



Psi Sigma Siren

The Journal of the UNLV Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the
National History Honor Society : Fall 2011

About Phi Alpha Theta:

Founded in 1921, Phi Alpha Theta is the international history honor society. “We are a professional society whose mission is to promote the study of history through the encouragement of research, good teaching, publication, and the exchange of learning and ideas among historians. We seek to bring students, teachers, and writers of history together for intellectual and social exchanges, which promote and assist historical research and publication by our members in a variety of ways.”

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From the Editor:

This semester’s edition of the Psi Sigma Siren is a wonderful reflection of the creative discipline that motivates the success of the History department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The following pages contain works from the authors Marie Rowley, Ashley Matcheck, Samuel Tofte, and Jacob Cassens, all of whom are outstanding members of Phi Alpha Theta- Psi Sigma and talented historical writers. I would like to extend a personal thank you to Marie Rowley, the former editor of the Siren, and Dr. Marcia Gallo, both of whom helped tremendously in the finishing of the following exhibition of historical works. It is my pleasure to display for you the most enlightened historical contributions of the fall 2011 semester!

-Amelia K. Barker



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Marie Rowley

The Housewife, the Single Girl, and the Prostitute:

Constructions of Femininity in Postwar American Historiography

America in the two decades after World War II experienced conditions that seemed to indicate an unprecedented focus on domesticity and traditional gender roles. Couples married at younger ages, fertility rates soared, and population shifted to suburban areas all over the country. Just beneath this surface, however, a more complex discourse about gender norms was also emerging. Gay and lesbian communities began to organize, teenagers emerged as a cultural force, and young single women began to view economic independence as a legitimate goal. These contradictory forces coexisted in a culture struggling to define gender and sexuality in the anxiety-ridden era of the Cold War. Journalists, psychologists, and other experts described a crisis of masculinity in American culture and gave women advice on how best to fulfill the roles of wives and mothers. The popularity of *Playboy Magazine* and the publication of the Kinsey Reports illustrate how central sexuality was in this ongoing postwar debate. Women's sexuality in particular was tied to the larger fears gripping the nation. This essay explores how historians approach the postwar constructions of femininity and female sexuality. Some investigate the origins of the stereotypical suburban housewife model of domesticity and how it was perpetuated



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in American culture. Others address how some women modified that model for their own ends. A third group of historians is concerned with the women who resisted the domesticity model and how their femininity was constructed and understood in the discourse. Taken together, these three strands of inquiry paint a complex, nuanced picture of gender and sexuality in postwar America.

The idea that the postwar period was characterized by homogeneity, consensus, and overwhelming conservatism is deeply entrenched in popular memory and much of American historiography.¹ This view may in part be based in the contrast that emerged in the wake of the great social and cultural upheavals beginning in the mid-1960s. Even participants in the social movements of the 1960s emphasized the conservatism of the previous decades, as Betty Friedan did in her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*. In her 1994 essay “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958” Joanne Meyerowitz notes that although “many historians question Friedan’s homogenized account of women’s actual experience, virtually all accept her version of the dominant ideology, the conservative promotion of domesticity.”² More recent historians are challenging this narrative, however, and identifying cultural and ideological roots of the women’s movement and sexual revolution in the postwar period. The works described in this essay demonstrate that not only were women’s actual

¹ See Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

² Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958,” in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, Joanne Meyerowitz, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 230.



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experiences rarely in line with the prescribed ideal, the ideology of gender and the cultural constructions of femininity and sexuality were neither uniform nor universally accepted.

Postwar American culture was saturated with anxieties about gender and sexuality. K. A. Cuordileone writes that when Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. identified “the crisis of masculinity” in 1958, many American men felt threatened by “a conformist mass society and the sexual ambiguity it bred.”³ Men seemed to be the focus of many contemporary authors’ concerns about shifting gender norms. However, historian Beth Bailey writes that while journalists, scholars, and social critics focused on the “crisis of American masculinity” after the war, a concurrent “crisis of femininity” was present in the discourse as well, though it was “submerged [and] unnamed.”⁴ Though anxiety surrounding women’s gender presentation and sexual expression was not referred to explicitly as often as the parallel concerns about men, this anxiety pervades the cultural landscape of the postwar period. Americans feared disorder, and one of the most frightening ideas was uncontained female sexuality. In the 1950s, Americans were just beginning to untangle the connections and distinctions between biological sex, gender presentation, and sexual orientation.⁵ Female sexual behavior, expression, and autonomy were therefore an integral part in the “unnamed” crisis of femininity.

³ K. A. Cuordileone, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960,” *The Journal of American History* 87, No. 2 (September 2000): 524.

⁴ Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 105.

⁵ See Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).



