his Defence of the Constitutions of the United States

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Abstract

“Excavating an American Republic” uses a comparative reading of John Adams’ *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States* and the ancient writings of Polybius, Cicero, and Tacitus to explore how these classical authors greatly influenced Adams’ personal ideologies regarding politics and constitutional theory. Additionally, this article proposes that Adams’ insightful understanding and proficient application of the classics allowed him to construct a thoroughly effective rebuttal, in *Defence of the Constitutions*, against Anne Robert Jacques Turgot’s vicious anti-republic and anti-monarchical attacks against American citizens’ decisions to implement strong executive branches in many of their fledgling state republics.

Introduction: The Punishment of a Student

On a summer’s day, in the northern precinct of Braintree, Massachusetts, a young boy, probably no older than twelve, was feverishly digging a ditch in a meadow his father owned. This laborious task, completed under the blistering hot sun, was not one of the boy’s usual daily chores. It was a punishment the boy’s father assigned to him as penance for his foolish and inappropriate actions. One wonders what sins this boy could have committed to compel his father, a Congregationalist Deacon, to sentence his young son to such an arduous task. Surprisingly, the boy did not steal money from a neighbour, nor lie to his mother, nor commit an act of violence, nor use the Lord’s name in vain, nor break any of the Lord’s holy commandments. In fact, the only crimes young John Adams committed were to proclaim that he “did not like [the] study [of Latin]” and to ask “for some other employment,” a request Deacon John Adams willingly fulfilled for his young son.¹

¹ This story is recounted in Gilbert Chinard’s *Honest John Adams*. Chinard argues that after this traumatic event, Adams developed an appreciation for the privilege of studying Latin, a luxury that his father, a manual laborer, never enjoyed. Gilbert Chinard, *Honest John Adams* (New York: Peter Smith Publishing Inc., 1985), 11. Carl J. Richard, in *The Founders and the Classics*, agrees with Chinard’s interpretation of the impact that this event had on the young John Adams, arguing that this singular event instilled in Adams the lesson that “knowledge of the classics produced a glorious life of upward mobility” and neglect of the classics condemned an individual to a “wretched life
While John Adams perceived this as an excessively cruel punishment from his father for not wanting to zealously study his Latin grammar, Deacon Adams had his son’s best interest in mind and attempted only to administer “tough love” to his son. John Adams, in recounting this anecdote, stated that after eating “the bread of [his] labor” and digging ditches for two consecutive days, he was ready to return to his study of Latin. Although humiliated, “toil conquered pride” and on that second night the humbled John informed his father that he would like to “go back to [his] Latin-grammar.” Adams’ decision immensely pleased Deacon Adams, who knew that his son, by continuing his education in the classics, would achieve a level of social mobility that he himself never experienced.

This anecdote from John Adams’ childhood not only exposes the origin of Adams’ appreciation for Latin and the Roman classics, but also illustrates the broader influence that the study of the Greek and Roman classics had on America’s intellectual culture and social standings prior to, during, and after America’s Revolutionary War. In fact, America’s eighteenth century educational curriculum was so entrenched in the study of the classics that America’s intellectual elite promoted an “imagined affinity between antiquity and modernity,” specifically between the Roman Republic and the fledgling American states. After graduating from Harvard in 1755 and excelling in his studies of the Roman classics, Adams whole-heartedly embraced this “imagined affinity,” which allowed classical literature to influence his own political and constitutional ideologies. Through his study of the classics, Adams developed a special appreciation for the Roman Republic’s classical constitutionalism, which he believed “formed the noblest people, and the greatest power[,] that ever existed.” Adams most obviously demonstrates his devotion to...
these ancient political ideologies in the first volume of his three-volume work, *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States*.

Serving both as a history of republics from antiquity through the eighteenth century and as a thorough philosophical examination of ancient and early modern constitutionalism, *Defence of the Constitutions* represents “the finest fruit of the American Enlightenment.” In the first volume of *Defence of the Constitutions* Adams specifically relies on the governmental theories found in the writings of Polybius, Cicero, and Tacitus to form the ideological foundations for his argument that, to achieve their predestined greatness, the American states must model their republics after the Roman example and vigorously protect their mixed constitutions. A thorough, comparative reading of Adams’ *Defence of the Constitutions* and the writings of Polybius, Cicero, and Tacitus not only illustrates that Adams consistently invoked these classical authors’ authority to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Roman Republic’s constitutional government, but also illuminates how Adams used their constitutional ideologies to defend America’s state republics, specifically its “monarchical republics,” which came under attack during America’s Revolutionary War for entrusting too much power in their governments’ executive branches.

**A Contested Love Affair: The Founders’ Relationship with the Classics**

Prior to the 1980s, historians who studied eighteenth century American ideologies developed the dual consensus that the Greek and Roman classics only influenced America’s founders superficially and that the founders usually misinterpreted these ancient texts. Beginning in the mid-1980s, however, a polarization developed as historians began to disagree drastically regarding how significantly the classics influenced early American political ideologies. This contested debate began with Meyer Reinhold’s *Classica Americana*. Reinhold argues, in accordance with the orthodox historiography, that the founders’ limited knowledge of antiquity, combined with their paradoxical “admiration for and hostility to[ward] the classics,” created an atmosphere of superficiality regarding their application of the ancient texts’ political theories.

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9 While Polybius, Cicero, and Tacitus are not the only classical authors that Adams references within *Defence of the Constitutions*, the works of these three authors are crucial to his defense of not only American states’ republics, but also classical constitutionalism itself. For a complete list of the chapters in the first volume, see Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions*, 1:xxvii–xxxi.

10 The terms “monarchical republic,” “aristocratic republic,” and “democratic republic” refer to republics in which either a significantly greater proportion of the governing powers are allocated to one of the three respective branches or a specific branch of that republic is empowered to act as an arbiter between the other two branches, e.g. in a “monarchical republic” the monarchical or executive branch would either hold a greater proportion of the governing powers or, as Adams envisioned, would act as arbiter for disputes between the aristocratic and democratic branches. Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions*, 1:xxii; see below. Massachusetts’ state republic, whose constitution was drafted primarily by Adams, is a model example of a monarchical republic. Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 579.

Classica Americana rejuvenated the historical debate regarding both the depth and accuracy of the founders’ comprehension of the classics. Carl J. Richard, publishing a decade after Reinhold, offered his own examination of this subject in The Founders and the Classics. Boldly contradicting Charles F. Mullett’s and Bernard Bailyn’s claim that America’s founders used the classics primarily as “window dressings” for inherently Whiggish beliefs, Richard argues that the classics provided “a large portion” of the “intellectual tools” the founders used to justify their rebellion against Britain and to validate the formation of their autonomous American republic.  

In 1994, the same year The Founders and the Classics was published, M.N.S. Sellers published American Republicanism. Sellers, expanding upon Richard’s premise, not only argues that America’s founders understood the classics with exceptional competence, but also proposes that their interpretations were so uniform that when one of them “used the word ‘republic’ they [all] thought of Rome.”

Both Richard’s and Sellers’ arguments problematized the historical consensus so severely that historians who agreed with the conventional historiography had to propose new theories, beyond naïve ignorance, to validate how and why the founders may have misinterpreted the classics. For example, in Rome Reborn on Western Shores, Eran Shalev argues that the founders’ inherent, intellectually shallow, application of the classics arose from their longing to be included in the republican process that began in ancient Rome, which compelled the founders to blur their perception of “historical time” and to create a significantly skewed “imagined affinity” between antiquity and themselves.

Even though the literature exploring the intellectual relationship between America’s founders and the classics has grown immensely in the last thirty years, early American historians have provided, for the most part, only cursory analyses of John Adams’ Defence of the Constitutions. For example, one of the pioneers of early American ideological history, Bernard Bailyn, barely acknowledges the existence of Defence of the Constitutions in Ideological Origins of the American Revolution. In the “Postscript” of Ideological Origins, which examines how the ratification of the United States Constitution was the “final and climatic expression” of the American Revolution’s political and constitutional ideologies, Bailyn only superficially references Defence of the Constitutions in a singular footnote that provides no meaningful contribution to the analysis of Adams’ seminal text.

Jack Rakove’s Original Meanings, a critical examination of the “original meaning” of the United States Constitution at the moment of its ratification, continues this trend of superficially


13 Sellers, American Republicanism, 7.

14 Eran Shalev, Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 3-7; Richard, The Founders and the Classics, 30-31.

15 In this footnote, Bailyn states that Adams, in Defence of the Constitutions, “disparages” Montesquieu’s understanding of the necessity of virtue in government. Montesquieu believed that virtue is more necessary for the success of a democracy than for a monarchy. Adams, however, considered virtue to be equally necessary in all systems of government. Bailyn, Ideological Origins, 321, 372.
analyzing Adams’ *Defence of the Constitutions*, as it is mentioned only twice in Rakove’s exceptionally detailed analysis.\textsuperscript{16} Acknowledging that the first volume of *Defence of the Constitutions* was not well received at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Rakove states that James Madison believed it contained no new observations on constitutional theory and only gave the delegates “many things to criticize.”\textsuperscript{17} Thomas Jefferson, however, also found need to critique the first volume of *Defence of the Constitutions*.\textsuperscript{18} Disagreeing with Adams, Rakove states that Jefferson did not perceive the Continental Congress as a “diplomatic assembly,” but rather perceived it as “both [a] legislative and executive” entity, a correction that Adams “conceded” to be “a fair one.”\textsuperscript{19}

Even though Rakove does provide a slightly more detailed examination of *Defence of the Constitutions*, his analysis of Adams’ text is still cursory. Gordon S. Wood’s *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, which devotes an entire chapter to “The Relevance and Irrelevance of John Adams,” provides one of the only in-depth analyses of *Defence of the Constitutions*.\textsuperscript{20} In this chapter, Wood not only argues that Adams’ intellectual prowess allowed him to interpret classical literature with significant accuracy, but also advocates that *Defence of the Constitutions* is the most “comprehensive description of American constitutionalism” written during the foundational years of the American republic.\textsuperscript{21} Finally, Wood proposes that Adams formulated his arguments in *Defence of the Constitutions* with both sincerity and honesty, arguing that “[t]here was never anything disingenuous about Adams,” who always “refused to pervert the meaning of language” to advance his own beliefs.\textsuperscript{22} Through this crucial insight into Adams’ ethics and morality, Wood validates the accuracy of Adams’ interpretation of classical literature while illustrating the sincerity of the arguments he presents in *Defence of the Constitutions*.\textsuperscript{23}

While these are only some of the crucial observations Wood provides in his analysis of Adams’ *Defence of the Constitutions*, he still does not contribute any comparative analyses between *Defence of the Constitutions* and the classical writings that influenced Adams’ political


\textsuperscript{18} Rakove, *Original Meaning*, 207.


\textsuperscript{20} Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 567-592.

\textsuperscript{21} Wood uses “American constitutionalism” in this context to refer to America’s collective understanding of both the history of constitutionalism and constitutional theory in 1787, when Adams began writing *Defence of the Constitutions*. This, however, does not refer to the separation of powers within a republic between an executive, legislative, and judicial branch, which is the definition of “American constitutionalism” that, with the exception of this single quotation, this paper employs. Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 567-569.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 569.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
and constitutional ideologies. This disparity in Wood’s analysis of *Defence of the Constitutions*, however, is representative of the egregious historiographical omission of in-depth textual comparisons between the classics and the American founders’ own writings. Early American historians, by ameliorating this historiographical void, may not only clarify the magnitude by which the classics actually influenced early America’s political and constitutional ideologies, but also remove a significant ambiguity regarding early America’s political and intellectual culture.

**A Theoretical Fork in the Road: Classical or American Constitutionalism**

John Adams divided *Defence of the Constitutions* into three chronological and thematic components of analysis: ancient republics and classical constitutionalism, medieval Italian republics, and his proposal of the ideal constitution for a republic. While he begins with a brief summary of the various active monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic republics in the 1780s, Adams’ primary focus in the first volume of *Defence of the Constitutions* is exploring the distinctive attributes of classical constitutionalism. Adams, however, also occasionally references the writings of early modern European scholars, such as Sir Thomas Smith, John Locke, John Milton, and David Hume, in the first volume of *Defence of the Constitutions*. Such references either substantiate his argument in favor of classical constitutionalism or serve as the argumentative straw man for which Adams uses classical constitutionalism to disprove.

The entire second volume and a significant portion of the third volume of *Defence of the Constitutions* is devoted to the histories of various medieval Italian republics, such as Florence,

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24 While Sellers’ analysis of *Defence of the Constitutions* in *American Republicanism* is methodologically the closest to creating a significant examination of the writings of an American founder in relation to classical literature, he, like Wood, does not provide any in-depth, comparative textual analysis regarding how accurately Adams interpreted and reflected the ideologies presented in these classical sources. For the complete analysis, see Sellers, *American Republicanism*, 33-40.

25 See above, n.10.

26 In his analysis of Sir Thomas Smith’s “The Commonwealth of England,” Adams states that Smith argued that all governments begin with monarchy, which gives way to aristocracy, which then gives way to democracy. Adams, however, also acknowledges that this observation provides “nothing remarkable” to the examination constitutional theory. With this in mind, it becomes clear that Adams only referenced Smith’s arguments to provide further support for his reliance on Polybius’ theory of the decay of the single systems of government, on which Smith’s aforementioned theory is based. While Adams uses Smith to support his defense of classical constitutionalism, he uses the writings of John Locke, John Milton, and David Hume as a straw man, against which he illustrates the importance of relying on classical constitutionalism. After providing a brief summary of each of the three philosophers’ “ideal” system of government, all of which are versions of extreme aristocracy, Adams argues that none of them fully understood the practical application of constitutionalism. Adams then argues that the best way to prevent corruption in a republic is not to “abolish [its] kings or lords,” but rather to strengthen its “house of commons.” According to Adams, a stronger democratic branch would have allowed “the people [to] take care of the balanc[ing]” of government and may have prevented England’s devolution into tyranny. Through this masterful use of Locke, Milton, and Hume’s writings, Adams simultaneously appeases those Americans in favor of granting greater constitutional powers to the common people while demonstrating how that goal can be achieved without weakening the monarchical branch of America’s state republics. Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions*, 1:207-208, 365-370, 371.
Bologna, and Montepulciano. After concluding his historical examination of these medieval republics, *Defence of the Constitutions* thematically shifts to Adams’ analysis of “The Right Constitution of a Commonwealth,” which serves as the text’s analytical climax regarding constitutional theory. Finally, Adams concludes *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States* with both a “Postscript,” in which he critically reviews the newly ratified United States Constitution, and a copy of the United States Constitution, which represents the culmination of Americans’ comprehension of constitutionalism at the birth of their new republic.

Although *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States* does conclude with the United States Constitution, Adams chooses to support classical constitutionalism over “American constitutionalism,” the latter of which only became an accepted ideology after the ratification of the United States Constitution. American constitutionalism, at its core, promotes the separation of powers within a republic between an executive, a legislature, and a judiciary. Classical constitutionalism, however, argues that a republic should divide power between a monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic branch, which would ensure that “a governor, a senate, and a house of representative” retained not only an equal voice in government, but also the ability to “restrain the irrationalities of men” and to prevent any tyrannical actions from the other two branches.

The ideological difference between classical and American constitutionalism hinges on disagreements concerning “the archaic image of society” and the necessity of a judicial branch. Classical republics, through their division of power, relied on the ideological certainty that nobility always exist within a society. Wood argues in *Creation of the American Republic* that Adams embraced this pragmatic view of humanity and accepted the pessimistic truth that America could never be “truly egalitarian” and, therefore, could survive only by replicating its inherent “oligarchical nature” within its state republics. A significant proportion of America’s educated elite, however, was heavily influenced by the Enlightenment’s optimistic philosophies regarding humanity’s capability for civic virtue. These optimists disagreed with Adams, not only arguing that inherent societal division was too archaic a belief for the enlightened American republic, but also proposing that the supposed “aristocracy” of American society could be

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30 Rakove, *Original Meaning*, 245-246. Wood specifically notes that the judiciary branch “benefited most from this new, enlarged definition of separation of powers” and that, in the years following the ratification of the United States Constitution, the judicial branch would become entrenched as one of the “three capital powers of Government that is so characteristic of later American constitutionalism.” Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 453-454.
combined with the nation’s “common people” into a singular legislature, which would share governmental powers and promote, without bias, the welfare of all of the republic’s citizens.34

While classical constitutionalism and American constitutionalism clearly diverge regarding the inherent nature of nobility, perhaps the clearest ideological division between these two schools concerns the necessity of a judicial branch within the republic. The framers of the United States Constitution, to prevent the distortion of America’s national laws, created an independent federal judiciary with its own unique powers.35 In theory, this formation of a new judicial branch would allow judges the power to check the legislative or executive branches without fear of political repercussions, such as financial punishment or impeachment.36

Classical constitutionalism, however, promotes the division of judicial powers among the three existing branches of government: the monarchical branch would manage the trials and punishments of soldiers and those serving under the executive’s command; the aristocratic branch would try all crimes committed within or against the state, such as “treason, conspiracy, … and assassination”; and the democratic branch would be “empowered” to conduct trials “in which the offense is punishable by a fine” or in which the defendant is facing “capital charges.”37 Theoretically, this tripartite separation of judicial powers would ensure that the judiciary’s integrity could not be jeopardized if one branch succumbed to political corruption.

**The Massachusetts Constitution and Mr. Turgot: The First Shots of an Ideological War**

While it is clear how classical constitutionalism appealed to Adams’ pessimistic tendencies, comprehending why he relied on classical ideologies to establish the theoretical foundations in *Defence of the Constitutions* hinges upon first understanding the political atmosphere that motivated Adams to write this text. The first volume of Adams’ *Defence of the Constitutions* was published on January 1, 1787, less than four years after America gained officially recognized independence from Great Britain.38 The memories of the oppressive and tyrannical rule of King George III and the wounds from fighting a bloody war to secure America’s freedom remained raw for many of the newly independent Americans. In the “Preface” of *Defence of the Constitutions*, Adams boldly proclaims that “the institutions now made in America,” referring to the states’ republics, would “never wear wholly out for thousands of years” so long as they “begin right” and avoid political subversion and corruption.39 This self-righteous claim reflects Adams’ genuine belief that America’s individual states, by embracing

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35 Wood argues that the ideological movement within America to establish an independent judiciary began as early as America’s Revolutionary War. Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 161.
39 Ibid., 1:xxv.
republics governed by classical constitutionalism, could secure the rights of their citizens while preventing their government from succumbing to the ever-festering threat of tyranny.

Although Adams did not compose and publish the first volume of *Defence of the Constitutions* until 1787, one can trace his application of classical constitutionalism to his participation in drafting the Constitution of Massachusetts of 1780. The Constitution of Massachusetts created a bicameral legislature that contained a “House of Representatives,” intended as “the Representatives of the Persons” and a “Senate [acting as] the property of the Commonwealth.” Adams, by encapsulating the aristocratic and democratic aspects of a classical republic into the Massachusetts Legislature, while ensuring both groups maintained individual political powers, adhered to the classical “tripartite balance” of government by creating an entity which had the political power to check the monarchical powers of Massachusetts’ state governor. By 1787, however, Adams was distraught to see that state governors and senators were “somehow as representative of the people as the House of Representatives,” thus transforming state republics into representative democracies. Fear that the balance of America’s state republics, specifically Massachusetts, may be lost to the chaos of democracy was an essential factor in Adams’ decision to write *Defence of the Constitutions*.

If, however, Adams had simply meant either to exalt the genius of Massachusetts for forming a properly balanced republic or to express his fearfulness that non-classical republics would decay into chaotic democracies, he would not have called his text a “Defence.” The central issue that motivated Adams to write *Defence of the Constitutions* was a letter written by Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, Baron de Laune, on March 22, 1778. In this letter to Dr. Richard Price, an English minister, Turgot laments that England succumbed to tyranny and never learned the “common truth that one nation has never any right to govern another nation,” implying that England’s greatest failure was its attempt to rule America. Although Turgot, without a doubt, supported America’s rebellion, he was critical of America’s political foundations, especially “the constitutions that [were] drawn out by the different American states.” Turgot was unhappy that states, such as Pennsylvania, had created mixed constitutions that replicated England’s governmental divisions by placing extensive powers in their executive branches. The most upsetting aspect for Turgot, however, was Americans’ foolish belief that mixed constitutions

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42 Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 576-577. While Massachusetts established a judicial branch within its republic, the judiciary could not check the political powers of the executive or either houses of the legislature and, therefore, the Constitution of Massachusetts still adhered to the principles of classical constitutionalism; see “Constitution of Massachusetts,” National Humanities Institute, http://www.nhinet.org/ccs/docs/ma-1780.htm.
45 Ibid., 500. Turgot could not have opposed the strong monarchical powers of the Constitution of Massachusetts since, at the time of writing his letter, the Constitution of Massachusetts had not been drafted or ratified.
would function “in republics founded on the equality of all the citizens.” Turgot, through this claim, implies that the framers of America’s state constitutions, by giving any political power to their executives, betrayed the equality of the Declaration of Independence and “created real [dangers]” of tyranny in the American states.

Turgot’s critiques must have profoundly offended Adams, especially if he first heard them while drafting the Constitution of Massachusetts. Adams, in the first chapter of *Defence of the Constitutions*, titled “Letter I,” quotes at length Turgot’s letter to Dr. Price, using Turgot’s criticism as the foundation for the anti-republic argument he attempts to disprove. In “Letter II,” Adams discredits Turgot’s claims by arguing that “Mr. Turgot is offended” not because America chose to establish republics, but because he perceives that “the customs of England are imitated in most of the new constitutions in America,” which Adams argues to be incorrect by illustrating the constitutional parallels between America’s state republics and the Roman Republic. Furthermore, Adams states that Turgot must be arguing for the American people to choose “an assembly of representatives… vested with all the powers of government.” Perceiving Turgot’s proposal for Americans to embrace democracy in their fledgling state governments as foolish, Adams states that he wrote *Defence of the Constitutions* to expose “this idea of Mr. Turgot in all lights” and to collect “a variety of authorities against it.” Among those authorities, it is the authors of antiquity who Adams first summons for testimony.

**Invoking Historical Power: Adams and the Authority of the Classics**

The insights presented in *Defence of the Constitutions* display Adams as a proficient scholar of the classics who understood the intellectual authority that classical ideologies held in early American culture. Adams used this authority to validate his belief that classical republics were the best form of government. Through an extensive and precise reliance upon the arguments of Polybius, Cicero, and Tacitus, either by paraphrasing their works in English or by including quotations from their works in the original Latin, Adams successfully invoked the political and emotional persuasiveness of these ancient texts in *Defence of the Constitutions*.

Adams consciously chose to paraphrase, in English, all sections of Polybius’ *The Histories* within *Defence of the Constitutions*, a choice that most likely originated from Adams’ linguistic preference for Latin over Greek and the practicality of addressing his targeted audience. Most notably, Polybius is one of the only authors that Adams references within *Defence of the Constitutions* who wrote in Greek, which was not Adams’ language of expertise.

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46 Ibid.
47 The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States (New York: Bantam Dell, 2008); To Turgot, 500-501.
49 Ibid., 1:5.
50 Ibid., 1:7.
51 Ibid., 1:8.
52 The most direct translation of the title of Polybius’ text from Greek to English is “The Histories,” yet it is often referred to as “The Rise of the Roman Empire,” which is the title that Ian Scott-Kilvert chose for his translation.
Adams openly admitted on multiple occasions that he preferred reading and translating Latin, often bemoaning the extensive Greek passages that Thomas Jefferson included in their correspondences.\textsuperscript{53} In fact, many, if not all, of the quotations that Adams includes from Polybius’ *The Histories* are from Edward Spelman’s professional, English translation of the text, further illustrating Adams’ decision to avoid reading or translating Greek while composing *Defence of the Constitutions*.\textsuperscript{54}

While Adams’ lackluster enthusiasm for Greek may have influenced his decision not to quote *The Histories* in its original language, this decision may have also emerged from a pragmatic motivation to ensure *Defence of the Constitutions* reached the largest audience possible. Richard argues in *Founders and the Classics* that Thomas Jefferson, whose favorite language was Greek, frequently complained that the “[American] educational system favored Latin over Greek.”\textsuperscript{55} With this in mind, it may have been fairly common for even the most educated of eighteenth century Americans, like Adams, to find reading Greek difficult. Adams’ choice, therefore, to include an English translation of Polybius’ constitutional theories in *Defence of the Constitutions* was a rhetorical necessity, one which ensured all English-literate readers could understand the foundational theories of Adams’ argument.

While there are no direct Greek quotations from *The Histories* in *Defence of the Constitutions*, Adams does include quotations from Cicero’s and Tacitus’ texts in their original Latin. Adams may have chosen to include these Latin quotes not only because he believed that his contemporaries, like himself, were better versed in Latin, but also because he hoped that, by including the original words of Cicero or Tacitus, he could better validate his argument to his audience than if he had translated their ideas into English.\textsuperscript{56} For example, Adams made a meticulous and conscious decision to include quotes from Cicero’s *De Republica* in Latin, such as: “[s]atuo esse optime constitutam republicam, quae ex tribus generibus illis, regali, optimo, et populari, modice consusa.”\textsuperscript{57} Quoting Cicero’s Latin serves a twofold purpose. First, it allows

\textsuperscript{53} Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*, 27.


\textsuperscript{56} In order to understand the flexibility of reading and translating Latin, one must first comprehend the natural vagueness present in translating Latin into English. For example, the verb *agere*, depending on the context of a sentence, can mean any of the following: “to do,” “to go,” “to act,” “to drive,” “to urge,” “to conduct,” “to spend (time),” or “to thank.” Therefore, the act of translating Latin into English allows a certain level of creative interpretation to occur, which will cause minor differences from one translation to the next. Frederic M. Wheelock, *Wheelock’s Latin*, 7th ed, revised by Richard A. LaFleur (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 518.

Adams’ Latin literate readers to compare Cicero’s ideas with Adams’ interpretation and, therefore, establish credibility for *Defence of the Constitutions*. This inclusion of the original Latin, however, also plays a much deeper, symbolic role within the rhetoric of Adams’ argument. By including this single sentence in its original Latin, Adams makes a logically invalid yet emotionally persuasive appeal to authority. Adams subtly implies to his readers that the words of Cicero are so important that, even though he is fully capable of including translations of them for his readers, just as he did with Polybius, he is choosing not to tarnish their greatness through imperfect translations, ensuring that his readers understand the ideological significance of Cicero’s enlightened constitutional theories.

*A Greek Foundation: Adams’ Support of Polybius’ Mixed Constitution*

With this basic understanding of the authority that the classics brought to *Defence of the Constitutions*, one can examine, beginning with Polybius’ *The Histories*, how the classics influenced Adams’ constitutional ideas. Polybius, one of the most important historians of antiquity, wrote *The Histories* during the height of the Roman Republic, in approximately 167 BCE.\(^58\) While Adams relies on Polybius’ theories of government to validate his arguments, he does not ignore the historian’s obvious pro-Roman and pro-republic biases. Prior to beginning his analysis of Polybius’ theories on classical constitutionalism, Adams acknowledges that Polybius wrote after “the second [P]unic war…[when] the Romans were in their greatest vigor,” and reminds his readers that Polybius may have skewed his history, intentionally or accidentally, to reflect the supposed glory of Rome in the second century BCE.\(^59\)

While Adams acknowledges these potential biases within *The Histories*, he also agrees with some of them and, by elaborating on Polybius’ rationale for why the Roman Republic had reached the zenith of political advancement in the second century BCE, uses these biases to further his own arguments regarding America’s state republics in *Defence of the Constitutions*. The Roman Republic’s greatness after the Second Punic War and during the Third Punic War, Polybius argued, arose from its ability to ensure that the Senate, which embodied the most educated men of Rome, maintained its appropriate political powers, specifically preserving its “decisive voice” regarding decisions of public policy.\(^60\) Polybius, however, juxtaposes the Roman Republic’s stability with the political decay of Carthage, whom Rome brutally conquered in the Third Punic War. Carthage was defeated, according to Polybius, because the political balance of Carthage’s constitution declined and “the influence of the people” became

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\(^{60}\) Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 6.51.
“predominant” in all matters of government, including public policy. Adams, through his masterful use of rhetoric, acknowledges Polybius’ pro-republican biases while using those same biases to illustrate the unavoidable political dangers that Americans would face if they followed Turgot’s advice and bestowed all political power to the common people.

After establishing and exploiting Polybius’ biases, Adams begins his examination of Book VI of *The Histories*, which provides one of the most important examinations of the practical workings of Rome’s republic. Polybius begins this analysis by first explaining to his readers the basic forms of single system governments that occur in human society. According to Polybius there are three basic archetypes of government, “one-man rule, minority rule, and mob rule,” and each of these archetypes possesses a positive and negative manifestation. From this singular premise, Polybius develops his theory of the decay of the single systems of government, which states that every beneficent kingship will corrupt into tyranny, every altruistic aristocracy will succumb to oligarchy, and every compassionate democracy will devolve into mob rule. Polybius, by explaining these transitions as the “cycle of governments,” exposes the inherent flaw of placing solitary political power into a single branch of government, since power can and will corrupt any man or group of men, regardless of social status.

Polybius’ writings regarding single systems of government were essential in Adams’ development of his own political ideology. In *Defence of the Constitutions*, Adams constantly invokes Polybius’ theories to illustrate the corruptibility of the single systems of government. It is fascinating, however, that a man as well educated and eloquent as John Adams decided to paraphrase Polybius’ ideas with almost no additional observations. For example, Adams begins his analysis of the single systems of government by explaining that governments arise “from the weakness of men” and that a kingship is born from a fledgling society choosing, as their leader, one who “excels in strength and courage.” Polybius, when explaining the birth of government in human society, states that “[humanity’s] natural weakness” compels a society to appoint an individual “who excels in physical strength and courage” to “rule over the rest.” This sparse commentary on Polybius’ theories of government continues in Adams’ analysis of Lycurgus’

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 6.4. Polybius argues that one-man rule either manifests as a kingship or tyranny; minority rule as either aristocracy or oligarchy; mob rule as democracy or a lawless, chaotic mob.
63 Ibid., 6.5-9. Polybius goes into great detail explaining the cyclical nature of single system governments, of which this paper, due to its limitations, can only provide a brief summary. Polybius states that when men are faced with a situation they cannot overcome, they choose a man who “excels in physical strength and courage” and thus elect their first king. As this man’s power becomes hereditary, however, his descendants become corrupt and the once benign kinship devolves into tyranny because the first king’s descendants “indulge their appetites [for power].” In order to stop this tyranny, the “noblest, the most high-minded” men overthrow the tyrant and, with the blessing of the people, install an aristocracy. The aristocrats’ power also becomes hereditary and thus corruption arises yet again, allowing an oligarchy to be established. Now the common people themselves will overthrow this corrupted government and place the power in their own, democratic hands. Yet, as time passes, men become “so accustomed to equality” that they no longer value it and allow the government to be transformed into a mob of greed and violence. When this occurs, in desperation, society will once again find a “master and a despot” to restore order with a kingship, and thus the entire cycle begins again.
65 Ibid., 1:178.
creation of Sparta’s mixed constitution in the eighth century BCE. According to Adams, Lycurgus established a Spartan government that “united in one all the advantages of the best governments,” ensuring that “no one part might outweigh the rest.” Adams, yet again, strictly echoes Polybius. Lycurgus, according to Polybius, “combined in [the Spartan constitution] all the virtues and distinctive features of the best governments” to ensure that “no one of [each type] inclines or sinks unduly to either side” and disrupts the republic’s delicate balance of power.

Through this reliance on the exact phrases used in *The Histories*, it becomes clear that Adams completely agreed with Polybius regarding the decay of the single systems of government and believed that Polybius explained these theories so precisely that no additional commentary was necessary. Furthermore, this agreement between Polybius’ and Adams’ writings remains consistent throughout Adams’ exploration of how to create a properly balanced mixed constitution. Polybius, after praising Lycurgus for creating the basic template for all mixed constitutions, explains that the Roman Republic created a mixed constitution that distributed specific powers to the consuls, the senate, and the people, therefore creating respective representative branches of power within its republic for monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. According to Polybius, if these three branches of government perform their duties correctly, they will create “a union which is strong enough to withstand all emergencies” while remaining “in equilibrium[,] since any aggressive impulse” by one branch of the republic “is checked” by the other branches. Adams fully supports Polybius’ analysis of Rome’s mixed constitution and, yet again, decides to paraphrase much of Polybius’ original text. In fact, Adams does not stop with simply repeating the words of the ancient historian, but goes on to support Polybius’ claim that “it is impossible to invent a more perfect system” than the

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69 Ibid., 6.11. Polybius goes on to explain the powers of each of these three branches of government, of which several unique characteristics are exhibited. The consuls, of which there are two at any given time, have the power to “lead out the legions” of Rome, to “exercise supreme authority over public affairs,” “to inflict punishment when on active service upon anyone under their command,” and, “for preparations of war” they have “power [that] is almost absolute.” The Senate “control[s] the treasury and regulates the flow of all revenue and expenditure,” investigates “any crimes in Italy which require a public investigation,” and dispatches “embassies or commissions to countries outside of Italy.” The people “are empowered to try... cases in which the offense is punishable by a fine,” and they “are the only court which may try on capital charges” furthermore, the people have the ability to “bestow offices on those who deserve them,” and they have the “power to approve or reject laws... [as well as] decide on questions of peace or war.”
70 Ibid., 6.12-14.
71 Ibid., 6.18.
Adams explains that “[t]he Roman constitution formed the noblest people, and the greatest power, that ever existed” and emphasizes to his readers that “[Polybius’] opinion,” which argues that a republic is the best system of government, “is very different from that of Mr. Turgot,” who foolishly believes that democracy is the most advanced system of government.  

Although one can clearly see how influential *The Histories* were on the arguments in *Defence of the Constitutions*, it would be inaccurate to claim that Adams agreed with Polybius on every matter of constitutional theory. In fact, there are two critical areas where Adams drastically departed from Polybius’ theories. First, Adams rejected Polybius’ belief that the first king or aristocrats of any government were men “of goodness and of justice.” Adams, fueled by his lingering animosity towards King George III and the English Parliament, claims that “the king, the aristocracy, and the people” once “secure in the possession of their power, would begin to abuse it” and, in doing so, simultaneously exposes his pessimism regarding human nature and illustrates his belief in the necessity of inflexible political checks within a republic.  

The second area in which Adams disagrees with Polybius is regarding the legacy of the Roman Republic. While Adams previously agreed that the Roman Republic’s constitution created the “greatest power” that “ever existed,” he does not agree that the Roman Republic will remain the greatest republic in human history. Adams brazenly declares that American citizens should “see cause to differ widely from the judgment of Polybius” and should agree that “the constitutions of several of the United States,” because of their decisions to grant their executives the “power to interpose and decide between the people and the Senate,” were improvements “upon the Roman, Spartan, and the English commonwealths.” Adams, through *Defence of the Constitutions*, argues that America’s states, by creating monarchical republics, perfected the noblest system of government, completing a process that began over two millennia ago.

**The Twilight of the Republic: Adams and Cicero’s De Republica**

While Polybius’ *The Histories* provided the foundational theories for John Adams’ understanding of the single systems of government and the ideal republic’s mixed constitution, the classical author who held the greatest ideological sway over Adams was the great Roman orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero. Not only one of the Roman Republic’s most prolific writers, Cicero was also one of the few Romans who both lived during and wrote about the final years of the Roman Republic. Many historians have argued that the works and life of Cicero significantly influenced both the political ideologies and personal behavior of John Adams. For example, James M. Farrell argues that “Cicero had been [Adams’] foremost model of public

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72 Ibid., 1:175. Polybius, in his own analysis of the Roman Republic’s constitution, states, “It is impossible to find a better form of constitution than [the Roman Republic’s constitution].” Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 6.18.
73 Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions*, 1:175.
76 Ibid., 1:175.
77 Ibid., 1:176.
service, republican virtue, and forensic eloquence” and that Adams saw himself as being “persecuted and tormented’ for his ‘most virtuous and glorious actions’” just as his Roman idol. The “Preface” of Defence of the Constitutions further supports this claim since Adams, when introducing Cicero to his readers, states that “all the ages of the world have not produced a greater statesman and philosopher” than Cicero.

The self-identification and kinship that Adams felt with Cicero is crucial to understanding why he connected so deeply with the ideas of his Roman idol. Cicero’s De Republica, the last text to analyze the Roman Republic that was authored by a man living during the Republic, was a central influence on the constitutional ideologies in Defence of the Constitutions. Cicero authored De Republica, which translates to “On the Commonwealth,” between 54-51 BCE, only several years prior to the great Roman Civil War between Gaius Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Magnus Pompey — a civil war that slayed the Roman Republic and ushered in the new Roman Empire. Cicero, a man of great insight, was aware of the tense political climate leading up to this civil war and wrote De Republica as a last appeal to Rome’s citizens to restore the greatness of their republic. It is unsurprising that Adams, who viewed the American state republics at the turning point of either success or failure, looked to the writings of Cicero for solace and advice.

Using the legendary military leader Scipio Aemilianus Africanus as his narrator, Cicero begins his exploration of Rome’s republic. First and foremost, Cicero defines a republic as “the concern[s] of a people,” with the people being “an assemblage of some size associated with one another through agreement on law and community of interest.” While it is unsurprising that Adams uses Cicero’s definition of a republic in Defence of the Constitutions, it is important to

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78 James M. Farrell, “John Adams Autobiography: The Ciceronian Paradigm and the Quest for Fame,” The New England Quarterly 62 (1989): 506, 523. The event that Adams refers to as being Cicero’s “most virtuous and glorious action” is Cicero’s resolution of the “Catiline Conspiracy.” This was a conspiracy that Cicero uncovered while consul of Rome in 63 BCE. Cicero determined that a Roman named Catiline, along with several other men, was planning to overthrow the Republic. Cicero, as consul, placed Rome under a state of martial law and, after capturing the supposed conspirators, executed them without a trial. This execution of Roman citizens without a trial by their peers, however, did not sit well with many of Rome’s senators and Cicero was exiled from Rome from 58 to 57 BCE for overstepping the power of the consul. Although unjust, Cicero complied with his exile without complaint, thus establishing for John Adams the selfless martyr archetype which he believed he shared with Cicero. For a full, detailed account of the Catiline Conspiracy and Cicero’s actions during these events, see Sallust, The Jugurthine War/The Conspiracy of Catiline, trans. S. A. Handford (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 151ff.

79 Adams, Defence of the Constitutions, 1:xxi. Winterer explains that “[a]bove all other ancient orators, Revolutionary Americans idealized Cicero...as the ideal citizen whose incorruptible morals protected the Roman republic from tyranny,” illustrating that while Adams may have idolized Cicero more devoutly than the average Revolutionary American, his adoration was not uncommon. Winterer, The Culture of Classicism, 25.

80 One of the most fascinating aspects of Adams’ reliance on and use of De Republica in Defence of the Constitutions is that neither he, nor the modern Western World, has a complete copy of Cicero’s manuscript. Adams laments this tragic loss in the “Preface” of Defence of the Constitutions, stating that “the loss” of Cicero’s “book upon republics is much to be regretted.” Adams implies that if it had survived in its entirety it may have surpassed Book VI of Polybius’s The Histories as the supreme authority regarding republics and classical constitutionalism. Adams, Defence of the Constitutions, 1:xxix-xx.

81 Scipio Aemilianus Africanus led Rome to its final victory over Carthage in the Third Punic War. It is no coincidence, however, that Cicero uses Scipio as his narrator for De Republica, since Scipio provided Polybius with lodgings during his detention by the Roman Republic during the Third Punic War, which is also when Polybius composed most of The Histories. Polybius, Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, 12.

82 Cicero, On the Commonwealth, 1.39.
note that Adams quotes the original Latin: “Respublica res est populi.” In fact, Adams so fully agrees with Cicero’s simplistic and pure definition of a republic that, just as with the theories he paraphrased from The Histories, he provides no additional textual commentary.

Cicero’s De Republica, like Defence of the Constitutions, also relies greatly on the constitutional analyses in Polybius’ The Histories. For example, near the end of the first book of De Republica, Cicero states that monarchy, which he previously argued to be the best of the three single systems of government, “is surpassed by a government which is balanced and compounded from the three primary forms” of a republic. Cicero, echoing the words of Polybius, states that through this combined system of government, this republic would obtain “a certain degree of equality” and prevent “the possibility of sudden collapse.” Adams yet again quotes Cicero’s original Latin: “Statuo esse optime constitutam republicam, quae ex tribus generibus illis, regali, optimo, et populari, modice consusa.” After this quotation, Adams provides only a brief analysis, agreeing that Cicero’s republic has “superiority… to all other forms.”

By building upon Polybius’ views towards republics and classical constitutionalism, Cicero indirectly validated Polybius’ credibility, providing an explanation for why Adams, who preferred Roman classics, continually referenced The Histories in Defence of the Constitutions.

Even though Adams relied upon Cicero’s De Republica to provide credibility to his pro-republic arguments in Defence of the Constitutions, Adams disagreed with Cicero’s constitutional theories in several significant areas. Even though both Cicero and Adams accepted the cyclical nature of the single systems of government, Adams disagreed with Cicero’s view towards the role of revolutions within a republic. Cicero states that “there are remarkable revolutions” and “cycles of change and alterations in [republics]” that cannot be avoided. Since these revolutions cannot be avoided, Cicero believes that the only way to ensure the longevity of the republic is for the “wise [men],” those in charge of the commonwealth, to “keep [these changes] under [their] control while governing.”

Adams, however, does not agree with Cicero’s belief that revolutions within a republic are inevitable. “Human nature,” according to Adams, “is incapable now of going through revolutions with temper and sobriety” as it had in the ancient world. Elaborating, Adams states that “[w]ithout three orders” in every state constitution and “balance between them” the American states would be “destined to frequent unavoidable revolutions,” which would destroy their republics. Interestingly, Adams believes that a properly executed republic will not have to weather the storm of political revolutions, as Cicero argued, and could avoid them all together.

83 Adams, Defence of the Constitutions, 1:xxi-xxii. “The commonwealth is the matters of the people.”
84 Cicero, On the Commonwealth, 1.69.
85 Cicero, On the Commonwealth, 1.69; Polybius, The Rise of the Roman Empire, 6.18.
86 Adams, Defence of the Constitutions, 1:xix. For my translation of this quotation see above, n.62.
87 Ibid., 1:xix.
88 Cicero, On the Commonwealth, 1.45.
89 Ibid.
90 Adams, Defence of the Constitutions, 1:viii.
91 Ibid.
The other crucial theory on which Cicero and Adams disagreed is the potential benefits and drawbacks of monarchy. Before comparing these two statesmen’s feelings towards monarchies, one must first understand Adams’ pragmatic yet complex belief that all republics must attribute the power of arbitration to their monarchical or executive branches. Ever fearful of the tyranny that plagued both Imperial Rome and the British Empire, Adams never argued that America’s republics should place a greater proportion of constitutional powers in their executive branches. Although Adams clearly distrusted monarchies, his pessimism regarding the inability of American citizens to maintain civic virtue compelled him to implore America’s states to invoke classical constitutionalism and to empower their executives with more constitutional authority than many of his contemporaries found acceptable in the democratic fervor following America’s Revolutionary War.92

By the mid-1780s, Adams foresaw an unavoidable division between the rich and the poor in the fledgling United States of America, which would ultimately compel the elites and the common people to elevate their own selfish interests above the republic’s welfare.93 Although the aristocracy “constitute[d] the ablest and wisest men,” Adams abandoned the belief that they would not oppose the “people’s welfare” and proposed a solution to this problem of economic divide: each republic must have a governor who, as “the only truly disinterested figure,” would act as arbiter for the disagreements between the elite and the common people.94

Adams’ reluctance to place all governmental powers in the hands of the common people, his budding distrust of the aristocracy, and his newfound reliance on executives to settle disputes between these two groups motivated many of Adams’ contemporaries to label him a “crypto-monarchist.”95 While this criticism may seem valid, especially in the wake of America’s Revolutionary War, it is a disingenuous statement. Adams always believed America would survive and prosper only if its states adopted classical constitutionalism within their republics.96

In De Republica, Cicero states that if one cannot create a mixed constitution, the best form of government to “choose” is “monarchy.”97 Cicero further explains that “kings captivate [people] by their affection, aristocrats by their judgment, and the people by its liberty” and although all three are undesirable, monarchy is the least dangerous.98 Adams supports Cicero’s opinion that monarchical republics, such as the Roman Republic, are the best system of

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93 Wood, Creation of the American Republic, 579; Wood, Radicalism of the American Republic, 267.
95 Wood, Radicalism of the American Republic, 267.
96 Wood refutes this critique of Adams’ crypto-monarchical nature by arguing that the Constitution of Massachusetts of 1780 was “as much of a monarchy as England was a republic,” clearly exemplifying that “the only meaningful classification of governments was by their degree of mixture, and the only good government was a properly mixed one.” Wood’s conclusions reinforce the argument that Adams did not support a pure monarchy, but rather a monarchical or “regal” republic, in which the executive acted as an arbiter between the other two branches. Wood, Creation of the American Republic, 579.
97 Cicero, On the Commonwealth, 1.54.
98 Ibid.
government. Adams goes on to argue, however, that “a simple monarchy, if it could in reality be what it pretends to be… might be justly denominated a republic,” implying that even though monarchy may be practical in constitutional theory, it is impractical due to the corruption it inevitably promotes. Just as Adams criticized Polybius’ faith in the benign nature of kings, Adams critiques Cicero’s view regarding simple monarchy, stating that a “limited monarchy” is only beneficial when it becomes a “monarchical republic” and is checked by “an aristocratical and a democratical power.” Through this masterful use of rhetoric, Adams acknowledges the dangers of unrestricted monarchy while simultaneously using Cicero’s support of monarchical republics to refute Mr. Turgot’s critique that the American states’ strong monarchical republics were crippling and corrupting the American Revolution’s promise of equality and liberty.

The Optimism of Adams and the Pessimism of Tacitus

Through his insightful and thorough reading of Polybius’ and Cicero’s texts, Adams created a strong foundation on which to build his argument in support of America’s state republics. Adams does not limit his readings, however, to those authors who lived during the zenith or nadir of the Roman Republic, but also relies on the retrospective writings of those who lived during the Roman Empire, such as historian Cornelius Tacitus. Born in approximately 55 CE, Tacitus, much like Adams, learned about the rise and fall of the Roman Republic only through the writings of historians and politicians such as Polybius and Cicero. Even though Tacitus did not live during the greatness of Rome’s republic, his views on monarchy, liberty, and the practicality of creating a republic, present both in his *Germania* and *Annals*, contributed significantly to Adams’ understanding of the republican system of government.