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Against this backdrop of the postwar fixation with gender, postwar America developed three categories of femininity, infused with sexual connotations. In the 2002 historiographical essay “Rewriting Postwar Women’s History, 1945-1960,” Joanne Meyerowitz writes that historians challenging the *Feminine Mystique* version of the postwar are taking two basic approaches. Some “explore the ideological underpinnings of the postwar domestic ideal,” while others “investigate the ways in which diverse groups of postwar women challenged, transformed, and resisted the domestic stereotype.”⁶ I argue that within these two approaches, three distinct models of postwar constructions of femininity have emerged. Some historians, building on the work of Elaine Tyler May, do focus on the influence and pervasiveness of “ideological underpinnings” of the gender conservatism of the postwar years. Others identify how some women “transformed” the ideal by creating a version of heterosexual femininity that retained many elements of the domestic ideal, such as traditionally feminine appearance, while adopting some independence and sexual autonomy. This construction of femininity may be called the modified domesticity or Single Girl model.⁷ Finally, other historians investigate the constructions of womanhood that fall outside the domestic model entirely, those who “resisted” the ideal and enacted what was culturally constructed as a deviant form of femininity. This essay will evaluate the historians using each of these models in turn and then suggest other ways to

⁶ Joanne Meyerowitz, “Rewriting Postwar Women’s History, 1945-1960,” in *A Companion to American Women’s History*, Nancy A. Hewitt, ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 382.

⁷ This is a reference to Helen Gurley Brown’s 1962 book *Sex and the Single Girl*, which championed this version of femininity. Brown’s views and impact will be explained at greater length later in this essay.



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continue expanding and complicating the historiography and our understanding of postwar gender and sexuality.

One of the first and most influential books on women's postwar history was Elaine Tyler May's 1988 book *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*.⁸ May argues that the foreign policy concept of "containment" was simultaneously applied to private life during the Cold War period. She documents the "domestic explosion" after World War II, characterized by increased fertility rates and lowered age of marriage, and explains that these demographic factors were reflexively influenced by an attendant domestic ideology that swept American culture.⁹ In addition to an increased emphasis on family and homemaking, May identifies "sexual containment" as a key part of this conservative gender model.¹⁰ Arguing against the "sexual liberalism" of the postwar years identified by John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, May contends that the dominant ideology firmly proscribed sexuality to the confines of marriage.¹¹ May further argues that this conservative view of sexuality and gender roles was perpetuated by journalists, experts, and mainstream Americans themselves.¹² *Homeward Bound* carefully

⁸ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, rev. ed., (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

⁹ May, 5.

¹⁰ May, 109.

¹¹ May, 111. See also John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 241, where they define sexual liberalism as "an overlapping set of beliefs that detached sexual activity from the instrumental goal of procreation, affirmed heterosexual pleasure as a value in itself, defined sexual satisfaction as a critical component of personal happiness and successful marriage, and weakened the connections between sexual expression and marriage by providing youth with room for some experimentation as preparation for adult status."

¹² May, 113.



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delineates the complex, heterogeneous reality of experience from the domestic ideal, but its overall argument is that conservative gender ideology was pervasive in the postwar years. “Whether or not women and men actually conformed to the containment prescription,” she writes, “they were likely to be affected by its power.”¹³

The containment model as described by May remains a significant influence on historians of the period. For example, Lynn Spigel’s 1992 book *Make Room for TV* builds directly on May’s analysis of the culturally hegemonic domestic ideal. In her history of the social and cultural contexts and impacts of television’s early years, she writes that the medium was “welcomed as a catalyst for renewed domestic values.”¹⁴ Though she acknowledges that at times the public discourse surrounding television contained conflicting messages about its role in family life, she echoes May’s assertion that the gender ideology of the period was overwhelmingly conservative.

Two very recent works reflect the lasting impact of the domestic ideal model and its continued relevance as a site of inquiry. Caroline Herbst Lewis’ *Prescription for Heterosexuality* and Anna G. Creadick’s *Perfectly Average*, both published in 2010, explore different ways that the conservative gender ideals of the postwar period were perpetuated. Creadick analyzes the discourse of “normality” that arose in the years just after World War II and reached its pinnacle in the mid-1950s. She argues that normality became perceived as an ideal for which to strive

¹³ May, 111.

¹⁴ Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2.



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instead of a statistical average. Her description of “normative femininity” recalls the domestic image May identified in prescriptive literature of the period.¹⁵ The pursuit of homogeneity that took as its icon the reproductively capable white female also worked to enforce heteronormativity, a form of sexual containment.¹⁶ Lewis draws explicitly on the “sexual containment” elements of May’s model in her analysis of the ways the medical profession enforced heteronormativity and conservative gender roles at mid-century.¹⁷ Lewis argues for the central role of sexuality in the construction of gender roles; medical professionals maintained that only their version of healthy sexual expression in women evinced the “passive femininity” that constituted the ideal.¹⁸ By investigating the origins and the influence of the domestic ideal, Creadick’s, Lewis’, and Spigel’s books all illustrate the strain in the historiography that Meyerowitz identified in 2002 as an expansion of May’s work.