*Germania*, Tacitus’ ethnographic history of the ancient German tribes bordering the Roman Empire, provides an overview of the ancient Germans’ culture and political ideologies. The two most influential aspects of *Germania* that Adams references in *Defence of the Constitutions* are the ancient Germans’ views towards monarchy and liberty. Tacitus explains that while “[the ancient Germans] pick their kings on the basis of noble birth… their kings do not have limitless or arbitrary power.” Adams, quoting Tacitus’ original Latin, states that “Reges ex nobilitae sumunt, nec regibus infinitia aut libera potestas.” This singular phrase simultaneously encompasses Adams’ beliefs that the individual chosen as a king or governor must be morally upright, but the proper political restraints must be established to ensure that the king or governor, once politically corrupted, can never possess unlimited power.

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100 Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions*, 1:xxi.
Adams, however, takes creative liberties in his analysis of ancient German politics, stating that the ancient German kings may “in all things[,] be over-ruled, at least by the nobles and people conjointly” — a claim that is not present in *Germania*. Since Adams did not reference any other scholarly works in this section of *Defence of the Constitutions*, one may question whether Adams consciously misrepresented Tacitus’ understanding of ancient German politics. Although it may seem deceitful to place words into Tacitus’ mouth, Adams may have made a benign inference that if a king’s power were checked, it would have to be checked by either the elite or the common people. Furthermore, Adams’ linguistic distinctions ensure that his readers do not confuse his analyses with those of Tacitus. Throughout his discussion of the ancient Germans, Adams always quotes Tacitus’ *Germania* in its original Latin. Therefore, readers may logically infer that any English phrases or sentences, regardless of their juxtaposition to Latin quotations from *Germania*, should be read as Adams’ own assumptions and conclusions.

While Adams differentiates between Tacitus’ ideas and his own, this discrepancy between these two scholars’ understanding of ancient German politics provides an excellent example of the flexibility of interpretation and inaccurate conjectures that arise while translating Latin. Nevertheless, Adams’ misinterpretation regarding the power to check the ancient German kings was minor and, therefore, should not compel readers of *Defence of the Constitutions* to question either Adams’ competency in reading and translating the classics or his rationale for applying classical constitutionalism to America’s state republics.

Tacitus’ exploration of the ancient German tribes’ views towards freedom and liberty is also essential to the arguments in *Defence of the Constitutions*. For the most part, Tacitus provides a stern critique of ancient Germans’ liberties, stating that inconsistencies in the fairness of their system of government “spr[ang] from their liberty.” When voting on political matters, the ancient German freemen “d[id] not assemble at the same time.” Adams agrees with Tacitus that this management of “popular liberty” was ineffective. In fact, due to the disorderly nature of these assemblies, the ancient Germans most likely assembled only to “receive the proclamations of the laws” and did not actually have “any effectual democratic check” on their government. Adams elaborates that this lack of a democratic check derived from the ancient Germans’ flawed political system. The ancient Germans had “the three orders of kings, nobles, and commons distinctly marked,” yet they had no fixed “delineation of powers”

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105 Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions*, 1:227. In the original Latin of Tacitus’ *Germania* 1.7 there is no use of the words optimus or populous, which were two common words used to refer to the elite and the common people respectively. Additionally, the translation of *Germania* used for reference in this paper does not include this negation of the king’s power by the other two branches of government. Finally, the section of *Defence of the Constitutions* that examines ancient German politics is subtitled “Tacitus.” Adams uses this subtile not only to demonstrate, rhetorically, that Tacitus is the paramount authority on ancient German politics, but also to illustrate that he will only reference the works of Tacitus in his analysis of the ancient Germans’ government. Tacitus, *Germania*, 1.7.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.
which, Adams argued, “left room for each to claim the sovereignty.”

Through this examination of *Germania*, one can clearly see that Adams believes that the failing of any government, especially of any republic, always arose from the improper demarcation of appropriate powers to each branch of the government.

Even though Tacitus’ *Germania* supports Adams’ argument that a republic with the appropriate checks will not succumb to tyranny, corruption, or chaos, Adams must also address and refute Tacitus’ bitter view towards republics displayed in his *Annals*. Since the primary focus of Tacitus’ *Annals* is the history of the Roman Empire during the Julio-Claudian *principates*, he rarely provides any analysis regarding Rome’s republic. However, in Book IV of the *Annals*, Tacitus provides a brief, yet telling, opinion of republics in his analysis of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, explaining that “a mixture of the three [simple governments] is easier to applaud than achieve” but, if any people are able to achieve it, that republic “cannot last long.”

To use Tacitus as an authority for the republic’s supremacy, Adams must directly address Tacitus’ pessimism and convince his doubters, such as Mr. Turgot, that Tacitus would have supported America’s state republics. While Adams acknowledges that Tacitus doubts “the practicability or the duration of a republic,” he also notes that Tacitus thinks this unachievable system of government is “laudable.” Using cunning rhetoric, Adams provides a hypothetical scenario to prove the successful nature of the America’s republics. Adams brazenly argues that if “Cicero and Tacitus could revisit the Earth” and learn that Americans, after living under England’s oppressive rule, established “governments of the ancient Goths or modern Indians” they would find Americans “reprehensible.” By implying that these influential Romans would be disappointed if Americans did not create state republics, Adams emotionally manipulates his readers to the illogical conclusion that Cicero and Tacitus would want Americans to live in a monarchial republic, similar to Rome, and not a democracy, as Mr. Turgot advocated.

**Conclusion: The American Legacy of the Classics**

Adams, by relying upon the ideas of Polybius, Cicero, and Tacitus in *Defence of the Constitutions*, validates his argument that republics formed under the principles of classical constitutionalism are the best form of government while simultaneously refuting Mr. Turgot’s criticism of the American states’ decisions to create republics, specifically monarchical republics, instead of pure democracies. The acute insights that Adams presents regarding the classics illuminates how the historical debate regarding the founders’ comprehension of the

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111 Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.33. This harsh pragmatism regarding the effectiveness and longevity of republics can be explained from Tacitus’ experiences, as a child, living under the *principate* of Nero, who is depicted by the ancient sources not only as a jealous and power hungry tyrant, but also as the architect and arsonist of the Great Fire of Rome in 64 CE. For a brief examination of Nero’s tyrannical nature and his supposed role in the Great Fire of Rome, see Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.37-40; Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* trans. Robert Graves (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), Nero 38, 53.
113 Ibid., 1:xxii-xxiii.
classics must be realigned. To understand early American political ideology more thoroughly, historians must first analyze how America’s founders used the classics to support their political ideologies both on a personal and collective level. Once historians begin to explore these questions, they will gain a much greater understanding of how classical constitutionalism helped shape not only eighteenth century American constitutionalism but also the creation of America’s early republic.

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Standing Behind, Riding Astride: 
The Patriotic Order of Americans and Its Status as a Fraternal Auxiliary in the Nativist Movement, 1900-1925

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Abstract

Americanists have long acknowledged the interdependent relationship between fraternal secret societies and the Nativist Movement of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Because such organizations were the province of white, native-born men, any contributions women may have made to the efficacy of these groups has been dismissed as insignificant, if not non-existent. Although the most well-known orders did indeed relegate women to purely supportive roles, another group, the Patriotic Order Sons of America, allowed its female offshoot to do far more than organize picnics and afternoon teas. This auxiliary — The Patriotic Order of Americans — was invested with both autonomy and authority that is virtually unaccounted for in historiography. This article seeks to introduce this heretofore little known group of women by examining the roles it played within the larger parent organization. Secondly, the group’s fervent activism indicates an explicit like-mindedness that challenges the common perception of female auxiliaries as inconsequential and disassociated from the ideology and objectives of the male orders to which they were linked.

The last chapter of the two-volume history of The Patriotic Order Sons of America features a remarkable photograph. One of the several images of the massive parade celebrating the avowedly nativist organization’s “Diamond Jubilee” of 1923 shows columns of smartly-outfitted women on horseback leading an army of marchers. Some of the riders gaze straight ahead, others salute an unseen flag or personage — all with a militaristic bearing indistinguishable from those of the numerous male contingents depicted alongside them. Regalia-clad women led several divisions of the parade and — according to the chronicle’s author — their horsemanship won the riders salvos of cheers.¹ While the parade’s largest

¹ John Henry Stager, An Authentic History of the Junior Sons of America, 1847 to 1868, and Patriotic Sons of America, 1869 to 1923 (Philadelphia: The Order, 1925), 382-399. J.H. Stager was a long-time, high-ranking officer in The Patriotic Order Sons of America. Stager’s prolific account of the parade and the accompanying festivities features numerous photographs of primarily Patriotic Order Sons of America participants. However, four
contingents hailed from the Jubilee’s host state of Pennsylvania, John Henry Stager notes that there were nearly ten thousand female participants from “all across the nation,” including strong delegations from states including Maryland, Tennessee, and Illinois. Many of these took part in one of the Jubilee’s most impressive shows of unity as Mrs. Lyda Callahan — with the help of two mounted aides — marshaled a battalion of more than two thousand uniformed flag bearers and musicians. These were the women of The Patriotic Order of Americans.

The parade was an awe-inspiring display according to newsmen of the day. A survey of Philadelphia newspaper reports suggests that the pageantry surpassed anything the city had witnessed in its recent memory. Described by the Chester Times as a “monster parade thirty blocks long,” other papers noted the prominent role accorded the “women’s branch of the Order.” Two fifty thousand participants from the organization’s satellite camps in twenty-two states played instruments in one of a hundred marching bands, re-enacted historical tableaus, and rode on floats emblazoned with rousing slogans including “Fight for Free Education!” and “One Flag, One Country, One Language.” John Higham maintains that in the decade from 1905 to 1915, popular nativism struggled to recover the vitality it had exhibited in the previous decade. The celebratory August spectacle in Philadelphia was a flamboyant indication of how nativist sentiment had regained a renewed strength during the tumultuous 1920s.

The Order’s female auxiliary significantly contributed to this vitality. Incredibly, women who closely allied themselves with the practices and objectives of the exclusively male parent organization comprised nearly half of those marching through Philadelphia’s streets. Credible evidence also suggests that the splash they made at the Diamond Jubilee served as but one — albeit highly visible — indicator of the surprisingly high esteem and influence The Patriotic Order of Americans enjoyed within the P.O.S. of A. This is not to suggest that the Auxiliary and the Order were separate but equal. It is very apparent, however, that the Order accorded these female compatriots a status that is unaccounted for in modern historiography. The respect given to the Auxiliary, coupled with a host of other evidence, proves that it served the nativist movement in two capacities: as a key part of The Order and as a fraternal organization in its own right.

As an organization, the Order embodied a marriage of classic fraternalism to a secret society. While historians differ in their definitions of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century fraternalism, they generally agree on certain elements. Primary among these is the creation of photographs depicting the organization’s female auxiliary The Patriotic Order of Americans are included, along with several notations that deem the auxiliary as having playing an important role in the celebration.

Editorial, The Wellsboro Agitator, Sept 19, 1923 and The Chester Times, August 24, 1923. Both papers described in detail the particulars of the parade, including the number of floats and bands. The Wellsboro Agitator excitedly declared the parade to be the “biggest parade ever held in the city.”

John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925 (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 70, 71, 266. Higham thoroughly delineates the vicissitudes of the Nativist Movement — the waxing and waning of anti-immigrant sentiment that at times diminished, increased, or evolved in response primarily to economic depression and the challenges posed by the Spanish-American and First World Wars. He marks the nativism of the early 1920s as being characterized by “two leading nativist traditions” of Anglo-Saxonism and anti-Catholicism.

From this point forward, The Patriotic Order Sons of America and its offshoot, The Patriotic Order of Americans, will be primarily referred to as “the Order” and “the Auxiliary” respectively.
symbolic relationships sustained by ritual, idealization of hierarchy, and solidarity in perceptions of fellow members as “brothers.”\(^5\) But where to place the auxiliary that appeared alongside it? Heretofore, the scholarship points to a very narrow view of the role that these women’s groups played and how they and others perceived those roles.

Simply stated, female fraternal auxiliaries have been thrown into a single, cramped box. In fact, scholars normally cast these groups as affiliates of fraternities, rather than groups that embodied an independent status in their own right. Much of this rigid approach is a consequence of historiography that normally focuses on the secret societies such as the Masons, Odd Fellows and the Knights of Pythias — orders in which female offshoots were restricted to support functions with structures bearing little resemblance to their parent orders.\(^6\) Indeed, despite the Order’s status as one of the most enduring secret society fraternities, historians have given it comparatively little scholarly attention.\(^7\) Furthermore, in the scholarship that does exist, scholars relegate its auxiliary to the same sphere as its Masonic and Pythian counterparts.

Because this group is scarcely known, this examination also serves the purpose of briefly introducing the organization. Simply stated, usable information on the Auxiliary is hard to come by. Apart from the inherent obstacles that hamper the study of any quasi-secret organization, archived material from this group is presently held in only two state repositories in New Jersey and Illinois. Despite this limitation, however, the historian can nevertheless glean substantive insight into the goals, perspectives, and procedures that guided the women’s branch of the Order. A cache of records from Springfield Illinois’s four “camps” (the term “lodge” is analogous) indicates that the group was both a semi-autonomous organization and a loyal, subordinate group. It is precisely this dual status that separates the Auxiliary from old conceptions regarding how female affiliates functioned in relation to their male parent organizations.\(^8\)

This study is focused primarily on the Auxiliary as it operated in one Midwestern city, and as such, the particulars may not reflect conditions nationally. With this acknowledged, it seems appropriate that the group deserves the consideration given to any other exclusionary patriotic organization. In the history of bygone auxiliaries — including that of the Order — many female members sat demurely on flower-encrusted floats. Others, like Parade Marshall Callahan, led their charge astride horses.

\(^5\) Mary Ann Clawson, “Fraternal Orders and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century United States,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27, no. 4 (October 1985): 688-689. See also Alvin J. Schmidt, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Institutions and Fraternal Organizations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 4-6. These are two examples out of several historians who cite these criteria as necessary for an organization to be classified as a true fraternal group.

\(^6\) The work of Mary Ann Clawson typifies this approach. In her “Nineteenth-Century Woman’s Auxiliaries and Fraternal Orders” *Signs* 12, no.1 (Fall, 1986): 40-61, she remarks on the especially tight strictures the Masonic order placed on its female auxiliary, *The Order of the Eastern Star* (OES).

\(^7\) The term “secret society fraternal” is used throughout this article. This denotes a group which had elements of ritual and secrecy, such as initiation rites and ceremonies that were closed to all but fully initiated members.

\(^8\) To avoid confusion, hereafter, The Patriotic Order of Americans will be referred to as simply “the Auxiliary.”
The Springfield of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an agreeable—if not wholly uncontested — site for a nativist auxiliary. Host to a fractious political assembly, it was also the site of equally contentious relations that existed between those occurring within various European nationalities and also within these groups and the city’s small African-American community. Although its ethnic and religious demography gently shifted during the decades between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the city remained predominantly Protestant and overwhelmingly white: the majority of both native and foreign born residents were German, English, or Scottish with either Methodist or Presbyterian affiliations. This demography, however, did not preclude the city from warmly welcoming other Western European nationals. For example, when military conflict erupted on the Isle of Madeira in 1848, several local businessmen put out the call for refugees to make their homes in the city. The editorial page of Springfield’s largest newspaper urged that these Portuguese “be welcomed with open arms … and be Americanized, not isolated.” 350 citizens of Madeira responded. In the ensuing decades, the Portuguese community blossomed into a thriving community — several descendants of whom would later become members of Springfield’s P.O. of A. camps. Beginning in the mid-1850s, an influx of German and Irish immigrants brought Catholicism to the area. Four decades later, the number of Roman Catholics quickly increased with the arrival of Italian and Lithuanian miners who sought work in Sangamon County’s thriving coal industry. Although census records indicate that many ethnicities co-existed in several of the city’s working-class wards, tensions between members of established groups and these new — and decidedly foreign — job competitors continued throughout the teens and twenties. African-Americans and whites of various ethnicities had similarly checkered relations. The city was home to one of the first free black communities in the state — and with its close connection to Abraham Lincoln, a frequent site of abolitionist activity and anti-slavery proclamations. The


11 Editorial, The Illinois State Journal, November 13, 1849. The paper’s call to “Americanize” the new arrivals fits neatly with the philosophy espoused by The P.O.S. of A., which was founded near the time of this proclamation.

12 James Krohe Jr., Midnight at Noon: A History of Coal Mining in Sangamon County (Springfield: Sangamon County Historical Society Press, 1975) preface, 6-8, 104. While the Southern European population of Springfield certainly increased after 1900, Krohe notes that the numbers of Italians and Lithuanians entering the city remained fairly low. This assessment is also supported by the 1920 Census records which note that out of a foreign born population of approximately 6500, 843 emigrated from Southern or Eastern-European nations. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 14th Census of the United States.

black community, although scattered in several neighborhoods throughout the city, was not well integrated into the community and relations were strained. In 1908, The Springfield Race Riot erupted, during which two black and four white citizens were killed, making it one of the most violent racial confrontations in United States’ history. After the carnage, the city attempted to make restitution to those victimized by the rioters, and no subsequent outbreak of large scale violence occurred. Not surprisingly, however, racial tensions throughout the ensuing decades continued to simmer, and occasionally threatened to boil over.

This divisive environment may well have fed the impulse many had to seek the comfort of shared beliefs and purpose that came with voluntary association. Like the dueling politicians making their cases in the State House, the city provided a forum for its citizens to express their points of view. The number and variety of the societies and organizations active in Springfield during this time indicate that citizens felt free to form groups that championed any number of causes and espoused a wide range of views. The 1905 edition of *The Springfield City Directory*, for example, lists 33 clubs large enough to be required to register with the city. Although half of these had overt patriotic or nativist agendas, others included temperance organizations, three Catholic societies, a chapter of B’nai B’rith, and five women’s social groups. Within this diverse environment the four Order Auxiliary camps collectively staked their flag.

**Same Song, Similar Verses: Inter-Organization Cohesion**

To fully appreciate the exceptional position of the Auxiliary within the schemata of female fraternal organizations, we must recognize the degree to which it aligned itself with the Order in ideological, structural, and procedural matters. The evidence makes it plain: to know the Order is to know its subordinate. As with many secret societies and fraternities, both the Order and the Auxiliary penned their own histories for exclusive dissemination among their members. In one such account written in 1898, the Order declared itself as “one of the most progressive, popular, influential, as well as the strongest patriotic organization in the country” — boosterism to be sure — but nevertheless an accurate representation of how the Order perceived itself. Their claim to be the oldest patriotic society for “native Americans” appears somewhat

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14 The riot was sparked by the claim made by Miss Mabel Hallam that black construction laborer George Richardson sexually assaulted her. The police managed to spirit Richardson out of town, but two other men — both well into old age — were lynched in his place by members of the 2000-strong mob. Hallam later recanted her story. See Carole Merritt, *Something So Horrible: The Springfield Race Riot of 1908* (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation, 2008) for a detailed description of the riot and the conditions that made the city ripe for the racial conflagration. See also Matthew Coryell, *1908 Springfield: Illinois Race Riot Revisited* (Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2007) for a discussion of the complete lack of justice for the black victims. Coryell describes several factors — including all white juries and investigators — that precluded guilty verdicts from being handed down to white rioters who were credibly accused of wholesale theft and murder.

15 *The Springfield City Directory* (Springfield: R.L. Polk and Co., 1905). Other city directories from the years after 1905 yield a similar number and composition of organizations active in the city. Fraternal organizations tend to be the longest lived; the GAR and the Odd Fellows maintained lodges in Springfield during the entire span surveyed for this report: 1905-1923.

16 *The Order, A Brief History of the Inception, Rise, Progress, and Achievements of The Patriotic Order of Americans* (Philadelphia: The Order, 1898). This volume was written anonymously by one or more officers based at
elastic as none of the prominent fraternities barred white male members solely on the basis of birthplace. Founded in 1847 on the eve of The Know Nothing Party’s political ascendance, the organization regained its footing and by 1861, had a strong presence in twenty states. By the late 1890s, there were 600 camps in Pennsylvania alone.

To gain a sense of how the Auxiliary was bound to the Order, it is necessary to look at its construction. The Order had a simple, three-tiered hierarchy. The Philadelphia-based National Camp oversaw the subordinate camps regardless of their location. If, however, there were twenty or more camps in a state, a State Camp could be chartered resulting in the transfer of authority from the National Camp. All State Camps reported directly to the National Headquarters. Delegates chosen by each subordinate camp administered the State Camps.

Comparison of Auxiliary and Order materials clearly indicates that, with minor exception, the women’s branch closely followed this organizational template. Auxiliary camps were considered to be true; consequently, they too were eligible to come under the jurisdiction of their own State Camps that would in turn be governed by a national overseer. The one significant — and perhaps surprising — deviation from the Order’s regulations involves the criteria the auxiliary needed to apply for a State Camp charter. According to The Laws of the State Camp of Illinois and Subordinate Camp Constitution, women could apply for a state camp charter if the state had at least seven subordinate camps with no fewer than 25 members apiece. Although the exact number of Auxiliary subordinates remains unknown, there must have been in excess of six because Springfield camps 3, 6, 9, and 16 came under the jurisdiction of a State Camp.

The Springfield auxiliary also adhered to the same codified hierarchy of personnel that the Order did. Both maintained a corps of twelve officers in each of its subordinate camps, including a President, Assistant President, Receiving Secretary, and Ritual Conductor. Although records indicate that each of the four camps had, at times, short term vacancies in the lesser roles of assistant conductor and trustee, the women’s camps enjoyed general stability of leadership. In Camp 6, for example, Bernadetta Abbey served as Receiving Secretary from 1910 to 1923, and Mary Clifford switched between Financial Secretary, Assistant President and trustee from the

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17 Dale Knobel offers a credible explanation for this apparent contradiction between the Order’s espousal of “pure” American heritage and the composition of its membership rolls. Knobel posits that while many groups were content to drum certain classes of native born out of the ranks of “real Americans,” they were sometimes willing to consider foreign born of selected classes (from predominately the “better stock” of Western Europe) as acceptable. Dale Knobel, America for the Americans: The Nativist Movement in the United States (Twayne Publishers: New York, 1996), xvii.

18 The Order, Constitution and General Laws of The Patriotic Order Sons of America: Together with the Constitution and Laws of the State Camp of Illinois and Subordinate Camps (Chicago: Frank Hart Publishing, 1891), 72-75, 89. There is great consistency between State Camps; Pennsylvania State Camps and Subordinate Camp Constitutions Patriotic Order Sons of America contains almost the exact information found in the Illinois Camp publication.

start of her membership in 1902 until her death or re-location in 1923. Although not prohibited in the Camp constitution, no President listed in 3, 6, 9, and 16 records served a term of more than three years, although in the aggregate, Sarah McNeil of Camp 9 served somewhat longer. After she served a term spanning the period 1908-1911, she later resumed her duties in 1915 for another year.

Rules governing the admission of new members also align, with minor exception. The Order stipulated that candidates must be men sixteen years of age or older, white, and native born. Additionally, prospective members had to profess a belief in God and His Son. Membership applications in the Springfield archives show that the four camps adhered to these criteria with the obvious exception being the admission of female members. An Auxiliary manual reveals, however, that men were permitted to join a women’s camp provided that they were members in good standing with a nearby Order camp — although the text implies that this was not common. There are also no substantive differences between their respective membership pledges. The Auxiliary candidate application reads in part:

I believe in maintaining and perpetuating our unsectarian public schools and other institutions peculiarly American.
I am opposed to the use of our public funds for any sectarian purposes.
I am opposed to foreign interference, directly or indirectly in the affairs of our government.
I am opposed to any organized disregard for American laws and customs.
I am in favor of admitting only those to our shores who come with the intention of protecting our Constitution and laws.
I promise to preserve forever secret, all of the signs, tokens, etc., of the P.O. of A., if admitted to membership.

This creed mirrors that found in a number of the parent order’s materials. Examination of the records also indicates that these affirmations remained unchanged throughout the tenure of the Springfield camps.

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21 John Stager relates how, in the late 1890s, considerable debate arose over whether the “white condition” should continue to be named as a requisite to membership since several African-American P.O.S. of A. camps actually operated in the Northeast. The southern states most stridently advocated for the prohibitive language. Eventually, the matter was decided in favor of retaining the “white” clause, although it was effectively shrugged off by a portion of the Order’s membership. See John Stager, An Authentic History of the Junior Sons of America, Vol. 1, 362-365.
22 “The Order,” Ritual: Subordinate Camps Patriotic Order of Americans (The Order: Philadelphia, 1923). In the section of this handbook devoted to rites of initiation, references are made to both male and female initiates. The book also strongly implies, however, that male initiates were uncommon. Moreover, there were no male initiates to the Springfield P.O. of A. during the entire period the records cover.
23 Text printed on Nellie Arnold’s signed application for admission to The P.O. of A. Camp 9, Patriotic Order of Americans Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, n.d.
Alongside this conformity to the Order’s basic structure was a considerable degree of autonomy. The same constitution that governed the Order also enumerated Auxiliary State Camp powers, including the right to grant charters, approve of subordinate camp financial expenditures, and by-laws. There is no evidence that indicates that any of the Springfield camps reported to the male order for guidance or approval in the matters aforementioned. The correspondence issued from the camps was mailed to the Auxiliary State Camp, and in a few cases, to the National Camp. Moreover, it is critical to understand that these outposts operated completely outside of the physical purview of the parent order. According to the city’s directories, the Order did not have a single subordinate in Springfield. This means that camps 3, 6, 9 and 16 essentially — and perhaps uniquely — operated without the benefit of male guidance, interference, or censure.

Clearly, the camps’ adoption of both the external and internal hierarchy of its parent signals a strong compliance with the Order and its rules. At the same time, this structure afforded the Auxiliary its own leadership that was invested with genuine authority. The effect was that of a dual existence of sorts: the Auxiliary was ultimately accountable to the National Camp of the Order while at the same time, it maintained its own structure of authority, and autonomy. In this way, it occupied a position that is seldom accounted for in contemporary historiography.

Exactly who filled the membership rolls of the Springfield Auxiliary? While complete rosters are not available to us, much can be learned by surveying what does exist: two lists of members seeking to transfer to another camp, a compilation of new Camp 6 members from 1905-1908, and a few intermittent lists. Taken together, the records suggest that the Auxiliary in Springfield was a surprisingly diverse group. Apart from the shared requisites of membership, there were disparities in age, marital status, and occupation. Of the 64 initiates admitted to the Camp between 1905 and 1908, three were under 20, 34 were in their 20s and 30s, 18 were in their 40s, and 12 were between 50 and 67 years of age. The majority were married, or, in four cases, widowed and listed as “housewives.” However, eight were unmarried, including Mildred

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24 Ibid., 28-31.
25 The Springfield City Directory. There is no record of The Sons operating a camp anytime between 1895 and 1930. The P.O. of A. is listed every year after 1905, although the auxiliary had at least one camp before this year; the archives include a roll of Camp 6 officers from 1902.
27 See Mary Ann Clawson, “Nineteenth-Century Women’s Auxiliaries,” and Pamela Popielarz, “In Voluntary Association: A Multi-level Analysis of Gender Segregation in Voluntary Organizations,” Gender and Society 13 no. 2 (April 1999):234-250. Both authors assert that female participation in a variety of auxiliaries was guided in part by their desire to be with those of the same demographic—for the most part, married women of similar age.
Johnson, listed as a 35-year-old “spinster.” Of these eight, six are listed as having professions outside of the home, such as 26-year-old “seamstress” Margaret Bass. Interestingly, three women were married and employed. On Mrs. Hattie Lankfords’ application, she described herself as a “forty-four year old teacher and housewife.”

Cross-checking of census and camp records indicates that — for at least the period of time for which membership rolls exist — initiates of the four camps were indeed native born. Intriguingly, however, many of the women resided with immigrant husbands, fathers, or other foreign born relatives. Indeed, several long-standing members were married to men recently arrived from Western Europe. For example, Lucy DeFrates and sisters Lucinda and Lettie DeVault all had spouses who had emigrated from Portugal. Lizzie Reinboth and Cora Dailey’s husbands were Scotsmen. Mary Nass was the only native born member of her household; her husband was Norwegian, her parents were Portuguese, and all three spoke the languages of their homelands. In total, nearly 25 percent of the Camp 6 initiates shared their homes with foreign-born family members. Certainly, in no case were these family members of Eastern or Southern European descent. However, this did not preclude members from regularly interacting with immigrants of diverse heritage. Because the vast majority of Camp 6’s initiates lived in the ethnically “North End” area, even member families who were not headed by immigrants had neighbors who were, and in a few instances, the census lists their neighbors as Italian or Jewish.

Living arrangements such as these indicate that Auxiliary members were not of the urban elite. Indeed, despite the aforementioned elements of diversity, the evidence points to a group that — at least in Springfield — was uniformly working-class. In addition to modest residences, the initiate rosters and census records list husbands’ occupations as unskilled or semi-skilled. The most commonly noted were drivers, painters, and miners employed in Springfield’s burgeoning coal industry. One possible exception is long-serving Camp 6 Secretary Mary Clifford’s husband who was employed as a train dispatcher. While likely only providing a modest income, this is one of the only recorded spousal professions that did not primarily involve manual labor.

Such statistics likely remained characteristic of the camps over a span of nearly 20 years. Membership transfer records from the year of the Order’s Jubilee (1923) are comprised of 23 women hailing from a similar mix of immigrant headed homes, occupations, marital, and economic status. There does appear to be, however, a slight deviation from the working-class

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28 Membership applications, Patriotic Order of Americans Collection, Box 1, folder 2.
30 It must be noted that this ethnic diversity was confined to whites; there was a small black enclave in the western part of downtown, but this was well away from the area where P.O. of A. members are known to have lived.
31 See James Krohe, Midnight at Noon: A History of Coal Mining in Sangamon County (Springfield, IL: Sangamon County Historical Society, 1975) for a succinct, yet textured discussion of how Sangamon County’s coal industry developed during the late 1800s into the first quarter of the twentieth century. The author discusses the ways in which competition for mining jobs caused numerous instances of strife between “old” and “new” immigrant populations.
homogeneity represented in the earlier member roster. The professions of two employed female members, Vienna Becher and Sophia Marsh, may well have placed them squarely inside the middle class. The former was a chiropractor and the latter worked as the assistant funeral director in one of Springfield’s largest mortuaries. Nevertheless, these are exceptional examples.

**Sharing Signs and Keeping Secrets: The Importance of Ritual in the P.O. of A.**

Perhaps in no greater way did the Auxiliary mimic the Order than in the arena of ritual. The existent historiography tends to minimize the importance of such performance to women’s groups irrespective of whether they were affiliated with fraternal orders to whom such performance was highly valued. Bayliss Camp and Orit Kent provide a welcome counter argument to this view as they assert that rituals were far more important to female auxiliaries than previously assumed. They nevertheless claim, however, that women modified these liturgies to reflect their primary roles as wives, daughters, and mothers. Drawing on views expressed by Mary Ann Clawson in “Nineteenth-Century Women’s Auxiliaries and Fraternal Orders,” they contend that these rituals emphasized traditional domestic themes over the platforms of the parent order, and were “shorter and less impressive” to boot.\(^\text{33}\) Camp and Kent do note that their scholarship is confined to orders with sufficient available data, and thus, their suppositions are limited both in scope and in the generality of analysis.\(^\text{34}\) With such an admission, it is probable that they, and other historians, would espouse a different view if they made the Auxiliary a focus of study.

Part of the Springfield Camps’ archive includes a handbook whose contents plainly refute such assumptions about the feminized and truncated nature of auxiliary rituals. This weighty volume provides detailed instructions for the proper conduct of a host of activities, including induction ceremonies, officer installations, and other secret rites. In contrast to the notion of female adaptation, the instructions are written using gender neutral wording.\(^\text{35}\) None of the rituals outlined could be classified as markedly feminine. In fact, in several instances, the text evokes traditional masculinity. In fact, the designation of new initiates as “recruits” and their pledges to “solemnly promise that I will, if required, sacrifice my life in the defense of my country” could fairly be described as militaristic.\(^\text{36}\) References to a distinctly feminine role are not entirely absent from this manual; the preface contains a reminder from the National Camp President that members possessed the “power of molding minds and shaping destinies.”\(^\text{37}\) Nevertheless, language that may rightly be considered as evocative of nineteenth-century domestic ideology


\(^{34}\) Ibid., 443, 449.

\(^{35}\) The Order, *Ritual: The Subordinate Camps of The Patriotic Order of Americans* (Philadelphia: The Order, 1923 ed.). Owing to the fact that men were—at least on occasion — admitted into auxiliary camps, the term “Brother” exists alongside the term “Sister.” However, owing to the fact that The P.O. of A. was primarily a women’s group, the former designation is only used a few times in the entirety of the text.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 52.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., preface.
rarely occurs. The rites, procedures, and pledges the women made were not grounded on conceptions of femininity but rather on their tacit agreement with the objectives and philosophy of the parent order.

When considering the possibility that Auxiliary rituals were modified, it would be most helpful if a direct comparison between the practices of both groups could be made.\textsuperscript{38} It is certainly possible that the Auxiliary’ rites deviated, in content or length, from those of the parent order. However, any notion that their observances were inconsequential or perfunctory is disproved by the elaborate descriptions provided in the manual used in Springfield. Assuming that the camps utilized the handbook \textit{Ritual}, it is evident that even regular meetings were highly choreographed. One diagram, specifying exactly how the camp meeting room was to be arranged, is illustrative of the acute attention to detail that characterized auxiliary proceedings. In all, there are 29 rules governing the appearance of the meeting chamber, anteroom, altar, flag placement and member seating. Furthermore, in addition to the badges and sashes worn by the general membership, officers and certain functionaries dressed in what the manual calls “regalia” — a term also noted throughout the Order’s materials. For instance, color bearers donned “ribbon regalia, liberty caps, and white gloves.” If a meeting featured speech-making, the orator dressed as Martha Washington if a woman, and as George if a man.\textsuperscript{39}

Even the movements of the rank-and-file members were scripted, and here too, the militaristic language appears. The manual instructed members that “in moving about the room, one must move in straight lines and turn square corners … being careful to conduct oneself with precision.”\textsuperscript{40} Several passages outline the way in which members must progress from the anteroom to the meeting chamber, how they are to address the officers, and where they are to sit in relation to those officers. The impression given is that of a carefully choreographed performance with each participant following specific motions.

Most importantly, this ritual handbook does not appear to have been a revered, but seldom used, piece of auxiliary material. The meeting minutes contained in the archive indicate a clear pre-occupation with adhering to ritualistic practice. At several points, the secretary of each camp notes either the planned or actual purchase of new sets of ritual books. In one representative instance, a vibrant discussion ensued in Camp 9 concerning procedural mistakes made in an officer installation as well as an admonition to give the proper salute. In another, the secretary of Camp 6 called for a practice session to remedy errors made in an initiation rite. A few months later, the secretary ordered the color bearers to update their robes. While the regular members were perhaps less invested in adhering to these proscriptions — as evidenced by the

\textsuperscript{38} A comparable P. O. S. of A. ritual handbook was unable to be located by the author of this article. Currently, there does not appear to be any such volume in circulation, nor are there any excerpts in online sources.

\textsuperscript{39} The Order, \textit{Rituals}, 52-54. At first glance, the scrupulous arrangement of the furnishings in Auxiliary meeting rooms seems to indicate that members may have been trying to emulate the orderliness of their private homes so highly idealized during and immediately following the Victorian era. Ascribing this practice to a domestic re-enactment, however, is unsupportable simply because so many other Auxiliary practices have been found to mimic those of the male branch of the Order.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 62.
repeated admonitions of officers to “do better” or “live up to the standard” — clearly, ritual keeping was no ancillary matter. 41

Secrecy also attended these rituals. In keeping with traditional conceptions of fraternal organizations as “secret societies” in the mode of Masonic and Pythian orders, the Auxiliary guarded its proceedings against both the prying eyes of outsiders and the loose tongues of its membership. The camp minutes document several instances of members being alerted that private information was leaking out to the public. Minutes from Camp 9 point to several times in 1914 where new passwords had to be issued, and all four camps’ records name several instances in which members were reminded to not repeat what went on inside the meeting chamber. 42 Unfortunately for those seeking to gauge how effective the Auxiliary was in promoting their nativist ideals, this scrupulous maintenance of secrecy poses an obstacle.

This zealous guarding of camp business from outsiders clearly aligns with the habits of their parent order. However, this mimicking of the Order’s mode of operation once again coincides with the Auxiliary’s authority to regulate itself. The Laws of the State Camp — which governed both the Order and the Auxiliary — stipulates that no instructions in ritualistic work could be officially implemented unless authorized by the State or National President of the respective organization. 43 Therefore, the Auxiliary’s leadership had the same power to alter the “secret work” of the subordinate camps as the Order’s leadership did. In this way, ritualistic practice makes the group part of the larger order, as well as a fraternal group in its own right. This activity, coupled with the insistence on secrecy, provided the women with a means of expressing solidarity with the Order’s mission. Conversely, it also gave the Springfield membership the ground to assert its own collective identity as an autonomous actor within both The Patriotic Order Sons of America and within the broader nativist movement.

Where They Stood: Perceptions of the P.O. of A. and its Place in the Order

Perhaps there is no greater indicator of how historians should view the Auxiliary than the way in which members perceived themselves. Certainly, the Auxiliary’s willingness to so closely conform to the parent order’s practices points to their fulsome embrace of its objectives and dictates. Apart from this submissiveness, however, their willingness to participate in public Patriotic Order Sons of America events shows that they believed they were accepted by the Order as an esteemed partner, if not a co-equal one. According to The Dictionary of Secret Societies, the Auxiliary maintained 544 camps in 22 states with an active membership of almost 50,000 — the vast majority of whom were women. 44 This fact alone implies that the organization’s members were very enthusiastic about the Order’s mission. If Stager’s estimate of 10,000 Jubilee parade participants is accurate, this means that a full one-fifth of its membership

41 Meeting Minutes for Camp 9 and 6, The Patriotic Order of Americans Collection, Box 1, Folders 1-2.
42 Meeting Minutes for Camp 9 and 6, The Patriotic Order of Americans Collection, Box 1, Folders 2-3.
traveled to Philadelphia to join their fraternal brothers. Moreover, the festivities encompassed an entire week and therefore, additional auxiliary members were probably involved in a host of other activities.\textsuperscript{45}

It is instructive that Stager’s account of the women’s contributions is tinged with admiration. He repeatedly notes instances of men and women working jointly on various committees and mentions several well-regarded presentations made by female officers. Recalling the events one year after they took place, Stager stresses the integral role of the Auxiliary with unreserved gratitude:

The widespread participation was not only the greatest advertisement this great ladies’ order has ever had, but it contributed in a large way to the success of the demonstration of the parent order and drew closer together in fraternal friendship these two great departments of the Order.\textsuperscript{46} (Emphasis mine).

Language is critical here. Referring to the Auxiliary as one of the “Departments of the Order” simply does not align with the present day perception that female auxiliaries functioned as social clubs designed to keep housewives and spinsters occupied in “helpmate” roles. Indeed, “fraternal friendship” is a similarly powerful term. These two words imply not only camaraderie, but something else far more elusive in the decades before mainstream American seriously considered the notion of gender equality: a sense of parity.

It might be tempting to somewhat diminish the noteworthiness of Stager’s praise for the Auxiliary’s activism because it was written after the Victorian-era heyday of constrictive social mores and domestic ideology. However, the seeds of what might be termed “quasi-egalitarianism” germinated well before The Patriotic Order of Americans became the Order’s official adjunct. In The History of the Patriotic Order of Americans, the Order’s National Secretary Theo Harris documents his efforts to create a female branch of the organization in 1889.\textsuperscript{47} Clearly, Harris envisioned it as a full partner in the Order’s work. In the midst of a month-long recruitment campaign he wrote:

In the evening, we went to the Hall where we found a number of ladies waiting. After doing my best to explain the aims and objects of the Order, I invited all who felt a desire to unite with us, and had already not done so, to come forward and attach their name to the application for auxiliary

\textsuperscript{45} Presently, it is not possible to determine how the Springfield camps participated in the Diamond Jubilee. However, Stager notes that Illinois was well represented, and moreover, the camps maintained an active correspondence with subordinates in states as far away as New York and Pennsylvania (where the Jubilee took place). It thus seems very likely that Springfield sent a contingent to Philadelphia.

\textsuperscript{46} Stager, An Authentic History of the Junior Sons, 406.

\textsuperscript{47} Prior to the creation of The Patriotic Order of Americans, women sympathetic to The Sons’ cause first assembled into the “Daughters of Liberty” which later amalgamated into another women’s group, “The Patriotic Order of True Americans.” At the time of Harris’ account in 1889, he was endeavoring to expand the latter into an official branch of The Order. Several years later, he and his compatriots succeeded, and the “true” was dropped from the name as the group became The Sons’ official auxiliary.
my own experience convinces me that some such system would be most beneficial to the Order and would speedily put us on the highway to success.48

Harris does mention encounters with men who objected to significant female involvement. However, this resistance took the form of apathy and sporadic arguments; the general impression Harris gives is of a generally receptive male membership. Clearly, the Auxiliary was founded with the hope that it would enter into a partnership. Far from being confined to an ancillary role, the women’s branch was to be entrusted with the parent order’s vital, activist work.

Although the Jubilee provides the most colorful example of male and female cooperation, other public appearances point to the Auxiliary’s standing within the organization. The Chicago Daily Tribune records two instances in which the Auxiliary and the Order appeared jointly at large gatherings in the city. Interestingly, an editorial mentions that one event included a number of women from Springfield.49 Certainly, these instances of mutual participation indicate the Auxiliary’s perception of its importance both to the Order and the cause it espoused. Additionally, although the women’s branch was governed by its own leadership, it could also send delegates to the Order’s national conventions. Any county with more than 200 Auxiliary members could send one representative; Camp 9 minutes from June 1913 mention the selection process for the Order’s 1914 convention in Brooklyn, New York.50

Interestingly, the Order was not the only patriotic organization that conferred the women with legitimacy. Stager notes that the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) at times worked in concert with The P.O. S. of A. He includes a statement from GAR leadership that affirms that their principles are “in harmony with our own.”51 Clearly, this feeling of kinship also extended to the Auxiliary. In Springfield, both city and camp records document that the women often held bi-monthly assemblies in a GAR meeting hall in the center of town. Moreover, it was not the only prominent fraternal that allowed them to use its facilities: The Odd Fellows regularly accommodated, albeit for a small fee, all four camps from 1905 to 1919.52 While no record of actual cross-fraternal activity exists, it seems unlikely that both of these exclusively male, “high profile” organizations would grant favorable rental privileges to a group of women unless they approved of their activities.53

48 The Order, The History of the Patriotic Order of Americans, 19-20.
50 The Patriotic Order of Americans Collection, Box 1, Folder 3.
52 Meeting Minutes, The Patriotic Order of Americans Collection, Box 1, Folders 1-2; The Springfield City Directory (Springfield: R.L. Polk and Co., 1905-1921 eds.). The minutes of camps 3, 6, 9, and 16 each contain references to bi-monthly rental fees paid out to both the GAR and the Odd Fellows. In 1914, for example, the rent for each meeting was affixed at three dollars.
53 It is reasonable to ask why the Springfield women chose to join the Order’s auxiliary instead of the more well-known GAR and Odd Fellows. In both of these groups, the women functioned in a manner historians generally associate with female auxiliaries: supportive but not overtly activist. In contrast, The Patriotic Order Sons of America offered its auxiliary something unique: a measure of autonomy and respect that many other fraternal groups were unwilling to give.
Betting on a Horse: Why Did Women Choose the Order?

The late nineteenth century proliferation of patriotic fraternities — of either avowed or peripheral nativist bent — provided interested women with many options. Springfield itself was home to many such groups, including the GAR and Odd Fellows, two popular organizations whose memberships far exceeded that of the Order. And yet, it was to the Order’s auxiliary that hundreds of the city’s female citizens flocked. To an extent, socio-economic identity may have helped guide their selection. Unlike the aforementioned groups, the membership of the Auxiliary was largely working class, and many women may simply have felt more comfortable in that milieu. Apart from this factor, however, why might such a considerable number of women forsake association with those more popular groups in favor of one lesser known?

In America for the Americans, Knobel asserts that there were three types of incentives that encouraged participation in these associations. Two of these, which he labels as “affective” and “utilitarian,” involve personal relationships and monetary benefits such as insurance. These inducements could be had in a variety of secret society fraternities, and therefore, do not offer a compelling reason for involvement in the Order’s auxiliary. However, the allure of public validation and recognition (the third incentive Knobel terms as “normative”) undoubtedly played a strong role, and, as we have seen, the Patriotic Order Sons of America offered its auxiliary a remarkable degree of both. But this elevated status — however unusual it may have been for the period — is not enough to explain the sort of fervent participation that characterized the female camps. Simply stated, there must be something more that explains that enthusiasm.

It seems likely that this “something” was a firm agreement with the organization’s ideology. As we have seen, outwardly, the members of the Auxiliary took the Order’s mission as their own. What is harder to discern is the degree to which members inwardly embraced its platform. The question is complicated by the fact that historiography does not adequately delineate differences that distinguished particular nativist groups. David Bennett, for example, asserts that these organizations were animated by a common vision of immigrants as dangerous intruders, even as he concedes that there was some variety in objectives and methods. If this assessment is correct, one must question why these women supported the Order when many of them had foreign-born husbands and fathers. The likely answer is members of the Auxiliary did not perceive the fraternity’s platform to be against immigrants as such, but rather, against newcomers who resisted full assimilation into what they judged as the “American” culture and

54 Throughout Strangers in the Land, John Higham devotes considerable attention to the particular concerns that motivated labor unions’ uneven support of certain aspects of nativism. As it concerns the situation in Springfield, the competition for jobs created by the rapid influx of Eastern and Southern Europeans into the area’s mining industry may have contributed to the women’s activism. The chapter “The Nationalist Nineties” is especially insightful on this topic. Strangers in the Land, 68-105.
55 Knobel, America for the Americans, xxvii.
57 Dale Knobel also ascribes a general fear and distrust of immigrants to nativist groups, but he also grants that “on the question of what was ‘alien’ and what (or who) threatened the national character they remained far from united.” America for the Americans, 234.
value system. Because their non-native family members conformed to this standard, these wives, mothers, and daughters likely saw no contradiction. In this way, the slogan “One Flag, One Country, One Language” proudly carried on an Auxiliary banner at the Diamond Jubilee posed no discomfort to a body of women who saw their European relatives as true Americans.