Other scholars turned their attention to the nuances and ambiguities of the domestic ideal in mass culture. Sociologist Wini Breines’ 1992 book *Young, White, and Miserable* begins with the premise that popular culture representations of femininity were “narrowly defined” but looks for underlying “gender tensions” in the messages young women of the baby boom generation received.¹⁹ Similarly, in her 1994 book *Where the Girls Are* media critic Susan J. Douglas

¹⁵ Anna G. Creadick, *Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America*, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 83.

¹⁶ Creadick, 20.

¹⁷ Carolyn Herbst Lewis, *Prescription for Heterosexuality: Sexual Citizenship in the Cold War Era*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4.

¹⁸ Lewis, 38.

¹⁹ Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), ix, 1.



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describes a “media-induced schizophrenia” in young women who grew up in the 1950s.²⁰ Both authors argue that despite the apparently overwhelming message that women should be passive and domestically-inclined, young women could find in the mass media alternative images of femininity that challenged that model. These authors’ investigations of the postwar mass media reveal roots of the feminist consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s under the surface of the tranquil domestic ideal of the 1950s. The varied meanings and uses of the dominant ideology they identify form a foundation for historians who investigate femininity that evinced a modified form of domesticity.

One site of inquiry into the modified domesticity model is through the uses of gender roles and sexual expression in the emerging teenage culture. Beth Bailey’s *From Front Porch to Back Seat* was one of the first works to thoroughly examine the ways the conservative gender ideology was communicated in real women’s lives and the ways they interpreted it for themselves. The postwar preoccupation with gender was translated into the relatively new world of dating via advice manuals, schools, parents, and other authorities who developed an elaborate system of gender etiquette in an attempt to control teenagers’ sexuality. The rigidly defined etiquette of gender performance was in turn used by teens as “a tool in the struggle for power within the courtship system.”²¹ The ideal feminine behavior, in line with the containment model of femininity, was passive submission. Teenage girls could use this to their advantage, however,

²⁰ Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*, (New York: Times Books, 1994), 19-20.

²¹ Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch*, 115.



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by performing their roles so perfectly that their dates felt their own masculine performance to be lacking. Bailey argues that middle-class white teenagers embraced the “essentially conservative system” of gender even as their demands for independence inherently challenged it.²² By engaging in gender based and sexually charged dating rituals, young white middle-class women upheld the ideal in some ways while tearing it down in others.

Bailey revised some of these arguments in her 1999 book *Sex in the Heartland*, which looked for roots of the sexual revolution in the ideas and experiences of mainstream Americans in Lawrence, Kansas. Bailey argues that dating was a site of power struggle, not just between men and women, but also between youth and authority figures. Young men and women, with a consciousness of themselves as a distinct category for the first time in the postwar period, constantly challenged the boundaries of acceptable sexual behavior. Authorities, such as the administration at Kansas University and countless other universities across the country, responded by creating elaborate rules and regulations to govern young people’s behavior. These rules, such as curfews, were consistently skirted by rebellious youths, and the result of this ongoing power struggle was a redefinition of sexual misbehavior—the range of “normal” behavior expanded to include anything that was heterosexual and consensual.²³ This redefinition and constant power struggle gave women a new range of sexual expression that could be explored while still upholding the traditional feminine ideal. Together, Bailey’s books illustrate

²² Bailey, *From Front Porch*, 117.

²³ Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 75.



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one variation in the modified domesticity model. If acceptance of the domestic ideal is viewed as a spectrum, the young women in Bailey's two studies would appear on the more conservative end, but their expressions of sexual autonomy represent a form of challenge to the ideal nonetheless.

Jennifer Scanlon's 2009 biography of Helen Gurley Brown further explores the roots of the modified domestic femininity she championed. Scanlon argues that Brown and her Single Girls were "lipstick feminists" who "refus[ed] to give in to the dictates of postwar domesticity."²⁴ Women's liberal sexual expression was a key element of Brown's perspective, a position she shared with mainstream feminism. However, her views diverged with theirs on the issue of traditional femininity. Brown did not see liberal sexual expression and a conservative model of femininity as incompatible. The Single Girl's sexuality and feminine performance struck a middle ground between the emerging sexual revolution and the sexual containment ideology of the postwar period. The success of *Sex and the Single Girl* in 1962 illustrates how widespread this middle-ground version of femininity had become since World War II. Brown's life and book, Scanlon argues, show that "the fissures in the postwar domestic formula always existed side by side with the formula."²⁵ Like Breines' and Douglas' studies of mass culture and Bailey's analysis of teenage dating practices, Scanlon's history of the Single Girl complicates the narrative of postwar domesticity. The Single Girl version of femininity challenged the

²⁴ Jennifer Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), x-xi.

²⁵ Scanlon, 69.



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mainstream sexual containment more aggressively than Bailey's teenagers, but it still retains essential elements of domestic feminine behavior and performance.