**Conclusion**

The Patriotic Order of Americans is classified as an auxiliary for good reason. As evidenced in both the Springfield records and in the Order’s accounts, it functioned as a true subsidiary. It adhered to the Order’s structure, values, and mission. Certainly, it served at the behest of its parent. Its viability as an organization depended on the strength of a group much larger and influential than itself.

However, not all auxiliaries are alike. The customary perception of women’s fraternal groups is that they existed in the shadows of the head organization. Scholars root their assumptions in the policies of prominent fraternities — a number of which only required that female applicants had familial ties to male members. Undoubtedly, many organizations did restrict their auxiliaries to insignificant roles. However, this assumption of irrelevance cannot be extended to the Patriotic Order of Americans because it possessed a dual nature as both a servant to its parent and as a self-governing, semi-autonomous body. Furthermore, the Auxiliary maintained a structure and ideology that mimicked the Order in myriad ways. It truly was, as John Stager claimed, a department of the Order, as opposed to a mere association of wives, sisters, and daughters. The women who chose membership in the Springfield camps did not define their qualifications in terms of their relationships, but in their identification with the Order’s cause. Moreover, it seems equally significant that the parent organization these women served not only permitted this perception, but nurtured and appreciated it as well. The Patriotic Order of Americans had value as both a branch of The Order, and as an independently managed partner in advancing a specific nativist philosophy.

To further our understanding of the Auxiliary, much research remains to be done. It is abundantly evident that The Patriotic Order of Americans belongs in the schemata of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century patriotic fraternal organizations. What is not known is how effective the group was as a political, cultural, and social actor. It is possible that through continued study that explores other avenues of inquiry, this question can be answered.

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58 The Masonic “Order of the Eastern Star” and The Women of the Elks were two such groups whose main requisite for membership was having a husband, father, or brother in the main order. See Alex Axlerod.
“What Small Thing is it that Remains to Keep Us Apart?”: New England Congregational Thought on the Need for Continued Parish Reform in England, 1640-1650

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Abstract

The study of Puritan resistance to the Church of England during the reign of the hierarchical episcopacy in the early seventeenth century has been well documented in extant research. Comparatively less attention, however, has been devoted to understanding what encouraged sustained Puritan resistance to English parish churches even after the overthrow of episcopacy and subsequent Puritan rise to power in England in the 1640s. This essay examines the perspective of Puritan Congregationalists who migrated to New England in the 1630s and chose to remain there even after events in England turned in their favor upon the abolition of episcopacy in the following decade. It explores what hindrances New England Puritans perceived as present in English parish churches that prevented them from becoming acceptably reformed churches. It argues that elements such as growing Presbyterian influence, fluid boundaries regarding both membership and the nature of the visible church, nonexistence of church covenants, and increasing disunity and sectionalism collectively influenced New England Puritan Congregationalists’ decision to remain in New England where they could construct their own acceptably reformed local churches, free from the ecclesiastical errors they found prevalent in the parish churches across the Atlantic. Such analysis demonstrates that not least among the reasons for sustained New England Puritan rejection of England as a viable ecclesiastical environment remained the desire for continued parish reform in the mid-seventeenth century.

Introduction

Writing during the English Interregnum of the 1650s, the Massachusetts Puritan divine John Cotton warned his fellow New England residents who contemplated a return to their mother country:

And so may I say to such, whether you will goe? will you be gone back againe to Egypt … If you be once incorporated into any of their Parishes, you will finde such beastly work in Church Government.
Despite the overthrow of episcopacy in the previous decade, Cotton pleaded against a mass return to the “Egypt” across the Atlantic from which he and fellow Puritans had journeyed approximately two decades prior to the time of his writing. Even in the midst of the Puritan rise to power in England in the early 1640s, New England Congregationalists maintained that there remained a void that separated the parish churches awaiting them in England from becoming the type of acceptably reformed churches found in New England. As Congregationalists, New England Puritans remained suspicious of all forms of higher ecclesiastical courts, synods, and certainly episcopal structures of church government. However, the abolition of episcopacy in the 1640s provided these Congregationalists an opportunity to hope that the Church of England might fall into greater alignment with their own Congregational beliefs, thus leading to prolonged debates with Presbyterian factions, a topic that will be discussed later in this paper. With episcopacy abolished and the chance for greater Congregational influence possible, the possibility of returning to England became what would appear a natural choice for transplanted English clergy in the wilderness of New England. However, as this paper will demonstrate, this idea did not gain substantive ground because a variety of ecclesiastical factors led New England Puritans to reject England and its parishes as viable religious climates even after the Puritan rise to political power in the 1640s.

Ecclesiastical polity and practice served as two defining areas of discontent among what Patrick Collinson termed the “hotter sort of Protestants” in early modern England. These Protestants, collectively known as Puritans, formed a group of reformers whose disdain for the episcopal organization, liturgy, and character of the Church of England increased over the course of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as their own desires for Reformed theology and anti-episcopal polity and liturgy were often ignored within the national church.

Though the concept of Puritanism has suffered from ambiguity and lack of a clear definition within past historiography, this paper seeks not to provide an exhaustive definition of its contours, but rather to focus most notably on Puritanism’s rejection of episcopacy in the Church of England and desire for a further reformation within it. Puritans disavowed the perceived papist nature of the institutional church, complete with its liturgy that bordered too closely on the Catholicism that England had ostensibly rejected under Queen Elizabeth in the sixteenth century. The failure of substantive reform pushed many Puritans to immigrate to New England, where they enjoyed freedom to create their distinctively reformed local churches, effectively removed from the control of bishops. Despite their anti-episcopal approach to crafting suitable churches in the New World, Puritans did not completely sever ties with their mother church. Rather, they upheld the legitimacy of a number of English parish churches, which, although belonging under

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the umbrella of the institutional Church of England, existed as “true” churches because of the collective piety of their members. Although they viewed the notion of a local church as more than merely a collection of pious members, New England Congregationalists reasoned that a “true” church would contain legitimate converts, which collectively bore witness to the godliness of their assembly.

Although this paper seeks to focus on New England Puritan responses to local parish churches, an understanding of their perception of these parish churches is incomplete if not seen within the broader framework of their response to the national church. While the institution of the Church of England itself was corrupt, New England Puritans reasoned, there still existed local parish churches whose congregants themselves composed what they regarded as a “true” church. However, no matter how valid these parish churches remained, there was still much reform needed to turn them into acceptably reformed churches, according to many New England Congregationalists. While not lumping them into the same category as the institutional Church of England but also refraining from attempts to completely sever ties with them, as had their Separatist counterparts, New England Puritan Congregationalists argued that parish churches were not yet complete in their reformation. This engendered immigration to New England where “true” churches could be formed. Since this type of parish reform encountered much resistance from the hierarchical episcopacy of the institutional church, many Puritans ventured across the Atlantic to form their own churches where they perceived a greater chance for more substantive reform awaited.

While numerous scholars have probed the grievances of New England Congregational Puritans regarding the need for further reform during the period of episcopal control of the Church of England, comparatively less work has been done on how those grievances evolved once the Puritans rose to power in the Church of England in the early 1640s. Thus, a gap exists in understanding how New England Puritan dissatisfaction with English parish churches continued even after the Puritans gained political power in the 1640s. An exploration of these grievances and investigation of what New England Congregationalists thought remained to be done to complete the reform process within the English parochial system lends insight into the development of Puritan thought on what constituted the visible church and how it should be displayed in local ecclesiastical polity and practice. By placing this discussion in a transoceanic context, insight is gained into how the relationship between New England Congregationalists and the English parish churches that they left behind evolved throughout the mid-seventeenth century. This article argues that the New England Congregationalists’ rejection of key areas of polity and practice among English parish churches served as a pivotal factor in their rejection of England as a viable climate for creating their understanding of legitimate churches. The first of these key areas involved increasing influence on English Puritanism from Presbyterianism, the hierarchical ecclesiology of which remained unacceptable to New England Congregationalists. Though English Puritanism contained both Presbyterians and Independents, increasing Presbyterianism displeased strongly Congregational Puritans in New England. The next area of discontent involved fluid boundaries regarding both membership and the nature of the visible
In the eyes of New England Congregationalists, not enough scrutiny of prospective members’ conversions and characters was performed before allowing them to join English parish churches. Additionally, New England Congregationalists found unacceptable the lack of church covenants, documents that they viewed as necessary to forming a legitimate church. Finally, the increasing disunity and sectionalism among English non-conformists dashed New England Congregationalists’ hopes for a unified non-conformist attack on episcopacy. This paper seeks to examine each of these issues to demonstrate the influence of these factors in leading New England Congregationalists to continue to reject England as a viable religious climate even after the Puritan overthrow of episcopacy. While these reasons in no way constitute an exhaustive list, given the equally pertinent family commitments, social obligations, and economic realities surrounding transatlantic travel in the seventeenth century, an analysis of the religious and ideological factors involved aids in presenting a fuller picture of why many New England Puritans chose to remain on the other side of the Atlantic while political and ecclesiastical transformations rocked the British Isles in the 1640s.

Recent Scholarship on Puritan Responses to English Parish Churches

Before exploring each of these facets of discontent, this paper first seeks to examine extant historiography on New England Congregationalists’ responses to ecclesiastical developments in England during the 1640s. While a paucity of research exists on the topic of New England perceptions of English affairs, this paper will instead analyze the rich diversity of scholarship on seventeenth-century English Puritanism more broadly on a macro-level before focusing more specifically on the micro-level of Puritan responses to English parish churches.

When surveying English Puritanism in its broadest sense, two basic questions that have been revisited by recent historiography are how to define the very idea of Puritanism and why Puritans established themselves as nonconformists. One of the most thorough responses to the question of how to define Puritanism can be found in Patrick Collinson’s aptly titled article, “Antipuritanism”, in which he argued that, by understanding both the prehistory of Puritanism and opposition to it in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, insight is gained into the peculiarities that defined and shaped it as a religious and ideological movement. The edited collection in which Collinson’s work and other essays addressing similar topics can be found, the *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, is a useful resource for identifying current trends in recent Puritan historiography. The additional concern regarding Puritan nonconformity has been addressed recently by Ethan Shagan, who argued that the Puritan belief in internal self-moderation led Puritans to argue that the Church of England was not, in fact, practicing this moderating discipline, either at the national or parish level.

Shagan’s analysis raises the question of why Puritans continued to acknowledge the

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Church of England as legitimate and reformable despite its episcopal overtones. Michael Parker asserted possible motivations for Puritans’ refusal to completely separate from the Church of England, not least of which remained the position it afforded them to work for its reform in Parliament after the Puritans began to make greater political advances within the English government. Thus, one reason, though not the exclusive or even the primary one, that a number of Puritans chose to remain in England stemmed from hopes for political change that would prove favorable for them. Also, in regard to the often uneasy relationship between politics and religion facing seventeenth-century Puritans, edited collections such as Charles Pryor’s *England’s Wars of Religion, Revisited* as well as Stephen Taylor’s *The Nature of the English Revolution, Revisited* include a variety of essays focused around the perplexity of the dual motivations of religion and politics within the English Civil War.

Within the ecclesiastical sphere of affairs during the Puritan rise to power in mid-seventeenth-century England, Rosemary Bradley’s dissertation, “‘Jacob and Esau Struggling [sic] in the Wombe’: A Study of Presbyterian and Independent Religious Conflicts, 1640-1648”, provided an excellent analysis of the multifaceted debate between English Puritans who favored a Presbyterian polity and those who favored one of a more Congregational nature, “Presbyterians” versus “Independents,” respectively. She argued that, despite their extensive pamphlet war over the course of the 1640s, neither side ultimately converted the other to their perspective, thus engendering the need for both to work together, which eventually occurred to a greater extent throughout the 1650s before the tumultuous years of the Restoration in the following decade. However, during the heat of the Presbyterian-Independent debate, tensions between the two sides remained severe.

More recently on the topic of the Presbyterian-Congregationalist divide, Francis J. Bremer produced an insightful analysis of the New England defense of Congregational polity against encroaching Scottish Presbyterianism during the Westminster Assembly of 1643. Bremer argued that this defense caused Puritans in New England to work more closely with the government in England in order to keep Presbyterian influence from finding its way to America. A disdain for hierarchical Presbyterianism thus united Puritans in England and America in a transatlantic anti-Presbyterian stance. In another work, Bremer also explored the constant interplay of events in England and New England that forced Puritans in both locations to reevaluate their ecclesiology in light of the ongoing debate on Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, leading some Puritans in the New World to focus on the continuities they

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5 Michael Parker, *John Winthrop: Founding the City upon a Hill* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 34.
8 Ibid., 276-277.
shared with their English counterparts rather than differences.  

The divisive issue of ecclesiastical polity between Presbyterians and Congregationalists can also be found in John Coffey’s work on the Scottish Presbyterian Samuel Rutherford. Coffey noted New England Puritan John Winthrop Junior’s communication with Scottish Ulster Presbyterians about potential emigration to America, though the question of how they would assimilate into a highly Congregationalist atmosphere raised questions.

Additionally, historians have noted the failure of the Westminster Assembly to bring the churches of England and Scotland into closer communion. David Hall noted Massachusetts Puritan Thomas Hooker’s defense of Congregationalism against rising Presbyterian influence near the time of the Westminster Assembly. In addition, Polly Ha argued that it was through private correspondence that New England Puritans learned of the Presbyterian leanings of the Westminster Assembly, thus prompting such a defense of congregationalism. In addition to Ha’s work on English Presbyterianism, another notable work on the topic is Elliot Vernon’s *The Sion College Conclave and London Presbyterianism during the English Revolution*, in which he explored the nature of Presbyterianism in an English context. Finally, Chad Van Dixhoorn’s recent work on the Westminster Assembly shed light on New England perceptions that Presbyterianism would eclipse hope for Congregational reform, thus reinforcing their decision to remain in New England.

Regarding Puritan responses to English parish churches at the local level, historians have investigated how Puritan behavior created a new relationship that affected Puritan relations with both churches in England as well as their counterparts in New England. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, many scholars investigated the structure of the parish churches in England that the Puritans embraced as representative of “true” churches, though in need of further reform. In 1977, Murray Tolmie produced an original exploration of the peculiar character of London Separatist churches in seventeenth-century England, noting their radical affiliation as nonconformists. Stephen Brachlow’s 1981 article on English Separatism analyzed examples of what he termed “progressive” parish churches in England by asserting that many followed a congregational model without interference from local bishops, albeit dependent upon the leniency of the latter. The following year, Slayden Yarbrough identified a number of these

distinctly congregational elements present within some parish churches, including “acts of
covenanting, election of officers by the church, and ordination [by the church]” that allowed
Puritans to justify their validity. Since parishes contained some or all of these elements, Puritans
could justify terming them “true” churches. The same year, Michael Moody analyzed Puritan
behavior in parish churches that held a more Congregational stance by demonstrating that many
Puritans selectively chose which portions of church services to attend, avoiding the more
episcopal liturgical elements.

Within more recent historiography, Michael Winship drew attention to the degree of
agency among nonconformists who selectively chose which aspects of parish life in which to
participate, noting, for example, the common practice of “attending parish church services in the
morning and dissenting services in the afternoon, and even serving as parish church officers
while doing so,” thus further indicating a significant amount of choice for Puritans with
nonconformist leanings. David A. Weir also focused on Puritan activity in English parishes by
noting the failed Puritan attempt at purchasing rights to appoint ministers through patronage,
which ultimately met its death upon Bishop William Laud’s realization of what was transpiring
among Puritans within the parochial system. However, the fact that Puritans were able to attempt
to purchase these rights indicates that they had some degree of agency in influencing parish
politics. A recent and thorough discussion of these types of parishes and the conflicts within
them is found in Peter Lake’s book, The Boxmaker’s Revenge: ‘orthodoxy’, ‘heterodoxy’, and
the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London.

In addition to analyzing Puritan behavior within English parishes, historians have noted
Puritan understandings of a division within these parishes between what they considered to be
the regenerate and unregenerate. For example, Francis Bremer noted the Puritan minister John
Cotton’s practice of identifying a separation between the members of his Boston, Lincolnshire,
parish church at large and members of the select group within it whom he deemed “godly”, the
latter of whom composed a “true” church. An earlier work by Avihu Zakai drew attention to
the inherent conflict facing Puritans in England during the era of episcopacy by noting that their
conflict with the so-called “unregenerate” affected not only their stances on church polity and
practice, but also their approach to living in a worldly society, which they perceived to be in
need of reformation, thus in part prompting their migration to New England. Though not all who

17 Slayden Yarbrough, “The Influence of Plymouth Colony Separatism on Salem: An Interpretation of John Cotton’s
Letter to Samuel Skelton” Church History 51 (September 1982): 296.
18 Michael E. Moody, “Trials and Travels of a Nonconformist Layman: The Spiritual Odyssey of Stephen Offwood,
1564–ca. 1635” Church History 51 (June 1982): 159.
19 Michael Winship, “Defining puritanism in Restoration England: Richard Baxter and others respond to a Friendly
2005), 22.
22 Francis J. Bremer, First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in the Atlantic World (Lebanon: University
maintained this belief emigrated, a significant number did.23 Michael Winship also pointed to the ramifications of Puritan embrace of parish churches by pointing to its connection with the later Halfway Covenant, in which members who had not yet voiced a confession of faith were allowed to become partial members, thus muddying the conception of the visible church, much to the same effect as that of English parish churches in which some but not all members composed a “true” church. As will be explored later, the concept of the visible church and its members remained a highly contentious issue even among Puritans themselves.24

Historians have also investigated the often polemical nature of labels of affiliation used to identify nonconformists. More recently, for example, Winship pointed to the complexity of this position by arguing, “Whether this willingness, at least in principle, to acknowledge true churches scattered here and there among England’s parish churches made these Congregationalists non-Separatists, as they claimed, was a question that could provoke a variety of heated responses from more moderate Puritans and Separatists.” What exactly constituted a nonconformist lacked clarity.25 Francis Bremer argued that one primary motivation behind the affirmation of parish churches involved Puritanism’s attempt to distance itself from the more radical label of separatism.26 Though vocally nonconformist, Puritans remained cautious of identifying with radicals who pushed the bounds of orthodoxy in the seventeenth century. An excellent example of recent work on radical factions is David Como’s Blown by the Spirit, in which he investigated the peculiarities of English Antinomians and the important role they played in shaping Puritan responses to both the Church of England and fellow nonconformists.27 As becomes apparent, labels, self-imposed or otherwise, remained an object of contention among the multiple divisions within nonconformity.

Furthermore, adoption of Presbyterianism or Independency at the parish level was not always monolithic. Some parishes chose to selectively embrace certain portions of Presbyterian polity while not embracing it in its fullest scope. For example, Ann Hughes explored the effects of the English Civil War on the local community of Warwickshire, noting in particular what she termed a “quasi-Presbyterian clerical community,” which “could be enjoyed without involvement in any dangerous campaign for overall religious change, and without the drawbacks of formal lay participation in a full Presbyterian system.”28

Finally, though not without struggle against episcopal parish churches in the New World, notably those in Virginia, the New World did in fact provide Puritans with unprecedented

opportunities for construction of what they considered to be “true” churches. Reflecting on the dichotomy between Puritan visions for churches in New England and the corruption they saw as inherent within the Church of England, David VanDrunem pointed to the fundamental originality of New England church polity by noting “the fact that these were attempts to establish new societies rather than adjustments to already-existing societies.” Kevin Shape noted John Cotton’s apocalyptic reading of quarrels over church polity as he viewed New England Congregationalism as evidence of the New Jerusalem on earth. Therefore, New England responses to English ecclesiastical affairs were shaped by the fact that they sought not to replicate extant parish churches that they saw as having substantive problems, but rather to reformulate the very understanding of a local church.

Thus, as a brief survey of extant historiography reveals, many historians have touched upon the inherent conflict between New England congregationalism and the ecclesiology of the parish churches that they left behind. However, more analysis is needed regarding what New England Puritans thought should be done to transform English parish churches into acceptably reformed churches. Therefore, the transoceanic framework of newer scholarship allows for an as of yet unexplored approach that takes into account the opinions of New England Puritan Congregationalists who felt the need for more substantive ecclesiastical reform in England. Although the more radical areas of England contained a substantial number of dissenting congregations and conventicles, many, though certainly not all, official parish churches remained locations of intense conflict promulgated by Puritans who desired more radical and substantive changes within the congregation.

As mentioned above, this article seeks to contribute to this discussion by arguing that New England Congregationalists’ rejection of key areas of polity and practice among English parish churches such as growing Presbyterian influence, fluid boundaries regarding both membership and the nature of the visible church, nonexistence of church covenants, and increasing disunity and sectionalism, led New England Congregationalists to continue to reject England as a viable religious climate even after the Puritan overthrow of episcopacy. This argument demonstrates that, although conditions in England became more favorable to Puritan values during the middle of the seventeenth century, New England Puritans continued to reject English parish churches as incomplete in their reformation.

**Puritan Response to the Overthrow of Episcopacy: Migration to New England**

The 1640s in England witnessed a drastic series of political changes as Puritans rose to political power during the tumultuous decade of the English Civil War. Rejecting what they

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perceived as King Charles I’s misuse of power and neglect of Parliament, anti-royalists and later Puritans led by Oliver Cromwell formed a substantive opposition to the monarchy. Though the political details of the English Civil War do not comprise the central focus of this paper, it remains necessary to understand the context in which Puritans rose to both political and ecclesiastical power in the 1640s. Along with the political realities of Parliamentary opposition to King Charles I, there existed no less fractious divides in the realm of ecclesiastical politics. As part of Puritan political rule in the mid 1640s, episcopacy was abolished, leading to a complex debate over the proper form of church government between Presbyterians, on the one hand, and Independents, who instead favored a Congregational polity, on the other. However, although Puritans did gain a significant degree of political control, this control did not remain stable throughout the entire decade. Rather, Puritans lost control in the latter years, as the years 1648-1649 witnessed the purging of members of the Long Parliament who tolerated the prospect of reaching an agreement with Charles I, many of whom held Presbyterian leanings. The New Model Army’s riddance of these members combined with London’s sectarian underground led to weakened Puritan presence in political government by the close of the 1640s.

The groundwork for overthrowing episcopacy, however, began much earlier in the sixteenth century with influence from early Puritans such as Thomas Cartwright, whose criticism of the hierarchical organization of the Church of England set in motion Puritan disdain for the established church. Reinforcing his views was the Admonition to Parliament, produced (anonymously) by fellow Puritans John Field and Thomas Wilcox in 1572 in which they advocated a Presbyterian polity against that of the current episcopal system of organization. Not many decades later, the Puritan argument was strengthened by the work of William Bradshaw, whose 1605 work, entitled Twelve general arguments: Proving that the ceremonies imposed upon the ministers of the gospell in England, by our prelates, are unlawful, likewise rejected the episcopal hierarchy of the Church of England.