Elizabeth Fraterrigo further articulated the rationale behind the modified domesticity model in her 2009 book about *Playboy* magazine. The type of woman constructed by *Playboy*, Fraterrigo writes, "did not oppose traditional notions of femininity and domesticity so much as she deployed those attributes outside the context of home and family by enacting a different sort of 'working-girl' femininity."²⁶ The Playboy bunny and the Single Girl challenged the sexual containment aspects of the dominant gender ideology, but upheld the passivity and submissiveness that the dominant ideology ascribed to proper femininity. This echoes Bailey's findings from *Sex in the Heartland*; young women were pushing the boundaries of acceptable femininity but were careful to not push too far. Though the modified domesticity model continued to uphold some of the conservative elements of the containment ideology, it does show that the latter was not monolithically dispensed nor universally accepted.

Other historians working with the modified domesticity model explore ways that this discourse was created. For example, Susan K. Freeman's 2008 book *Sex Goes to School* argues that sex education classes in the postwar period were shaped by normative gender assumptions, but a more complicated discourse emerged as students discussed the information in classes or among themselves. She stresses that many educators and the students themselves "acknowledged

²⁶ Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009),105.



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variability in accepted standards of femininity and chastity.”²⁷ Though the material of these classes advocated conservative beliefs about heterosexuality and gender roles, the act of educating young women about their own bodies and sexuality, and encouraging them to openly discuss these topics led to an increased sense of autonomy. Like Breines, Douglas, and Bailey, Freeman specifically identifies roots of the sexual revolution and women’s liberation movement in the 1950s. She argues that the sex education classes public schools offered in the postwar period opened the “possibilities for questioning sexual and gender norms” that would come to fruition as the young women in those classes entered adulthood.²⁸

The postwar period can only be understood in connection to an understanding of the cultural and social context of World War II. Elaine Tyler May argues that the domestic ideal of the postwar period was tied to past doubts, fears, and instability of the war as well as the contemporary paranoia of the Cold War.²⁹ The modified domesticity model also has some roots in wartime America. For example, Maria Elena Buszek’s study of the pin-up girl as a feminist icon argues that the classic pin-ups of World War II represented a “subversive model of female sexuality” that combined “conventional beauty, blatant sexuality, professional independence, and wholesome patriotism.”³⁰ As much as Rosie the Riveter symbolized women’s changing place in American labor during the war, the pin-up represented a shift in sexual mores. The seismic

²⁷ Susan K. Freeman, *Sex Goes to School: Girls and Sex Education before the 1960s*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), xi.

²⁸ Freeman, 101.

²⁹ May, 1.

³⁰ Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006),



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cultural shifts of wartime encouraged challenges to gender norms and ideology. Some turned to a narrow, conservative definition of gender roles, while others embraced a version of femininity that encompassed elements of domesticity with a newfound sexual liberalism. The wartime pin-up could be seen as a forerunner to the Single Girl model of feminine sexuality.

Female sexual expression or gender presentation that fell outside the heterosexual norm was constructed in popular discourse as deviant femininity. The framework for this construction is most clearly explained in Donna Penn's 1994 essay, "The Sexualized Woman: The Lesbian, the Prostitute, and the Containment of Female Sexuality in Postwar America." Though Penn acknowledges the overarching ideology of containment as it applied to female sexuality, as described by May, she is less concerned with the shape of that ideology or the way it was discursively enacted and more with the construction of the "other" against which it was formed. Deviant femininity was constructed to "define, bind, and contain the so-called norm."³¹ The domestic model of femininity describes the so-called "normal" woman; Penn reconstructs how "abnormal" women were perceived in postwar America.

Penn identifies the lesbian and the prostitute as two archetypes that epitomized deviant femininity in American culture, and explains that they were linked by the danger perceived around their sexuality. Though seemingly distinct categories, the link between lesbians and prostitutes was that they both served as "symbols of female sexual desire, female sexual excess,

³¹ Donna Penn, "The Sexualized Woman: The Lesbian, the Prostitute, and the Containment of Female Sexuality in Postwar America," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 360.



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uncontained female sexuality, and therefore female sexual deviance and danger.”³² In the Cold War climate of fear and uncertainty about the meanings of masculinity, female sexuality was viewed as potentially dangerous or subversive. Penn argues that despite the pressure to conform to the domestic ideal and the cultural backlash that demonized them, both categories of deviant women “aggressively and publicly carved out an alternative meaning from the dominant code.”³³ The histories of both lesbians and prostitutes present a challenge to the idea that the domestic containment model of femininity and female sexuality wholly dominated postwar culture.

Beyond Penn’s essay, the history of prostitution in postwar America is largely absent from the historiography. However, examining how prostitutes were portrayed and perceived in wartime America may give an indication of their status after the war as well. In her 2006 book about the connections between courtship, treating, and prostitution in the first half the 20th century, Elizabeth Alice Clement describes how the US Government altered the cultural discourse on deviant feminine forms during World War II.³⁴ Propaganda posters warned servicemen to avoid prostitutes, pick ups, and victory girls, thereby including all women who have sex with soldiers under the mantle of ‘bad women.’³⁵ The pin-up girl exhibited a sexually available form of femininity, rooted in the domestic ideal and seductive but non-threatening. By contrast, the prostitute or victory girl was portrayed as dirty and diseased; her sexuality was

³² Penn, 359.

³³ Penn, 375.

³⁴ Elizabeth Alice Clement, *Love For Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 243.

³⁵ Clement, 258.



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understood to be aggressive and indiscriminating. Though the cultural representations of these women were unflattering and emphasized their deviance from an idealized norm, the numbers of prostitutes and victory girls during World War II illustrate how some women challenged the dominant gender ideologies of the time.

Marilyn Hegarty further explores the regulation of female sexuality and construction of deviant femininity during World War II in her book *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*. She argues that in the context of wartime fears of the disruption of traditional gender systems, “female sexuality seemed particularly dangerous.”³⁶ In this state of uncertainty, the sexually alluring woman and the sexually dangerous woman appeared at times in contrast to each other and at other times became conflated. Framing women’s labor in characteristically domestic terms could control the mobilization of women in the war industries, but a similar expansion of women’s sexual behavior and opportunities seemed to cross a line into male prerogative. Hegarty explains that the “patriotute” exemplifies the “paradoxes inherent in an attempt to enlist women’s sexuality in support of the war effort while simultaneously trying to keep women’s sexuality under control.”³⁷ The culture condoned the use of female sexuality as a morale booster for the soldiers, as evidenced by the widespread organizing of USO dances and acceptance of the image of the pin-up girl. On the other hand, society maintained a deep mistrust of female

³⁶ Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 2.

³⁷ Hegarty, 158.



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sexuality, particularly among women who exercised the greatest deal of agency with their bodies.

Hegarty also describes the connection between prostitutes and lesbians. As the wartime fears of gender disorder and sexual chaos flourished, constructions of deviant female sexuality were overlapping and ill-defined. The slander campaigns against the Women's Army Corps are an example of this conflation of deviant femininities. These women were seen as directly challenging gender norms and therefore came under scrutiny for instances of lesbianism, prostitution, promiscuity, or some combination of the three.³⁸ This reinforces Donna Penn's assertion that prostitute and lesbian were equivalent categories in the postwar. Penn also proposes that the newly increased visibility of lesbian subcultures was a factor in their postwar cultural representations as dangerous women; perhaps the focus on prostitutes during the war had a similar effect on creating a backlash against them after the war.³⁹

The other "sister of the sexual underworld" in Penn's formation is more represented in postwar historiography.⁴⁰ Lesbian history by scholars such as Lillian Faderman, Elizabeth Lapovsky-Kennedy and Madeline Davis, and Marcia M. Gallo offer important examples of another form of deviant femininity. Prostitutes and lesbians "shared a culturally defined space as sexually defined women," but that cultural construction was debated and contested among the

³⁸ Hegarty, 89.

³⁹ Penn, 359.

⁴⁰ Penn, 359.



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women themselves.⁴¹ Though the dominant culture defined their femininity as outside the norm because of a perceived threat centered in their sexual autonomy, lesbian communities created versions of femininity for their own uses and identities.

The primary method of describing and understanding lesbian femininity or gender presentation in the postwar period is through the use of the butch/femme dichotomy. In *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, Lillian Faderman argues that without existing role models, lesbians in the 1940s and 1950s adapted their gender presentations to the dominant “heterogenderal pattern” present among both heterosexuals and the male homophile community.⁴² She also acknowledges, however, that to many lesbians these gender roles were more complicated. Femmes in particular present a complex challenge to the formulation of postwar femininity; their attraction to a “rebel sexuality” distinguished them from the heterosexual women with whom they were basically identical in outward appearance.⁴³

Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis write that although butch/femme roles “derived in great part from heterosexual models, the roles also transformed those models and created an authentic lesbian lifestyle.”⁴⁴ By publicly incorporating elements of traditional masculinity, butch lesbians were enacting a form of prepolitical resistance; presenting traditionally feminine style and behavior while partnered with a masculine woman was a

⁴¹ Penn, 369.

⁴² Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 167.

⁴³ Faderman, 171.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 6.