A few decades later, at the same time that a number of Puritans began to emigrate to America, English Puritan William Ames published his attack on episcopacy entitled A Fresh Suit against Ceremonies in God’s Worship. This argument was further advanced in 1641 under the Root and Branch Petition, in which 1,500 persons opined their grievances against what they generally perceived as hierarchical imposition. As the decade of civil wars continued, Puritan Paul Baynes published The diocesans tryall: wherein the maine controversies about the forme of governement of the churches of Christ are judiciously stated, in which he argued for the creation

33 William Bradshaw, Twelve general arguments: Proving that the ceremonies imposed upon the ministers of the gospell in England, by our prelates, are unlawful; and therefore, that the ministers of the Gospel, for the bare and sole omission of them in church-service, for conscience sake are most unjustly charge of disloyaltie to His Majesty (London: sold in Westminster Hall and Paul’s Church-Yard, 1660).
34 William Ames, A Fresh Suit against Human Ceremonies in God’s Worship (Amsterdam: Printed by the successors of Giles Thorp, 1633).
of a non-episcopal polity for the Church of England. The following year, after he had already arrived in America, John Cotton published his defense of Congregationalism entitled *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England*, in which he argued that the polity of the apostolic church was in fact congregational rather than episcopal, at least the version of episcopacy present in the manner of the Church of England.

After defeat in Parliament, the Root and Branch petition failed to rid England of episcopacy, an event that did not occur until the autumn of 1646, at which time Parliament passed a law successfully guaranteeing the abolition of archbishoprics. Between these years, a large number of English and Scottish divines held the opening of the Westminster Assembly in 1643, which eventually allowed for a reformulation of the Church of England with considerable Presbyterian influence, although this Presbyterian advancement was later reversed during the Restoration of 1660. Although the Westminster Assembly was certainly not representative of all dissenting factions, it did include the two most prominent groups of nonconformists: Presbyterians and Independents (or Congregationalists). Although the Assembly held a Presbyterian majority, it also included notable Independents such as Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye, among others, who opposed the Presbyterian polity defended at the Assembly. While both Presbyterians and Congregationalists opposed episcopacy as the proper system of government for the Church of England, they held varying attitudes toward retaining parts of its organization and liturgy, with the New England Congregationalists keeping the farthest distance from it.

By the 1640s, however, a number of Puritans had already made the decision to cross the Atlantic in order to find solace from the tumultuous ecclesiastical feud raging in the Church of England. While certainly not constituting a majority, many Puritans chose to remain in England for a variety of geographic, economic, and personal reasons, others chose to sail across the

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35 Paul Baynes, *The diocesans tryall: wherein the maine controversies about the forme of government of the churches of Christ are judiciously stated* (London: Printed for John Bellamie, and are to be sould at his shop at the signe of the three Golden-Lyons in Cornhill neare the Royall-Exchange, 1644).


38 *Concerning Church Government and Ordination of Ministers* (Edenburgh [sic]: Printed by Evan Tyler, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majesty and reprinted at London for Robert Bostock at the Kings head in Pauls Churchyard, 1647), 10.

39 A Letter of Many Ministers in Old England, Requesting the Judgement of their Reverend Brethren in New England Concerning Nine Positions: Written Anno Dom. 1637: Together with Their Answer Thereunto Returned, anno 1639: And the Reply Made unto the Said Answer, and Sent Over Unto Them, anno 1640. London: 1643. Polly Ha argued, “Thus while presbyterians and congregationalists developed varying responses to episcopacy, and arguments against each other, their debate over ecclesiology was also shaped by the concern over separation and their relationship with an to the Church of England.” For an extended discussion, see Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 1590-1640 (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 2011), 116. Francis J. Bremer has explored the degree of agreement between these two groups on their mutual rejection of episcopacy. See Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 132-133.
Atlantic to journey to New England. For example, the Puritan minister John Cotton, who served a long tenure as parish minister in Boston, Lincolnshire, immigrated to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1633. The year prior, Cotton received a summons by the High Court of Commissions after a parishioner reported his failure to genuflect during Communion.\(^{40}\) He then left Boston to go into hiding in London rather than appear before the court.\(^{41}\) However, Cotton soon made the decision to emigrate to New England, ultimately deciding it best to “withdraw myself from this present storm, and to minister in this country [New England].”\(^{42}\)

However, even after emigrating, Cotton did not completely sever ties with the parish churches that he left behind, including his own. For example, Cotton explained in his treatise *On the Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* that Puritans chose to immigrate to New England not to separate from English parish churches in their entirety, but rather to separate from the corruptions that appeared so prevalent within them.\(^{43}\) In another treatise, *Of the Holiness of Church Members*, Cotton asserted that complete abandonment of parish churches would have caused unnecessary internal division among Puritans who, despite their divergent views on the nature of the visible church, needed to work together to support the broader reformation movement against the hierarchical episcopacy. “By hasty withdrawing, Reformation is not procured, but retarded,” Cotton explained.\(^{44}\)

Thus, if such parish churches remained legitimate enough for New England Congregationalists to refrain from discontinuing fellowship with them, and the abolition of episcopacy in the early 1640s promised an end to hierarchical church polity, why then did New England Congregationalists choose not to return to England? A partial reason for this collective decision concerned the fact that parish churches were not yet acceptably reformed churches in the eyes of a large number of Puritans in New England. Two New England Congregationalists, John Allin and Thomas Shepard, acknowledged that the errors present within these churches that kept them from becoming acceptably reformed churches were not in matters of essential doctrine, “Neither do we understand that these Churches are accused of any Errors about the saving Truths of the Gospel,” they explained, but rather on the more secondary issues of church polity and practice. Even in “in the best reformed Churches, and particularly by our godly Learned Brethren of England and Scotland,” problems still remained that hindered a “general and holy Reformation” across the Atlantic.\(^{45}\)

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In his reflection on the spiritual status of the parish churches in England in 1643, Massachusetts puritan minister Richard Mather asserted:

Which we do not speak to justify the Parishes altogether, as if there were not dangerous corruptions found in them, nay rather … we may lament it with tears, that in respect of their members and Ministry, in respect of their worship and walkings, in many of those Assemblies there are found such apparent corruptions, as are justly grievous to a godly soul. In a word, the corruptions remaining are just causes of repentance and humiliation.46

Such corruptions included fluid boundaries regarding membership and the nature of the visible church, nonexistence of church covenants, and increasing disunity and sectionalism. In addition to these corruptions, differences of opinion on church polity separated English and New English perspectives and shaped the ongoing ecclesiastical debates of the 1640s. This essay first examines differences in church polity, specifically the dichotomy between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism before then exploring differences in numerous elements of church practice, frequently termed by Puritans as “corruptions.” It will then conclude by demonstrating the existence of continued reluctance among Puritans to return to England in the 1640s as a result of yet unreformed parish churches.

**Congregationalism versus Presbyterianism**

One primary reason for the decision to stay in New England stemmed from the increasing Presbyterian influence engendered by the Westminster Assembly that opened in 1643. Although they maintained amicable relations over their mutual affirmation of Calvinism and disdain for episcopacy, Congregationalists and Presbyterians did not share compatible views on church polity. Congregationalists in England and New England alike both argued that power in the church should be allocated in the hands of the congregation, exercised through its elders, rather than in elders ruling through a presbytery or synod.47 While the Church of England and the Church of Scotland had maintained considerable distance throughout the early seventeenth century, the Westminster Assembly, beginning in 1643, sought to bring the polity of the two national churches closer together. However, this issue proved complex. Scottish Commissioners became increasingly irritated at the largely Erastian position of English Presbyterianism, which allocated too much power to the state, they lamented. Although Scottish and English Presbyterians joined forces in mutual rejection of episcopacy, such as among the group of Puritans known as Smectymnuuns who published treatises attacking episcopal polity, the proper definition and understanding of Presbyterianism itself remained somewhat muddled as Scottish

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47 John Cotton, *Of the Keyes to the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Power thereof; according to the Word of God* (London: printed by M. Simmons for Henry Overton, and are to be sold at his shop in Popes-Alley, 1644), 20.
and English divines disagreed on the role of the state in ecclesiastical matters.\textsuperscript{48} Thus, English Presbyterianism remained peculiar in its distance from both Scottish Presbyterianism and Congregationalism.

In his journal, a New England Puritan leader John Winthrop explained his own hopeful feelings and those of his fellow New Englanders in 1640 upon hearing of the arrival of a vocally anti-episcopal group of Presbyterians known as the Scottish Covenanters as well as the new political body expected to be somewhat more favorable to nonconformists known as the Long Parliament:

They brought us news of the Scots entering into England, and the calling of a parliament, and the hope of a thorough reformation, etc., whereupon some among us began to think of returning back to England.\textsuperscript{49}

However, the strong influence of Presbyterianism prompted Winthrop to express a vastly different tone three years later during a large meeting of ministers at Harvard College in 1643. With John Cotton and fellow Congregationalist Thomas Hooker presiding, the ministers addressed the rising tide of interest in Presbyterian polity, noting that some ministers in Newbury, Massachusetts, had begun to model their own systems of church government on that of a presbytery. As moderators, these two avid Congregationalists sought to diffuse Presbyterian fervor from eclipsing the Congregationalism that served as a hallmark of New England polity. Winthrop informed that the meeting adjourned with a general denunciation of Presbyterianism and the collective decision of the Newbury ministers with Presbyterian leanings to reconsider such leanings in light of the Congregationalist arguments espoused during the meeting.\textsuperscript{50}

In a later treatise, Hooker reinforced the centrality of the ongoing debate between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism to transatlantic ecclesiology by terming it “the subject of the inquiry of this age.”\textsuperscript{51} Hooker likewise focused on the allocation of power within the church. He argued that Samuel Rutherford, a Scottish commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, incorrectly assigned this power to ruling elders rather than to the church itself. While these officers remained vital to the function of the church, Hooker asserted, they should not be regarded as the recipients of the keys of the power of the church. Rather, the congregation should hold this power. Stating the relationship between church officers, the congregations they serve, and the balance of power between the two, Hooker explained:

Office-power is but a little part of the power of the Keyes: like the nibble of the Key: and therefore

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\textsuperscript{48} For an expanded discussion of the divergences between English and Scottish Presbyterianism, refer to Ha, \textit{English Presbyterianism}.


\textsuperscript{50} Winthrop, \textit{Journal}, 139.

\textsuperscript{51} Thomas Hooker, \textit{A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline Wherein The Way of the Congregational Churches of Christ in New-England, is Warranted and Cleared, by Scripture and Argument, and all Exceptions of weight made against it by sundry Learned Divines} (London: Printed by A.M. for John Bellamy at the three Golden Lions in Cornhill, near the Royall Exchange, 1648), 11.
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that may well be in Officers, and yet the power of the Keyes not be firstly in them, but in such, who
gave that power before, theirs did give what they have, and can take away what they have given.52

Thus, the congregation, “those that gave that power before,” remained the proper recipient of the
eys of the church.

In his own writings, Cotton likewise argued that differences over polity severed New
England churches from their counterparts across the Atlantic. While jointly celebrating with his
English friends the reduction of episcopacy in which “the hierarchical yoke is broken and the
Philistine cart of human inventions has been put away,” Cotton avowed that there still remained
substantial differences between the churches of New England and those within the English parish
system.53 For example, Cotton noted the divergent stances, which he termed the “great chasm”,
regarding the allocation of power in church government. Before delving into these, however,
Cotton listed the elements upon which New England Congregationalists agreed with their
English brethren including the notions that rule by elders remained the most biblical form of
church government, synods could at times be useful when necessary, and unsurprisingly, that the
hierarchical episcopacy remained a mutual object of loathing.

“What small thing is it that remains to keep us apart?” Cotton then asked. The answer, he
asserted, lay in the New England Congregationalist rejection of synods as a normative form of
church government. While stating that synods could at times be useful, Cotton argued that power
should be ultimately allocated to the elders who in turn sought to bring all matters of decision
before the congregation and acquire congregational consent before proceeding in decision
making. In extenuating circumstances in which a matter could not be brought before the
congregation, a council of elders could make a decision, he explained. He asserted that he and
other New Englanders drafted these arguments into writing as a response to an English council
assembled to address questions of church government and worship in the interest of “the need for
the reformation of religion,” arguably a reference to the Westminster Assembly of 1643, which
occurred three years prior to Cotton’s treatise.54 He further asserted that these arguments relating
to church polity were not mere justifications for New England practices but were rather key
elements that Puritans in New England wished to see instituted in the English parishes that they
had left behind.

The Visible Church

By attempting to prove the peculiar characteristics that led to what New Englanders
generally considered a thorough ecclesiastical reform in the wilderness of America, Cotton and
Hooker sought to highlight the differences between these New England churches and the parish

52 Hooker, A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline, 200.
Answer to the Whole Set of Questions of…Mr. William Apollonius, trans. Douglas Horton, 1648 (Cambridge:
54 Cotton, An Apologetical Preface, 46.
churches in England that had not enjoyed so thorough an internal reform. However, matters of polity were not the only driving wedge between New England Puritans and the parish churches of England. Rather, a host of issues surrounding how parish churches conceived the concept of the visible church remained of vital necessity. For example, in a treatise entitled *Of the Holiness of Church Members*, written in 1650, Cotton sought to dispute what he saw as the erroneous claims of two Scottish commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, Samuel Rutherford and Robert Baillie. In his treatise, Cotton attacked Rutherford’s equation of an external call with the concept of the visible church. By the term “external call,” Cotton referred to the concept of the gospel being presented to listeners through human mediums, such as sermons, lectures, or other means of hearing the word of God. This external call remained only so effective upon its listeners, however, he claimed. Unlike the external call, which was employed by human agents, only God could apply the internal call, in which he called an individual to conversion, Cotton argued. The visible church, then, as a representation of God’s saints on the earth, must be composed of those who have responded to the internal call, not merely through outward acceptance of the external call, asserted Cotton. He further explained the problems created by Rutherford’s collapse of the two terms together, complaining, “here is indeed an external calling but here be no Saints.”

To support his argument, he then created a hypothetical example of the establishment of what he termed a “Preaching Ministry” in Irish parish churches. If such a ministry did exist, he informed Rutherford, the ministry in itself could not transform the parish churches into a visible church, a *Catum vocatorum*, a “congregation of calling.” Rather, the need for a more structured definition of which persons constituted the visible church remained central to the New England Puritan Congregationalist discourse on ecclesiology and what remained lacking in the parish churches in England.

**Membership**

Intimately related to determining which persons constituted the visible church was the pivotal issue that Puritans in New England saw failings in the handling of membership in the parish churches across the Atlantic. For example, Cotton refuted what his “brothers of the Presbyterial way” saw fit for church membership. Rather than merely joining in fellowship with a particular church, Cotton asserted, true membership was only valid if accompanied by a profession of personal conversion. Examples of divergences from biblical patterns for ecclesiastical practice led Cotton to make the bolder assertion that Presbyterians like Rutherford refused to acknowledge Christ as the head of the visible church, opting instead to let unregenerate members hinder the purity of Christ’s church. Such failure, argued Cotton, limited the effectiveness of parish churches from becoming acceptably reformed churches. After thus addressing the arguments set forth by Rutherford, he then turned to those made by Baillie.

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56 Ibid., 10.
57 Cotton, *Of the Holiness of Church Members*, 23, 27.
According to Cotton, Baillie saw the prescriptions for church membership outlined by Cotton as relating not to the reformed churches already in place in Scotland, but rather to new churches that were in the preliminary stages of establishing precedents for membership. Cotton spoke for Baillie, who argued, in contrast, “the reformed Churches who take themselves to be so farre true, that they need no dissolution, or erection, they are not concerned in this case of admission.”

According to Cotton, Baillie viewed these members as having already received membership upon their baptism in infancy. To this Cotton responded that while these infants should indeed be afforded the status of baptized covenant children into the church, they should not, however, be “confirmed” members, with privileges of taking Communion, until they individually professed faith. This stance, he argued, “doth not tend to the dissolving, or unchurching of all reformed Churches, but rather to their purifying and reformation according to the primitive pattern.” Thus, a central contention that Cotton held against parish churches remained the manner in which the unconverted gained access to membership. Argued Cotton, “we could never expect a change and serious Reformation of these evil and difficult times, whilst such vicious Hypocrites are admitted into Churches.”

Hooker likewise entered into the membership debate. After listing the ideas on which he did agree with his English and Scottish counterparts, he then echoed Cotton’s lament over the means by which Rutherford defined membership in the visible church. He asserted that Rutherford argued for the admission to membership of unregenerate persons who “hate to be reformed.” Although denying them the privileges of Communion, Rutherford, according to Hooker, allowed these members to become “ordinary hearers, and so members of a visible Church.”

Hooker contested Rutherford’s logic on this admission to membership, arguing that those who did not show evidence of regeneration should not be afforded a place within the membership of the church. “While they hate to be reformed, they have no title,” asserted Hooker. Rutherford’s reasoning, he argued, implicitly led to the claim that members who had been excommunicated were thus still members, an idea he found unbiblical and ultimately harmful to the purity of the church. If nothing separated members who had voiced conversions of saving faith from those who merely attended sermons, then nothing substantially blocked excommunicants who found their way into church services as habitual attendants, Hooker stated. Furthermore, such a stance weakened the meaning of belonging to a single congregation: members could potentially be admitted to membership in multiple congregations if the only requirement involved attendance; “so a man may be a member of three of four congregations,” Hooker warned.

58 Ibid., 42.
59 Ibid., 43.
60 Ibid., 76.
61 Hooker, A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline, 57.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.

Past Tense


In addition to matters of polity, the nature of the visible church, and membership, the role of a church covenant also factored prominently into New England Congregationalists’ opinions of the state of English parish churches. Inherently tied to membership, the church covenant served as both an affirmation of orthodox doctrine and a means to pledge responsibility for becoming a participating member of a church. In his emphasis on the nature of the visible church in his 1648 treatise The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared, Cotton listed among the distinguishing facets of New England congregational churches a church covenant, required profession of faith, and subjection to the church in matters of discipline. This form of ecclesiastical practices, known as the New England Way, set it apart “so far as it differeth from other Reformed Churches,” informed Cotton.64

In addition, the Massachusetts Puritan minister Richard Mather addressed this role in his 1643 treatise An Apology of the Churches in New England for Church Covenant. Mather argued that a church covenant remained essential to the development of a valid church. Regarding the parish churches in England, Mather noted that many critics argued that the idea of a covenant was not practically feasible because local magistrates forced membership rather than allowed for voluntary acts of joining to local parishes. Mather countered this argument by stating that while some members joined only as a result of fear of punishment at the hands of magistrates if they neglected membership, this phenomenon was not universal in most parish churches and many in fact joined voluntarily. Thus, he claimed, these parishes possessed a form of church covenant in the form of the “Articles of Religion which they profess.”65

Mather then drew a distinction between English parishes and those of Catholic profession. While the latter remained outside the bounds of what Puritans viewed as legitimate churches, he observed, English parishes churches could in fact be called “true” churches because, unlike their Catholic counterparts, they had enough semblance of Protestant doctrine to escape the derogatory label of “papist”. While these churches collectively remained valid in the eyes of New England Congregationalists, Mather did not conceal the fact that there remained substantial corruptions within them. In addition to lacking a church covenant as explicit as those found among New England congregations, Mather defined the corruptions of parish churches as a lack of discipline and “church-order.”66 He asserted that by joining oneself to a particular congregation via affirmation of a covenant, a member therefore placed himself under the discipline of that congregation. Nevertheless, these churches sinned “not out of obstinacy, but of ignorance,” Mather explained. Lacking a permanent model to follow in the turbulent years after the Puritan rise to power, these churches, “never having had means to be convinced,” remained unaware of the ecclesiastical standards to which they should adhere in order to become

66 Mather, An Apology, 53.
acceptably reformed churches.  

Sectionalism

Finally, while issues such as church government, the nature of the visible church, and membership requirements dominated a great portion of New England Puritan discontent with the English parish system, other concerns preoccupied the minds of New England divines as well. For example, in his 1644 treatise entitled *New Englands Lamentation for Old Englands present errours*, Thomas Shepard drew attention to what he termed the “infection” brought about by the development of such heretical sectarian influences as Anabaptism, Separatism, Antimonianism, and Familism. Although the majority of Puritan ministers rejected these sects as deviations from the reformed faith, Shepard lamented that those who did adhere to them created unnecessary divisions and internal disunity in England, which collectively threatened the rise of “worse dayes than ever yet England saw.” However, toleration of some sects was advanced by their association with the Dissenting Brethren, a group of Independents within the Westminster Assembly. Although these sects could at times claim orthodoxy by association with the Dissenting Brethren, they did not hold the legitimacy needed to exist as legitimate religious factions in the eyes of New England Congregationalists.

By developing incorrect practices in baptism, psalm singing, and administration of sacraments, these sects weakened the legitimacy of English parish churches. Although New England was certainly not immune to sectional strife, given the divergence of Puritan and Separatist ecclesiology, Shepard saw these religious groups as at least congruent in basic doctrine, unlike the widely varying doctrines of Anabaptist, Antimorian, and Familist sects in England. Hooker likewise noted the corruption inherent in the rise of unorthodox sects in England. For example, he drew particular attention to the threat posed by Antimionians and Familists, who “might have proceeded to the subversion of many souls” of those who instead emigrated to New England. Such disunity, Shepard and Hooker averted, effectively prevented the unity needed for the health and growth of parish churches.

Conclusion: Sustained Rejection of English Parish Churches

When analyzing movement patterns of seventeenth-century Puritans, it remains undoubted that a number of the reasons for their resolve to remain in the New World rather than return to England stemmed from a variety of pragmatic dissuasions, not least of which were the realities of transatlantic travel as well as the burden of resettling after return. While these factors

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67 Ibid., 48.
69 For an expanded discussion of this position, see Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 170.
certainly remained pertinent, they do not provide the complete ideological context of why New England Puritans, particularly members of the clergy, chose to remain in New England. The issues raised in this paper regarding New England attitudes toward parish churches provide a significant, though not exhaustive, explanation for their decision to stay in the New World.

Furthermore, it would be untenable to argue that no large scale return to England existed during the early seventeenth century; Susan Hardman Moore’s *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home* demonstrated that a significant portion of nonconformists chose not to remain in the New World during the series of conflicts known as the Civil War and Interregnum.  

In addition, a number of Puritan ministers, such as the Congregationalist minister Hugh Peters, returned to England for the purpose of fighting against the royalists in the Civil War. However, this paper seeks not to deny the reality of return voyages but rather to investigate the faction of Puritan ministers who instead chose to remain in New England. While the handful of such ministers examined here certainly do not constitute an exhaustive or even majority opinion of all New England clergy, their stories do, however, bear witness to the existence of a Puritan desire to reject English parish churches even after attempts for further reformation began.

After reciting his list of hallmarks that made New England churches unique, including the allocation of power to the congregation, qualification of the nature of the visible church, the necessity of a church covenant, and subjection to the church, including its discipline, Cotton argued, “And these be the chief doctrines and practices of our way, so far as it differeth from other Reformed Churches.” These doctrines and practices indeed proved central to the status of English parish churches and their need for continued reformation.

Thus, New England Congregationalists’ rejection of key areas of polity and practice among English parish churches regarding areas such as church government, membership, covenanting, and unity led them to reject England as a viable religious climate even after the Puritan overthrow of episcopacy. This argument demonstrates that although conditions in England began to become more favorable to Puritan values during the middle of the seventeenth century, Puritans in New England continued to reject its parish churches as incomplete in their reformation. These necessary requirements for ecclesiastical legitimacy proved too central to the function of the church, and their absence too prominent, to allow New England Puritans to justifiably return to their native country. Therefore, even after several decades, New England Congregationalists remained convinced that the errors within English parish churches signaled that New England would prove to be not merely a temporary retreat but rather a new permanent home.