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femme's act of resistance. While some women explained these roles in the terms of gender essentialism that formed the basis of the conservative postwar gender ideology, others were not comfortable embracing essentialism. Kennedy and Davis explain that these women created alternate explanations for the creation of their gender and sexual identities, demonstrating the way that the lesbian community challenged the dominant version of femininity in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴⁵

While these excellent histories of lesbian life reconstruct how femininity was viewed and structured within lesbian communities, Robert J. Corber's *Cold War Femme* focuses on how the dominant discourse constructed lesbians through cultural representations of them.⁴⁶ He analyzes several films and film stars of the Cold War era to assess how coded messages about lesbian identity were communicated to the audience through words, appearance, and actions. He argues that through World War II the common understanding of homosexuality was inexorably bound with notions of gender performance, but that this understanding began to shift during the Cold War era to encompass the figure of the femme lesbian, defined more by her sexual object choice than her gender presentation. Corber argues that this ultimately led to the destabilization of the traditional femininity of the postwar. The cultural construction of the femme lesbian was more

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, "The Reproduction of Butch-Fem Roles: A Social Constructionist Approach," in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, eds., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 253.

⁴⁶ Robert J. Corber, *Cold War Femme: Lesbianism, National Identity, and Hollywood Cinema*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).



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threatening to mainstream America because her gender presentation made her indistinguishable from a heterosexual woman who adhered to the domestic ideal.

As the differing views on the nature of the butch/femme dichotomy outlined in these two works illustrate, the understanding of how lesbians fit into the postwar discourse on femininity remains complex. Faderman's interpretation suggests that the lesbian community adopted the butch/femme model for lack of other options, while Kennedy and Davis would seem to suggest that adhering to butch/femme roles was a choice many working-class lesbians made as a subconscious form of resistance and a useful way of organizing their communities. Even among the politically and socially conscious lesbian organization, the Daughters of Bilitis, the relationship between female sexuality and gender was contested and complex. Marcia M. Gallo describes the results of a questionnaire the DOB sent to its members in 1958 wherein some members identified as masculine, some as feminine, and some as neither, "reflecting the recurring debates within DOB over the popularity of the gender-based roles for lesbians."⁴⁷ Though the rigidity of this dichotomy began to break down in the 1960s and 1970s, its prevalence in the postwar period provides a window into a unique form of deviant femininity. In the larger context of the fear of sexual chaos embodied in female sexual agency in the postwar period, lesbians' embrace of the butch/femme dichotomy can be interpreted as both an indicator

⁴⁷ Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement*, (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006), 53.



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of the preoccupation with gender in American culture and a challenge to the hegemonic domestic model of femininity.

Another form of female deviancy was constructed around abortionists and their clients, as described in Rickie Solinger's 1994 essay "Extreme Danger: Women Abortionists and their Clients before *Roe v. Wade*." Just as prostitution and same sex desire were socially constructed, women who chose to terminate their pregnancies were subject to the same cultural forces that defined them in relation to the idealized norm of heteronormativity and especially impetus to marry. Women accused or tried for illegal abortions in the postwar years served as examples of "multiple deviants"—they had defied the idealized sexual order by conceiving out of wedlock and by terminating the pregnancy they demonstrated an independence that overstepped the bounds of ideal passive femininity.⁴⁸ Motherhood was viewed as a woman's natural role, and therefore a woman who sought an abortion was seen as "a female of easy virtue and as a sexualized, but de-feminized, not-mother."⁴⁹ Through the experiences and the cultural representations of women who received abortions in the postwar period, historians can begin to understand how the category of deviant femininity could apply not just to prostitutes and lesbians, but any woman who challenged the gender and sexual order too much.

Abortionists and their clients transgressed the conservative gender order in a way similar to another representation of deviant femininity: the nymphomaniac. Carol Groneman's 2000

⁴⁸ Rickie Solinger, "Extreme Danger: Women Abortionists and their Clients before *Roe v. Wade*," in *Not June Cleaver*, Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., 345.

⁴⁹ Solinger, "Extreme Danger," 347.



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book *Nymphomania* provides another glimpse of the way heterosexual women who demonstrated sexuality that defied the containment model were perceived. Chronicling the medical and psychological professions' explanations for nymphomania over time, Groneman argues that in the postwar period the nymphomaniac was constructed in terms borrowed from Freudian psychoanalysis and reflecting the period's preoccupation with gender norms. The experts argued that the nymphomaniac, like the lesbian or the abortion client, had "rejected" her innate femininity, which could lead to divorce or even prostitution.⁵⁰ Groneman's and Solinger's studies reinforce and expand Penn's arguments; the lesbian, the prostitute, and other sexual deviants were all "sexually defined women" outside the realm of "normal" femininity.⁵¹

Building on the foundation of the previous historians, one way that the historiography can expand is by incorporating all three frameworks of femininity in analyzing postwar culture. For example, in her 2005 book *American Sexual Character*, Miriam Reumann reconstructs the discourse around female sexuality broadly. She explores how postwar Americans' concerns with national character were shaped by sexual anxieties, particularly as they were described in the Kinsey Reports. When *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* was published in 1953, it sparked even more controversy than its predecessor had five years earlier. Reumann argues that it called into question long-standing assumptions about "normal" female sexuality or the naturalness of the conservative model of femininity. Ultimately the publication of the Kinsey Report and the

⁵⁰ Carol Groneman, *Nymphomania A History*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2000), 81.

⁵¹ Penn, 369.



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public fervor it provoked meant that “the gulf between women’s prescribed social and sexual roles and their actual desires and behaviors could no longer be ignored.”⁵² Like Breines, Freeman, and other historians, Reumann finds roots of the cultural shifts of the 1960s in the 1950s. The publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* was a contributing factor in the destabilization of traditional gender norms in the following decade.

Reumann’s work complicates the understanding of postwar constructions of femininity and sexuality by investigating the ways they were constructed. Her work is not built on one of the three models of femininity I have identified, but instead works to reconstruct the cultural context in which all three co-existed. Though the Kinsey Reports themselves questioned the universality of the domestic containment model, the harsh response from some critics supports the idea that this ideology held considerable power. However, the Single Girl and the female deviant found some vindication in the Kinsey Reports, and the fact that many Americans began to embrace a scientifically-founded sexual liberalism after their publication gives weight to their presence in the spectrum of postwar American ideology. Reumann’s book illustrates how complex and nuanced postwar gender and sexual ideology truly was.

Another work that incorporates multiple frameworks in its depiction of postwar femininity is Rachel Devlin’s 2005 book *Relative Intimacy: Fathers, Adolescent Daughters, and Postwar American Culture*. Devlin argues that the crisis of femininity of the postwar period was

⁵² Miriam G. Reumann, *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 87.



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a significant factor in reshaping the meaning of the father-daughter relationship. She writes that as experts became increasingly fixated on the category of “wayward girls,” they responded by “establishing the father as the sexual focal point of female adolescent psychology.”⁵³ Devlin challenges postwar American historiography in two principle ways. First, she complicates the narrative of the emerging teenager culture that focuses primarily on young Americans’ newfound independence. Books like Bailey’s *From Front Porch to Back Seat* take this as a primary assumption, but Devlin’s work illustrates that close ties to family authority continued to shape young women’s lives and sexualities. Secondly, Devlin describes her work as revising the domestic containment model of postwar femininity that stressed conservatism and silence. The postwar preoccupation with the erotic dimensions of the father-daughter relationship, she argues, illustrates a site of change and negotiation in America’s sexual culture.

While some historians are beginning to unravel the ways in which sexuality influenced the constructions of femininity in the postwar era, other historians are investigating the ways in which race and class further complicate the narrative. Much of the current literature focuses on the lives and cultural context for the white middle class. Historians like Beth Bailey carefully point out that their studies are focused this way because of the nature of the available sources and the larger context of postwar women’s historiography.⁵⁴ There are several recent examples of ways that race can be incorporated as an important element of gender construction, however. The

⁵³ Rachel Devlin, *Relative Intimacy: Fathers, Adolescent Daughters, and Postwar American Culture*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 3.

⁵⁴ Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 11.



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following examples utilize the three categories of postwar femininity outlined in this essay, while also accounting for the influence of race on the construction of those categories.

Wini Breines' *Young, White, and Miserable* works with the domestic femininity model and is notable for explicitly focusing on how race influenced the construction of white female identity. Breines outlines the postwar preoccupation with issues of race and concludes that this both mirrored and shaped the concurrent preoccupation with gender. As Breines explores the avenues that young white women took toward nonconformity, a key element she identifies is their identification with "black music and difference."⁵⁵ The ideal version of femininity was not just passively domestic but also conspicuously white; young white women who did not feel an affinity for that model embraced ways to differentiate themselves from it. Similarly, Rachel Devlin's *Relative Intimacy* is primarily concerned with the culture of the white middle class, but also includes race as a site of identity-formation in young women. By contrasting the cultural depictions of the father-daughter relationship of the white middle class and the African American middle class, her study gives a clear of example of the way race, class, and gender overlapped in postwar American culture.

In her 2007 book, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age*, Susan K. Cahn places adolescent female sexuality at the center of her study of the American South. She argues that the sexual agency of both white and African American girls worked to "unhinge the established coupling of race and sex that fortified the power of white elites and a growing middle

⁵⁵ Breines, 19.



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class.”⁵⁶ Like Beth Bailey, Cahn analyzes the role of dating and sexual behavior in the youth culture that emerged in the postwar decade. However, she includes differences of race and class in her study, concluding that “the sexual culture of mid-century high schools was not uniform or pervasive, but rather existed to different degrees in different settings.”⁵⁷ A new sense of sexual autonomy among young women was a commonality across all races, classes, and locations, however. Cahn echoes Breines, Douglas, and others who locate the origins of the cultural revolutions of the 1960s in developments of the immediate postwar period; in the context of the South, however, issues of race form the primary concern. Cahn ultimately argues that parental concerns about teenage sexuality informed the battles surrounding school desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s; the specter of interracial sex among teenagers shaped the political and social unrest of the period. Cahn’s book, like Bailey’s work, is situated in the modified domesticity model.