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Queen Victoria’s Durbar Room: The Imperial Museum at Home

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Abstract

In 1890, Queen Victoria commissioned John Lockwood Kipling to create a sumptuous ‘Indian dining room’ for Osborne House, her summer palace on the Isle of Wight. This room later came to be known as the Durbar Room, a great hall in which the queen displayed many of the gifts she received from Indian princes as Empress of India. As a strange amalgam of private and public space, dining room and museum, the Durbar Room was an indulgent project. Originally constructed by Sikh artisans led by Bhaj Ram Singh, the room was only opened to the public after the queen’s death. When Osborne House became a convalescent home for retired military officers, the room was maintained as a kind of museum where a selection of decadent Jubilee presents was displayed to an eager public. The Durbar Room is also interesting as a popular subject for picture postcards, and many views of the room have been printed and sent by post since the room opened to the public in 1904. The Durbar Room is a unique case study in the display of Indian material culture and the indulgence that is the private royal museum. This paper addresses the decadence of the Durbar Room, as well as its collections, construction, and popularity in picture postcards, with regards to its status as a uniquely indulgent private collection of Indian art and design.

Queen Victoria’s Durbar Room was designed to exhibit her resplendent collections of princely gifts at her summer palace. While the room’s origins can be traced to Queen Victoria’s personal evaluations of her immense empire, a contemporary understanding of this space is obscured and complicated by its adherence to nineteenth-century methods of display. Uncomfortably positioned between the ideas of a royal palace, family home, trophy case, and tourist destination, the Durbar Room’s difficult identity asks how a twenty-first century viewer can responsibly appraise nineteenth-century legacies of imperial display.

On the Cowes waterfront on the Isle of Wight, Osborne House stands as a resplendent Italianate gem of the Victorian era. Positioned at the northern point of the Isle, Osborne looks over the Solent strait towards the southern English port cities of Southampton and Portsmouth. The country retreat and favored sanctuary was built to serve as a less formal royal palace for Queen Victoria. It was at Osborne where Victoria and her husband, Albert, Prince Consort, were able to give their nine children the opportunity to participate in diverse recreational activities on the home’s private beach and working model farm.
Built between 1845 and 1851, the house was largely Albert’s personal creative project, and he collaborated with the gifted builder Thomas Cubitt in designing the home and its landscaped gardens.\(^1\) After its completion, Osborne House became one of the royal residences preferred by Queen Victoria, which included her English palaces, Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace, as well as her Scottish estates, Balmoral Castle in the Highlands and Holyrood House in Edinburgh. Of all of these superlative stately homes, Osborne House is perhaps the manor most closely allied with leisure and recreation, a distinction attributable in large measure to its exclusive seafront access and relative distance from the southern English coast.

After Albert’s untimely death in 1861, Victoria was left legendarily distraught. Her mourning continued through the rest of her life, and the queen consigned herself to wearing black for the next 40 years. It was to Osborne that the bereaved Victoria withdrew. However, because it was conceived as a summer palace, Osborne lacked the requisite amenities for conducting state affairs — there was no throne room, formal dining room, or stateroom. Formal occasions on the Isle of Wight were usually relegated to specially constructed tents on the rolling lawns of the property. This deficiency led to the preparation of architectural plans for a new wing, named the Durbar Wing, which was built between 1890 and 1891.\(^2\) The substantial addition was to be the only significant alteration made to the house after Albert’s passing.

The stateroom that would serve as the center of the new wing was an opulent and whimsical creation — a decadent tribute to Victoria’s status as the Empress of India. Though the queen would never visit South Asia, she had the power and means to recreate certain aspects of the subcontinent within her British pleasure palace. The design of the room may have also been influenced, in part, by Victoria’s daughter, the Empress Frederick, who wrote to her mother, “You have so many lovely Indian things to put into it, and [Rudolf] Swoboda’s heads and studies would look very pretty there too.”\(^3\) Unlike the comparable displays of Indian artifacts in the Great Exhibition of 1851 or the East India Company Museum, both of which were determined by the values of various contributors, the creation of the Durbar Room was ultimately determined by the singular power and perspective of the queen and her circle.

Famous for its teak carvings and ornate plaster detailing, the Durbar Room became a repository of Indian culture and traditions, as well as a unique museum of Indian art objects. Unlike the imperialist collections of Indian art that were burgeoning in London at this time, the collections of the Durbar Room were almost entirely comprised of gifts made to the British crown by Indian princes. While the Indian collection at Osborne was kept in glass cases, like those found in a museum setting, there may not have been a curatorial objective beyond that of displaying the most impressive offerings from the far reaches of the empire.

Since its construction, the Durbar Room has had difficulty conveying a definitive message about its collections and perspective. This nebulousness may also be attributed to the

\(^1\) Alasdair Glass, “The Durbar Room at Osborne,” *Context* 75 (July 2002): 12.
\(^2\) Ibid.
participation of artisans from the subcontinent in the construction of a royal British space. When, in 1890, Queen Victoria commissioned John Lockwood Kipling and the Sikh artisan Bhai Ram Singh (Fig. 1) to create an ‘Indian dining room’ at Osborne House, she was also contracting an interior that would represent her personal perception of the Indian empire.4

As a unique amalgamation of private and public space, dining room and museum, the Durbar Room remained a private chamber for the royal family and state affairs until after the queen’s death. When Osborne House became a convalescent home for retired officers in 1904, the room was maintained as a kind of memorial to the queen herself. Around this time, the Durbar Room became a popular subject for picture postcards, and many views of the room were printed and distributed by post.

The Durbar Room is a unique case study in the history of collecting and displaying Indian material culture. It is an Indian room within an Italianate British palace, designed to display precious gifts from the distant and exotic subcontinent. Today, the Durbar Room still features trophies of the former empire, making it a distinctive nineteenth-century collection that can be viewed in its original context. Furthermore, as a historic site of international exchange, the Durbar Room has traditionally functioned as a microcosm — a place that encapsulated in miniature an ambitious scheme of empire, which distinguishes the room as a distinctive Victorian museum of Indian material culture.

The Durbar Room takes its name from traditional Indian princely courts, being the title given to the public audience held by an Indian or British colonial ruler, or the hall where such audiences are held.5 As the stateroom for the Empress of India, the Durbar Room at Osborne House transposes the traditional Indian stateroom to the site of the royal British summer palace, making the space a type of proxy India.

Kipling described the room as “a sort of Hinduized version of the work of the Akbar period.”6 The Durbar corridors leading to the room are lined with Rudolf Swoboda’s famous portraits of Victoria’s Indian subjects. Slender columns decorate the walls, along with Mughal and Hindu motifs in gold and plaster. An inlaid stucco-coffered ceiling and carpets woven in the women’s prison at Agra accent images of Ganesh, as a sculpted peacock watches over the room from above (Fig. 2). Stylized lamps decorated with Indian patterns lit the room in the first

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4 In her essay “John Lockwood Kipling and British Art Education in India,” Mahrukh Tarapor writes of Kipling’s cooperation with his Indian students: “Kipling directly involved his students in several of his most important final commissions on buildings, completed between the publication of “Indian Architecture of Today” and his final departure from India in 1893” (52). “The Queen’s new room was the Durbar Room at Osborne House, completed in 1892. In this case Kipling delegated even more authority to native craftsmen: here a certain Ram Singh (a student of Kipling’s from the Mayo School of Art in Lahore), who designed and supervised almost the entire decoration of the room, while keeping Kipling abreast of developments through a meticulously written correspondence to India. He informed Kipling equally of design changes by royal request and of tangible expressions of royal approval” (77-78). Mahrukh Tarapor, “John Lockwood Kipling and British Art Education in India,” Victorian Studies 24, no. 1 (Autumn, 1980): 53-81.
6 Tarapor, 78.
instance of electricity being utilized in a British royal residence.\(^7\) The environment is unlike any other in the archipelago of Victoria’s palaces, and it broadcasts its own difference through the presence of glass display cases. The employment of these cases for the collection distinguishes the Durbar Room as a type of museum — yet, exactly what type of museum it is remains unclear.

It is not surprising therefore that the Durbar Room has a somewhat nebulous status as a type of museum. The character of this museum has changed and evolved throughout the life of the room itself. Its architect, John Lockwood Kipling, was the curator of the Lahore Museum, which may have subconsciously influenced the overall character of the room.\(^8\) Later, the central glass cases came to display rotating selections of princely gifts from India, which were given to mark Victoria’s jubilees in 1887 and 1897.\(^9\) After Albert’s death, all of Osborne House was treated as a shrine to the Prince Consort himself, rather than the culture of the subcontinent. When the house was opened to the public in 1904, it seemed to be dedicated to the Victorian era as a whole, without specific reference to the Indian empire. Julius Bryant, Chief Curator at English Heritage, writes:

By the time Victoria died in 1901, after forty years of widowhood, Osborne had become a family shrine to Prince Albert. Shortly before the house opened as a museum in 1904, the best of the paintings and sculpture were removed to other royal residences (notably Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle). Subsequently, Victoriana gradually arrived from other royal palaces, adding to the sense of museumification. English Heritage [now] seeks to explain how Osborne House was lived in, not only by the royal family but by the politicians and staff of the royal household, whose presence turned this family retreat into the epicenter of the British Empire.\(^10\)

Since the English Heritage Centenary Project refurbished and reopened the room in 2004, it has become a kind of museum of Queen Victoria’s reign and the message of Osborne House and its Indian room remains uncertain.\(^11\) Alisdair Glass, Senior Project Director at English Heritage writes, “Notwithstanding the centenary, the significance of Osborne is not that Victoria died there but that she, and Albert, lived there … The story of Osborne … is a story that is particularly relevant to today’s multicultural society and to the debate on national character that the present Jubilee has stimulated.”\(^12\)

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\(^7\) “…the drawing room chandeliers and candelabra were electrified, at the risk of drilling through the glass branches. The lamp room at Osborne still contains the early Edison and Swan patent light bulbs, glass candles, and yellow silk shades. The gold wall sconces were fitted for electricity, the flex being left conspicuous, as worthy of show. Victoria’s continuing suspicion of the latest technology is indicated by the absence of any electrical fittings in her bedroom, which was presumably lit by candles and oil lamps.” Julius Bryant, “Chasing Shadows: Exploring the Meaning of Light in English Heritage Houses,” \textit{APT Bulletin} 31, no. 1 (2000): 29; Greg King, \textit{Twilight of Splendor: The Court of Queen Victoria During Her Diamond Jubilee Year} (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 186.

\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) Glass, 12.

\(^10\) Bryant, 29.

\(^11\) Glass, 13.

\(^12\) Ibid.
It seems that the vague character and significance of the room is the product of a number of converging factors. First, because the room was closed to the public until after Victoria’s death, contemporary accounts of it are rare. Secondly, the collections and decoration of the Durbar Room have been largely omitted from biographies of the queen and have even been absent from the earlier spate of studies on British reactions to Indian art. Lastly, once the room was designated as a space of display in 1904, the collections within were not categorized or exhibited as outstanding examples of Indian art. Instead, they were shown simply as gifts. Understandably, an exhibition of general offerings from the subcontinent reflects a far different perspective than a logical and intentional display of Indian art and artifacts.

Although exhibition checklists or didactics from the Durbar Room cases seem to remain unavailable or inaccessible, a selection of likely displayed works can be constructed from a few pieces of evidence. It is known that the Royal Collection accessioned the Indian objects that were displayed during Queen Victoria’s lifetime. Some objects can be seen in early photographs of the room, while published primary accounts describe general object types. One guidebook to the Isle of Wight describes the room’s cases filled by richly bejeweled gold caskets containing addresses presented to Queen Victoria by Indian potentates and municipalities. From this information, one could begin to attempt to identify works that may have historically been displayed at Osborne House.

With regards to this evidence, one object that may have been historically displayed in the Durbar Room is a golden casket containing an address of welcome (Fig. 3), which was presented to Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII) by the inhabitants of Amritsar, during his visit to India 1875-6. Made from gold and encrusted with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, the velvet-lined box features delicate floral decorations and jeweled parrots. Beautiful craftsmanship and priceless materials distinguish this box as an object worthy of consideration. However, when regarded in the ornate and busy setting of the Durbar Room cases, this example was probably viewed as merely one example set within a case containing many similar specimens.

Another object which may have been exhibited in the museum cases at Osborne House is a jeweled attar-dan, or scent vessel, which was gifted to Prince Albert Edward by Vikram Deo.


15 Royal Collection, inventory no. 11230.
Maharaja of Jeypore, during the same trip in 1875-6 (Fig. 4). The delicate egg-shaped vessel sits on an ornate golden tray decorated with “hunting scenes, architectural subjects and floral designs; openwork border of green enamel acanthus leaves on the inside and red enamel leaves on the outside with pendant pearls; six enameled and diamond set legs.”16 The central cup, balanced in the middle of the tray, features red and green enamel and a diamond lotus flower. Judging from available images of the room, which reveal a number of vessels and containers, as well as the period of its accession, it seems that the display of this attar-dan in the Durbar Room was likely.

However, in its early public life at the beginning of the nineteenth century, visitors to the Durbar Room did not seem to specifically react to these individual magisterial artworks. Rather, newspaper reporters and cultural tourists viewed the room as a single art object, considering the whole display instead of its discrete artistic contents. There are almost no available published accounts in which visitors react to a single object or describe the discrete contents of a display case.

In her biographical encyclopedia of Victoria’s life, Helen Rappaport writes, “In 1897 it was crammed, like an Aladdin’s cave, with many of the beautiful gifts that the queen received from royal relatives on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee.”17 The magnificent gifts were usually described as a single unit in this manner. Such descriptions were even printed in newspapers as far away as Seattle. The Seattle Times reported on March 13, 1904:

Special Cable to the Seattle Sunday Times. London. Saturday, March 12 – Osborne house is no longer a royal residence. It has become a convalescent home for officers of all branches of his majesty’s service. The well-loved home of Queen Victoria is now ready to receive its new tenants. None of the pictures, the statuary, or the treasures of the Durbar room have been removed. In this apartment a portion of the jubilee presents received by Queen Victoria will be arranged for public inspection.18

The Queen’s collection would continue to be treated in this manner throughout the twentieth century, and the Durbar Room seems to still be organized as a single display of the idea of India, instead of as an exhibition of unique and singular art objects.

Official guidebooks for Osborne House have also traditionally regarded the royal Indian collections in this manner. In Sir Guy Laking’s official An Illustrated Guide to Osborne, printed by Her Majesty’s Stationery Office in 1933, the room is treated as a single art object without regard for the individual elements within it. Furthermore, his text reveals that the home’s governing bodies have largely institutionalized this perspective. He writes:

The objects in the Durbar room do not figure in the general catalogue of Osborne House, for, as in the case of the Swiss Cottage Museum hereafter referred to, the contents of the various cases are added to

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17 Helen Rappaport, Queen Victoria: A Biographical Companion (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 280.
from time to time by appropriate gifts from their Majesties the King and Queen, so rendering a printed catalogue soon out of date; each item is, however, fully labeled. In the [center] of the room is a large case exhibiting some interesting examples of Indian art, in the nature of arms, metalwork, textiles, and ivory work, including a fine pair of tripod tables of early 19th century craftsmanship which though of Indian work, are seemingly influenced by one of the later designs of Chippendale. In the cases round the walls are certain sections of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee gifts. The trophies of armor and arms decorating the walls opposite the windows are nearly all of Indian, though a few are of Persian, origin. They date from the middle of the 17th to the middle of the 19th centuries. ¹⁹

Despite the fact that Osborne House was, by this time, gifted to the nation by King Edward VII, the unique contents of the room had not been defined to visitors, denying guests the opportunity to identify, question, and research the unique holdings of this special Indian collection. Despite the presence of formal glass museum cases within the Durbar Room, the objects within those cases are not organized according to any accepted scholarly principles and lack the explanation usually expected from such displays.

This disregard for appropriate museum standards of documentation flouted most museological conventions, and the room seemed to be deficient in the requisite standards for proper museum displays. In 1903, it was reported that King Edward VII intended to continue depositing Queen Victoria’s Jubilee presents in the Durbar Room. ²⁰ However, one article on the subject was titled “Wanted (?) A Royal Museum,” illustrating the general uncertainty under which such directives were issued. ²¹

As a result of this mismanagement, knowledge of the Durbar Room’s contents has been limited to the general, the brief, and the perfunctory. Visitors are not conditioned to look at the material qualities of the unique objects in the central display cases. Instead, they are encouraged to take in the general interior decor, the plaster panels, teak pillars, and Durbar throne. The overall “Oriental” style of the room is still touted as the main display, and information about the unique objects in the room’s collection remains scant.

Even Durbar Room visitors who exhibit an interest in its contents are denied detailed information and, as a result, their accounts of the collection remain quite vague. In his 1913 travel memoir Through England with Tennyson: A Pilgrimage to Places Associated with the Great Laureate, Oliver Huckel visited the Durbar Room in an attempt to restage Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s audience with the queen at Osborne House in 1862. ²² Huckel was on a journey exploring the places featured most prominently in the poet laureate’s biography, and Osborne was an important setting on that expedition. He later described:

Among the state apartments we enjoyed most the East India or Durbar room, where were gathered and shown all the magnificent presents that the Indian princes and principalities had presented Queen

²² Tennyson was Queen Victoria’s Poet Laureate. For more on this relationship and his visit to Osborne, see John Batchelor’s book Tennyson: To Strive, To Seek, To Find (London: Chatto and Windus, 2012).
Victoria at the time of her Diamond Jubilee. So gorgeously beautiful were those shrines and caskets, and of such marvelous workmanship, that they seemed like a vision of the “Arabian Nights.” They gave most vivid impression of the beauty and richness of the golden Indies.23

Huckel describes the room as a collection without identifying its component parts. The connection he makes between the Durbar Room and the fictional stories of Scheherazade illustrate the manner in which the public was denied meaningful insight into the elements of the display, giving them, instead, a magical impression of overall “Indian-ness,” similar to the enchanted world of the stories Scheherazade told over those one thousand and one nights.

This glorification of the room as a whole rather than of the individual objects within is also reflected in the vast number of postcard views of the room that have been published since around 1904. The opening of the Durbar Room to the public coincided with the international mania for the picture postcard.24 Saloni Mathur writes:

Postcard publishers in Europe and America scrambled to meet the demands of consumers who claimed to be swept away, in the words of one contemporary enthusiast, by the enormous “attraction of these persuasive little agents”… In Britain during 1908, more than 860 million cards were reported to have passed through the British post, a figure that some claim is unmatched in history… The lack of information (on postcard publishers) itself reveals a great deal: postcards were mass-produced across multiple sites, transnational in nature, and anonymously executed. Postcard production around the turn of the century was an international business, encompassing many large national firms and an even larger number of tiny, local operations.25

Although the many postcard images of the Durbar Room remain difficult to identify, there seem to be countless versions in existence. These postcards attest to the view of the Durbar room as a complete artwork, rather than a vision of unique and significant elements.

Some of these images were published by Her Majesty’s Office of Works, including one later example from 1936 (Fig. 5). In this image, the central museum display cases are shown to be a substantial element within the room, although their contents remain unidentifiable. This approach seems to apply to nearly all postcard views of the Durbar Room, including examples published by Hartmann c. 1910 (Fig. 6), an undated view published by Swain (Fig. 7), a version by the Gale & Polden publishing company, and a view published by Nigh’s of Ventnor (Fig. 8).26 These images all include the room’s glass display cases without focusing on the contents within, expressing a general preference for architectural details over the artistic contents of the cases.

24 Mathur, 114.
26 Unfortunately, these postcards do not seem to be publicly catalogued in a scholarly manner, and images and information has had to largely be garnered from websites dedicated to the buying and selling of antique postcards. The world of antique postcard collecting is, unfortunately, a rather nebulous place, though I was fortunate to find a modicum of information through online postcard auctions.
These postcards do not speak to the richness of Indian visual culture or the magnificence of Victoria’s Indian Jubilee gifts. Rather, they promote a vision of British superiority over Indian design and architecture. In her essay “Beyond (and Below) Incommensurability: The Aesthetics of the Postcard,” Yoke-Sum Wong addresses the types of British visions of imperial treasures that were disseminated through postcard exchange. She writes:

The postcard rendered an empire as fragments. Consider how fragments manifest themselves, interlacing the universe of everyday lives — whole intricate worlds, circles otherwise closed to view, are presented in extract for those who do not take to adventuring, laboring over hard languages, making friends and enemies, learning to “follow” what is said and what is done. Hindu temples, pyramids, medieval castles, wild game, rattan baskets, and scantily clad peoples lay alongside the tea cozies in Victorian or Edwardian front rooms and parlors and were displayed and passed around, pasted randomly or categorically in a scrapbook or by themselves, evoking myriad responses from gasps to sighs, from giggles to outrage, from a brief comment to a less brief discussion — and, often enough, a complete lack of interest.27

What Wong identifies as “a complete lack of interest” in the sending and receipt of postcards could also be recognized as a “lack of complete interest” in regard to viewing the Durbar Room as a Gesamtkunstwerk, or total work of art. Here, the individual expressions of Indian art, which are on view in the individual glass cases, are reduced to a single, general overview of the overall character of the space. In exchanging these general views of the room, viewers reduce this particular microcosm of the empire to a mere section. The breadth of Indian design and ideas at Osborne House is subsumed by the unified vision of the room, and the glass display cases are given priority over the contents within.

The cutting and pasting of assorted postcards into scrapbooks is not unlike the way in which the Indian artifacts of the Durbar Room were plucked from the Royal Collection and randomly inserted into the central display cases. In the exchange of postcard views of the room, “whole intricate worlds, circles otherwise closed to view, are presented in extract” to senders and recipients, reducing the already-limited understanding of the cultural legacy of this room and its contents to the miniature world of the postcard picture.

The legacy of the Durbar Room is further complicated by its status as the site where royal pageants, performances, and Christmas celebrations would take place. Not only was the Indian material culture that decorated the room persistently overlooked as a collection of unique and significant objects — the collection would also be continuously dominated by other cultural events which competed for viewers’ attention within the very same space. This cacophony of cultural practice may have further and indelibly denied the Durbar Room collections the opportunity to be seen as significant art objects of considerable distinction.

After Queen Victoria’s death at Osborne House in 1901, the estate was converted into a convalescent home for officers of His Majesty’s Services by her successor, King Edward VII.

This shift allowed more subjects than ever before to visit the royal home, and with this upsurge in visitorship came an increase in printed accounts of the room, its history, customs, and traditions. One news story of 1903 observed the royal use of the Durbar space, remarking:

…this new wing contains the Durbar room, in which so many dinners and other entertainments have since been given. Princess Henry of Battenberg utilized this room to stage her tableaux vivants, which she was so fond of arranging in the winter months when the court was in residence. At one end there is a gallery for musicians. This was found most useful when private theatricals dinners or other entertainments were given.28

As the room is considered as a staging area for theater pieces and performances, the significance of the space as a home museum becomes even more confused. Performances of Twelfth Night were staged beneath Bhai Ram Singh’s terracotta decorations, upon the Agra-woven carpets and hand-carved Indian mahogany chairs.29 It seems that theater pieces performed in the space did not address its design or contents, favoring English works of music and drama over their Indian equivalents. By most accounts, no efforts were made to acknowledge the material significance of the room while interacting with the space itself.

This complex relationship between the royal family’s personal activities and the Durbar Room is perhaps best seen in the room’s role as a present room during the Christmas holiday season.30 Tony Rennell describes the Osborne House Christmas traditions in his book The Last Days of Glory: The Death of Queen Victoria. He writes:

On Christmas Eve, presents were laid out in the Durbar Room, the banqueting hall built just ten years earlier and fitted out with magnificent moldings of peacocks and elephant gods to look like the throne room of an Indian raja. The family gathered around the Christmas tree, which was hung with lights and French and German bonbons, their gifts for each other laid out on tables.31

Victorian Christmas celebrations were a multicultural affair, and Queen Victoria and her family were responsible for introducing many of the traditions still associated with the holiday. Prince Albert introduced to the British court the German custom of decorating a Christmas tree, and the Prince Consort was also partially responsible for popularizing the exchange of presents and holiday cards.32 He introduced many other German traditions, which by the mid-nineteenth century were incorporated into the British conventions, and a number of these customs were then staged in the Durbar Room at Osborne House. Thus, the Indian room in the Italianate villa became a staging ground for German traditions (including the exchange of French candies) as

30 Ibid.
32 It is generally accepted that Prince Albert introduced this tradition, though some sources claim that Christmas trees were actually introduced to Britain by Queen Charlotte, consort of King George III.
interpreted by the British Queen. Though the Durbar Room remained overlooked as a significant museum of Indian art, it became renowned as the locus of combining international cultural practices and holiday observances.

Christmas at Osborne became the subject of national fascination, and descriptions of how the royal family spent Christmas were printed in newspapers and magazines. One such 1897 account described:

It may be imagined that on a festal night like this the Durbar Room presents a very gay appearance. The great sideboard is loaded with gold plate which has been polished till it gleams like glass. A mighty Yule log sent from Windsor glows on the hearth. The strong red and green of the decorations contrasts very prettily with the subdued Oriental coloring of the walls. The table glitters with plate and glass and candles and the dessert is adorned with the unusual pomp of flags and crackers in all the glory of tinsel and gelatin. At the head of the table, the Queen takes her seat. Round it her family group themselves in order, the children enjoying the mere fun of taking their places. And there, perhaps, we will leave them with loyal and hearty wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.33

While the Durbar Room was still inaccessible to the general public, they were able to read descriptions of its use by the royal family. However, these descriptions, especially those regarding the Christmas celebrations, omit many details of the setting of the Durbar Room and its contents.

To this day, Christmas is still observed at Osborne House. Holly and pine trees further embellish the already ornate permanent decorations, and red ribbons are tied around the furniture. Golden holiday angels atop the trees soar high above the ornamental Indian lamps. Instead of functioning as a museum of Indian art and design, the Durbar Room is treated as a hall dedicated to the preservation of the manner in which Queen Victoria used this space and its contents.

When Queen Victoria died at Osborne House on January 22, 1901, she left behind a complicated legacy. In addition to a dysfunctional empire and a class system mired in inequity, she departed this world without articulating the lasting significance of the Durbar Room and its peculiar decoration and contents. What was once a room for state functions and display is now celebrated as a place where the daily operations of the former British Empire were once conducted, and it seems that the unique objects comprising the room’s collections are still disregarded in favor of viewing the room as a whole. In many ways, despite the passing of more than a hundred years since its construction, the Durbar Room is still, sadly, little more than a room of “lovely Indian things,” leaving much to be done in terms of its scholarly evaluation and interpretation.

33 B.C. Skottowe, “How the Queen Spends Christmas at Osborne,” The English Illustrated Magazine 18, October 1897–March 1898, 224.
Figure 1. Bhai Ram Singh at work in the Durbar Room, 1892. From an album at Osborne House titled "Royal Tableaux, Osborne." English Heritage Photo Library, K010289.

Figure 2. Osborne House, Isle of Wight. Interior view of the Durbar Room looking towards the minstrel's gallery. Some items shown may be on loan from the Royal Collection. Image © English Heritage.
Figure 3. Gold casket presented to Albert Edward, Prince of Wales by the inhabitants of Amritsar, during his visit to India, 1875-6. Gold, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and velvet, 7.8 x 33.0 x 13.1 cm. The Royal Collection, inventory no. 11230.

Figure 4. Attar-dan presented to Prince Albert Edward by Vikram Deo, Maharaja of Jeypore. Gold, enamel, diamonds, and pearls, 10.2 x 8.9 x 7.0 cm. The Royal Collection, inventory no. 11423.
Figure 5. Osborne House, Durbar Room postcard. Printed by H.M. Office of Works, 1936.

Figure 6. Durbar room postcard. Published by Hartmann, c. 1910.
Figure 7. Durbar room postcard by Swain, undated.

Figure 8. Durbar Room postcard view. Published by Nigh’s of Ventnor, undated.

Craig Steven Wilder’s *Ebony & Ivy* unravels the entanglements between America’s Ivy League universities, the institution of slavery, and the conquest of North America. Wilder argues that, along with the state and the church, these institutions of higher learning formed the “third pillar” of a society built upon slave labour. The slave economy, according to Wilder, evolved concurrently with America’s elite universities, each affecting the development of the other. Not only was the labour of enslaved peoples crucial to building and maintaining these institutions, investments by the planter classes of the Southern colonies and the Caribbean paid for the campuses, the endowments, and even the books in the libraries. To Wilder, these ivy festooned colleges were not merely passive inheritors of slave-generated wealth, but active suitors of financial support from slave merchants and planters. Slave owners and traders were the founders and trustees of America’s oldest and most respected educational institutions, including Harvard, Yale, and Princeton among others. Moreover, these playgrounds for the children of the wealthy and powerful also produced the pseudo-scientific racial ideologies that helped legitimize the entire colonizing enterprise. These institutions were colonizing instruments that benefited from, and perpetuated, slavery, ideologies of racial superiority, and the conquest of indigenous peoples.

Wilder relies on a massive body of primary and secondary source materials, including church records and university archives, letters, diaries, “daybooks,” and memoirs, to support his position. The work took Wilder ten years to research and write, and the seamless interlocking of narrative with argument shows this polish. Throughout, Wilder touches on a bevvy of secondary arguments that support his primary intervention. He states that these colleges were fundamental in staffing the colonies with administrators and military men charged to maintain and expand colonizing efforts in North America. Furthermore, Wilder directly ties the development and expansion of the northern colonies to the broader Atlantic World, as slave labor was not only critical to building and running these schools, but also sustained the economies that aided further Anglo-American incursion into Native lands.

Many of the insights of *Ebony & Ivy* make major contributions to a manifold of historical fields. Aside from a history of America’s Ivy League schools and these schools’ intimate relationships with slavery and ethnocide, Wilder thrusts the North back into the larger discussion of Atlantic slavery. He notes that the socioeconomic environment of the northern colonies – shipping, finance, and manufacturing – was not just reliant on the slave economy but was an important node in the greater Atlantic system. Furthermore, while northern elites may have attempted to insulate themselves from the institution by “romanticizing and sanitizing,” they could not fully divorce their rise to political and economic power from that “peculiar institution.” Wilder also connects these processes to the conquest and colonization of the Americas, and the sovereign Native nations that inhabited them. Upon review, these interconnections seem painfully obvious, but thanks to Wilder’s research and presentation, the interlocked nature of these processes screams out with clarity.
As it happens, this contribution also leads to one area of criticism. Superficially, the book appears to be solely a discussion of an American academy deeply rooted in the economics of slavery, and yet contains important insights into the links between these institutions and the colonization of America and its indigenous inhabitants. This may be more of a critique of the publisher or editor, but neither the title, nor the subtitle, hint at a key theme that haunts the entire study. Students of history can and should view Ebony & Ivy as more than a dissection of the sordid history of the Ivy League and its connection to unfree labor. It is a work that further unmasks the interconnections between conquest, scientific racism, and the rise of global capitalism.

William J. Cowan
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Walter Johnson. River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom.

Walter Johnson’s provocative River of Dark Dreams tracks the rise of the plantation economy in the Mississippi Valley during the first half of the nineteenth century. Yet this study is more than just a reexamination of the shadowed underbelly of the failed Jeffersonian dream — for Johnson wrestles with American conceptions of empire, particularly the Southern utopian fantasy of a pan-Caribbean, transatlantic, pro-slavery domain that championed free trade, racialized labor, and white, male republicanism.

Johnson positions himself against some recent historiographical trends in the field, notably those that have emphasized the importance of the Compromises of 1820 and 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act as causal factors of the U.S. Civil War. While this scholarship has helped to further demonstrate that the lead up to the war was inextricably bound to the system of racial slavery — with unfree labor and its territorial expansion understood as the central issue as opposed to the tired “states rights” argument still extant in public discourse — this historiographic turn has perpetuated the misunderstanding of slavery as a nationally circumscribed institution and merely a North-South sectional problem. Johnson pushes back against this simplistic binary narrative, exposing it as not only tautological, but as a gross misreading of the larger transnational history of Atlantic slavery.

Using personal correspondence, slave narratives (including accounts from Solomon Northrup and William Wells Brown), Affleck’s Record Books, and trial records of slaves accused of capital crimes, Johnson complicates this received understanding of the political economy of slavery in the Lower South by revealing tensions amongst Southern regions as well as the frictions between Southern planters and Atlantic markets. The issue of reopening the international trade in captive Africans highlights these conflicts. This economy was rooted in the tensions of two Southern areas—the Mississippi River Valley (Louisiana and Mississippi) epitomized the Deep South economy that relied on the importation of Upper South slaves to produce monoculture cotton
crops for exportation, and an Upper South (Virginia and Maryland) economy that “produced” and exported slaves to the emerging Cotton Kingdom along the Mississippi. Upper South slavers worried about the effects of the “slave drain” on their regional economies and planter identities as the enormous movement of enslaved Africans and African-Americans from the Upper to the Lower South was a defining feature of the political economy of slavery during the era. While the relationship between these two regions was often adversarial, a mutual dependence culminated in civil war against a common federal foe.

One of Johnson’s major contributions is his examination of what it was specifically that Southern cotton planters thought they were seceding from, and more importantly to Johnson’s argument, to what exactly the pro-slavery factions believed they were working towards. This geographic repositioning of the slave economy pushes the discussion out into international waters as well as deeper into the North American continent. Because planters needed new lands to maintain the high outputs of a crop that rapidly depleted nutrients from the soil, the system of cotton monocropping necessitated westward expansion. Past conquests of Indigenous lands would need to be repeated as would the forced migration of Amerindians and enslaved laborers. Proponents of the slave system understood that expanding their socio-economic institution globally was crucial to the survival of that very system and their own prominent and lucrative positions within it. Planters worried about their ability to spread their slave society westward as Northern business leaders were doing with the labor of immigrant ethnic whites. Those that advocated for the reopening of the slave trade believed they saw an opportunity for global domination and the establishment of a pro-slavery empire, ideally pan-Caribbean, reliant on imported Africans and exported cotton that was beyond the political and economic control of the federal government. To address the problems they — especially those in the Mississippi Valley — saw in the U.S. slave economy, planters in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi looked for a more direct connection to the markets of Europe and the greater global economy.

Johnson’s repositioning of Mississippi Valley planters as major actors in international markets also addresses the common misperception of planters and slave traders as residing within some pre-capitalist, aristocratic, pastoral fantasy world. In fact, Southern cotton producers were commercially minded and integral to the evolution of global capitalism. The Lower Mississippi Cotton Kingdom was intimately connected to markets in New York and Liverpool. To Johnson, they were the major free marketeers of the nineteenth century. Again, we see slavery intimately bound to the rise of capitalism and American economic and political power. Southern planters, especially those in the Cotton Kingdom of the Mississippi Valley were the bleeding edge of the global market economy and were directly involved in the international expansion of capitalism, the continued conquest of Indigenous Americans, and the extension of American slave society.

William J. Cowan
University of Southern California

Gregor Thum’s *Uprooted* is a comprehensively researched study in a rapidly growing field of twentieth century East-Central European historiography: the forced expulsion of millions of people as the result of intensive political change in the post-World War II period. Thum uses the city of German Breslau, or Polish Wroclaw, for his case study, as he traces the complex historical, demographic, political, cultural, and architectural processes that served to dramatically transform its physical and social makeup. Thum takes the reader from the 1945 fall of the city to the Red Army, through to the post-Soviet period. He examines the many ways in which the city was transformed through political, demographic, and physical processes, while reflecting upon the challenges posed to new generations of Polish inhabitants, who until recent years struggled in their attempts to establish a new form of local identity.

Drawing upon a wide range of mainly Polish and German source material, including Polish state archives, memoirs, and popular propagandist texts, Thum describes Breslau-Wroclaw as a microcosm of East-Central Europe: a city that witnessed the playing-out of a long list of political, military, and cultural developments and conflicts during the tumultuous twentieth century (xv). Between 1945 and 1948, the majority of Breslau’s German populace was expelled and replaced by newly settled ethnic Poles. For Poles, this period saw the loss of the economically poor but culturally rich Eastern Borderlands, along with the gain of the industrially rich but culturally poor Western Territories. As the result of the loss of a centuries-old German presence, there was a sharp decline in the local memories, traditions, and knowledge of pre-war Breslau/post-war Wroclaw.

The opening chapters discuss the immediate post-war decades, which were marked by civil unrest and conflicts between groups of settlers from different geographic, historical, and cultural areas of Poland, and from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. In this “society of the uprooted” (178), regional antagonisms between Poles became stronger (188). Wroclaw was to be rebuilt and re-settled according to official propaganda purposes, dictated from the top-down post-War Polish authorities, in order to legitimize the Polish presence in the “Recovered Territories” (12). Chapter six onwards examines the expunging of German presence and memory in the public sphere, through propaganda and educational campaigns. The post-1945 Polish state approximated the same borders as Poland circa 1000, a fact of major symbolic importance to authorities. Restored, re-constructed, and re-interpreted Gothic architecture, in particular, signified official “proof” of Wroclaw’s medieval Polish origins, while Prussian buildings were allowed to decay. All cultural institutions in Communist Poland, including the Roman Catholic Church, followed similar processes of historical re-writing. This narrative selectively ignored Prussian-German traditions and historical claims to the city. A massive process of renaming took place throughout the “Recovered Territories” as some 30,000 place-names, tens of thousands of natural features, and hundreds of thousands of street names and squares were given Polish names (244). German inscriptions were removed from buildings, and all of Wroclaw’s German cemeteries were
destroyed (282-287). Many of Wrocław’s post-1945 monuments were built according to a state-mandated cult, to honour Polish figures that had a tenuous or non-existent historical connection to the city. The concluding chapters review the momentous changes to post-1989 Wrocław. Despite decades of revisionist work, Thum argues that the fundamental German-Prussian core of the city remained. This period saw a second wave of re-naming and increased levels of Polish-German cooperation in historical recognition and representation. In the 1990s a stronger form of local identity became discernible, with Wrocław seeking to situate itself as a major Polish city and as a pan-European metropolis.

Although this study is excellent throughout, Uprooted raises a few points of contention. There is a limited sense of perspective in that Thum’s main narrative focuses upon Polish experiences and understandings of the city. Although there are sections that reflect on the difficulties and challenges faced by German survivors prior to their expulsion, and of the psychological issues involved in the taking over of German apartments by Polish settlers, Thum does not adequately consider German voices on the deportations, the loss of the “Recovered Territories,” and the reconstruction of Wrocław. Also, there are no mentions of return visits to the city by Holocaust survivors or their descendants. These shortcomings are relatively few, however, and on the whole, Uprooted is a comprehensive, masterfully researched and written case study that analyzes the many complex processes involved in the re-writing of a city’s culture, ethnicity, memory, and history. Uprooted should be considered required reading for both scholars and a specialist audience interested in practices of population displacement and political and urban change in East-Central Europe in the post-World War II period.

Michał Młynarz
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In The Reformation of the Landscape, Alexandra Walsham reexamines the familiar political and cultural events of post-Reformation Britain and Ireland by engaging with the physical environment: rocks and trees, springs and wells, cathedrals and holy shrines. Responding to the recent “spatial turn,” Walsham questions whether the physical structures of the environment — both natural and man-made — reflected or affected changes in religious attitudes following the rise of Protestantism. Walsham is thorough in her endeavor; the book is rife with examples of local shrines, wells, forests, and ruins all across what is now the United Kingdom. Further, she covers a vast chronology, from pre-Christian religious practices in Iron Age Britain, to the rise of spas in the late-seventeenth century. Much of Walsham’s contribution is in her synthesis of more focused works by other historians. In one (quite large) volume, Walsham converses with historians of religion and iconoclasm as well as historians of science and medicine to draw out continuities in
attitudes and practices regarding the landscape and to push against the story that the rise of Protestantism marks the “disenchantment of the world.”

The first two chapters of her book follow well-trod lines of argument regarding medieval religious practice and zealous Protestant reform. First, Walsham takes issue with the notion that medieval religious life was parish-centered, and argues that the late medieval proliferation of sacred, devotional sites demonstrates the inherent instability of late-medieval Catholicism. In chapter two, Walsham argues that the collapse of Catholicism at the hands of reformers intent on destroying idols in the landscape resulted in a resurgence of parish-centered spiritual life, as pilgrimage shrines and monasteries lay in ruins. Most innovatively, Walsham argues that the desolate ruins of monasteries and cathedrals became monuments to the fervor and righteousness of Protestantism rather than the majesty of the medieval church. In this instance, as in others toward the end of the book, Walsham excels as she illustrates how the landscape eludes fixed meanings and embodies contradictory ones.

The third chapter, “Britannia sancta,” offers her first real historiographical intervention, as Walsham takes issue with historians who have argued that the intellectual response of the Tridentine church had little to do with the common folk still clinging to Catholic superstitions. Instead, Walsham illustrates that after missionary priests in Britain and Ireland were evicted from their churches, they were drawn to traditional sacred places in the landscape, and that reengagement with these spaces bridged the gap between custom, ritual, and the newly invigorated intellectual stance of the church. Chapters four and five further explore this theme of reappropriation of the landscape and reattachment to natural space across the Protestant spectrum. Walsham recognizes that iconoclasm was a powerful strain within Protestant belief, but argues that it was paralleled by remorse for the destruction of medieval monuments. She suggests that later-sixteenth and seventeenth-century Protestants saw God’s hand at work in the landscape through divine providence, much as their Catholic forebears did, despite their earlier rejection of miracles as superstition. Finally, in chapters six and seven, Walsham demonstrates that existing holy sites in the landscape were reimagined and renamed within the new paradigm of science and medicine even as they retained their prominence. For instance, holy wells were rediscovered as healing spas, and ancient pagan monuments were reimagined as petrified footballers. Walsham is at her best in these chapters, as she is able to demonstrate that a multiplicity of meanings were imbedded within a single locale, often resurrected or reconfigured, but never fully erased. In Walsham’s analysis, the “disenchantment of the world” was not so much a rejection of superstition as it was a reconfiguration of those practices by another name.

Despite these strengths — or maybe because of them — Walsham does not always engage with the concept of space as an analytical category. Although her book is comprehensive, the vast expanse of space and time that she covers prevents her from engaging with any one landscape in detail. Her book is filled with anecdotes about individual springs or the flowering trees, but she rarely engages with climate, topography, or geography. While the vastness of Walsham’s analysis occasionally prevents the reader from engaging with a spatial experience of early modern Britain and Ireland, her broad chronological and geographical scope provides ample fodder for further
research into more localized projects on landscape in the British Reformation. In the final analysis, *The Reformation of the Landscape* is a book about meaning-making, about the language used to describe and understand the physical world of early modern Britain as it reflected and refracted changing religious and secular ideals.

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This compact, ambitious, and insightful book traces the production, circulation, and consumption of Saint Augustine’s writings in the confessional debates of Reformation Europe. Arnoud S. Q. Visser frames the reception of the theologian’s work in the emerging and at times chaotic print culture of early modern Europe, where ideas about authority and validity in newly printed texts were still being established. He employs a cross-confessional perspective to show that readers interpreted and appropriated Augustine’s writings in radically different ways based on their religious loyalties. The provocative argument embedded within this framework is that “humanist scholarship, in spite of its famous claim to return to the sources, still accommodated a selective, fragmented, and goal-oriented reading practice,” which was “the motor behind the remarkable flexibility of Augustine’s authority” (9).

In Part One, Visser traces changes in the editorial process over time, from indiscriminate collecting of authentic and spurious manuscripts in the Amerbach edition (1505-1506) to Erasmus’ textual-critical and at times polemical Leuven edition (1528-1529). He ends with a second Leuven edition (1576-1577) that relied upon much of Erasmus’ earlier work. However, Visser’s argument that the later Leuven edition was more confessionally neutral due to the “moderate Catholic culture” of the Low Countries and pragmatic marketplace interests seems underdeveloped (59).

The circulation of Augustine’s work is framed within the context of search tools and confessional publications in Part Two. Visser asserts that bibliographies and indexes in *opera omnia* editions created biased frameworks for reading Augustine. These apparatuses weighed his works by merit (bibliographies) and through categorizing his writing on specific issues (indexes). These new technologies controlled access to Augustine’s ideas for the purpose of supporting specific theological arguments, thus ignoring conflicting passages elsewhere in his writings (68-70). The parallel publication of selectively compiled anthologies and epitomes was also a market-driven effort to make Augustine available to a larger audience, specifically those who could not afford to purchase the costly collections of his complete works. As they often printed authentic and questionable works together to support a particular confessional argument, for Visser, these more affordable volumes “highlight the instability of textual transmission” during the Reformation (90-91).
Part Three, on consumption, begins with records of book ownership in England and Italy that show Augustine to be the most popular ancient author after Cicero. Visser notes that later editions of Augustine did not necessarily replace earlier ones in libraries. In light of this information, he concludes that “Augustinian holdings in...collections suggest that the sixteenth century did not so much bring increased textual stability as further fragmentation” (99). While Augustine was a universally recognized authority, there was apparently no consensus on an authoritative version of his works. Visser then considers how Thomas Cranmer, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and William Laud, three influential figures in the English Reformation, each read and interpreted Augustine to suit their particular needs. Visser ends this section by considering Augustine within the wider context of early modern communication and theological debate. He cites the Biaist controversy in Leuven and the Arminian controversy in Leiden, where Catholics and Protestants alike deployed Augustine’s writings in contemporary debates. Despite these useful examples, one feels there is too much focus on the material culture of consumption. Greater theological contextualization would have helped explain contrasting usages in England and the Low Countries.

This slim volume does not explain every interpretation of Augustine in Reformation Europe nor is such thoroughness necessary for Visser’s argument. Instead, the dissemination and use of Augustine is a case study for the early modern culture of book reading and the application of intellectual authority to confessional debates. Visser argues, quite successfully, that readers of Augustine were united across confessional boundaries by a shared “search for authoritative confirmation of their contemporary ideas” (137). Humanist notions of what constituted intellectual authority are thus key to understanding the context of sixteenth-century religious debates. Readers on all sides declared a desire to return to the sources, and thus to intellectual authorities. Nevertheless, Visser shows that confessional debate could “at times appear to be an exercise in intellectual ventriloquism” (137). Sophisticated and general readers alike were often satisfied with the dangerously distortional practice of finding what they sought in Augustine’s vast oeuvre and discarding the rest. This work will surely be of interest to specialists in the print culture and confessional debates of Reformation Europe. It also raises intriguing questions about the way society and academia read and use intellectual authorities today.

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