One way that historians have begun pulling apart the connections between race, class, gender, and sexuality is through investigating single motherhood in the postwar period. Rickie Solinger’s 1992 book *Wake Up Little Susie* first highlighted the distinct ways that illegitimacy was constructed in racial terms.⁵⁸ She explores the reality of this intersection of race and sexuality as it impacted women’s lives and public policy. Regina Kunzel’s 1994 essay “White

⁵⁶ Susan K. Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 10.

⁵⁷ Cahn, 222.

⁵⁸ Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade*, (New York: Routledge, 1992).



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Neurosis, Black Pathology” further develops the connection between race, gender, and sexuality in the construction of illegitimacy. She argues that in this period “out-of-wedlock pregnancy functioned as a language through which people might contain, contest, and resolve issues of social change and sexual and racial conflict far broader than the issue of illegitimacy.”⁵⁹ White illegitimate pregnancies were a sign of mental illness, while black women who became pregnant outside of marriage were considered “culturally deviant.”⁶⁰ *Wake Up Little Susie* and Kunzel’s essay are connected to Solinger’s work on abortionists and their clients. Out-of-wedlock pregnancy was obviously understood differently based on whether it was carried to term or terminated; these works show how race influenced the construction as well. It also connects young, black, unwed mothers to other female “deviants” of the postwar period, such as lesbians and prostitutes. Further work can be done to elaborate on this connection between race and other forms of female deviancy, beyond the “language” of out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Catherine S. Ramirez further complicates the understanding of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the postwar by breaking down the black/white dichotomy. In her 2009, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit*, Ramirez investigates the history of *pachucas*, Mexican American women who participated in the zoot suit style and culture. She argues that the *pachuca* style of dress and grooming “was construed as a sign of an aberrant femininity, competing masculinity, and

⁵⁹ Regina Kunzel, “White Neurosis, Black Pathology: Constructing Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancy in the Wartime and Postwar United States,” in *Not June Cleaver*, 322.

⁶⁰ Kunzel, 323.



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homosexuality.”⁶¹ *Pachucas*, then, provide another example of deviant femininity, like lesbians, prostitutes, and black unwed mothers. As in Cahn’s study, the cultural context of Ramirez’s work is a period of intense fears about “the instability of class, race, and gender categories, nonnormative sexualities, juvenile delinquency, and sedition,” though the demographic factors of the west brought those fears into focus on working-class Mexican American culture.⁶² *Pachucas* offer another clear example of the ways that race, class, and sexuality intertwined in the cultural manifestations of gender expectations and performance in mid-century America. Ramirez’s book also offers a valuable addition to the growing literature that challenges the assumed dominance of the postwar domestic ideal.

The work of the historians presented in this essay represents a growing and important strain in the historiographies of women’s history, postwar history, cultural histories, and histories of sexuality. The diversity of subjects and arguments they represent illustrate the depth of the field and point the way toward new areas of inquiry. Creadick’s and Lewis’ books demonstrate that the domestic ideal was perpetuated in many more ways than the family sitcom that is usually cited as the source of that image. Cultural historians can continue to pull apart the gendered messages of different aspects of postwar life. Fraterrigo’s book demonstrates how constructions of modified domestic femininity can be analyzed through comparison with constructions of masculinity. The ties between the parallel crises of masculinity and femininity deserve further

⁶¹ Catherine S. Ramirez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), xvii.

⁶² Ramirez, 57.



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scrutiny. The authors exploring deviant femininity illuminate often over-looked elements of postwar culture, while also raising intriguing questions about other ways female sexuality that fell outside the prescribed norm was portrayed and understood. More work is needed on prostitution after World War II, for example. Finally, the full implications of race and class on the construction of gender is only beginning to be understood. These categories can be applied to all the frameworks of femininity to enrich our understanding of postwar culture and its continued impact today. The postwar period continues to be relevant to American society and culture, and historians have the opportunity and the obligation to increase our understanding of its complex legacy.

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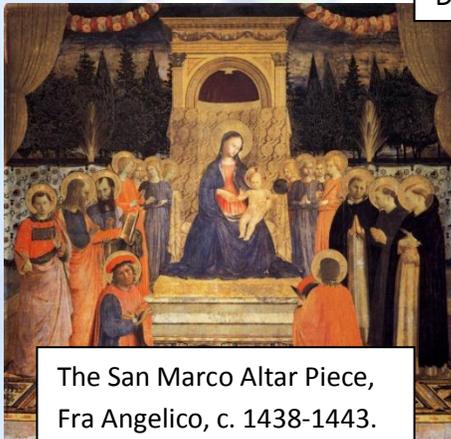
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Ashley Matcheck

Memory In Paintings of Quattrocento Renaissance Florence:

Religious paintings and Secular Portraits



The San Marco Altar Piece,
Fra Angelico, c. 1438-1443.

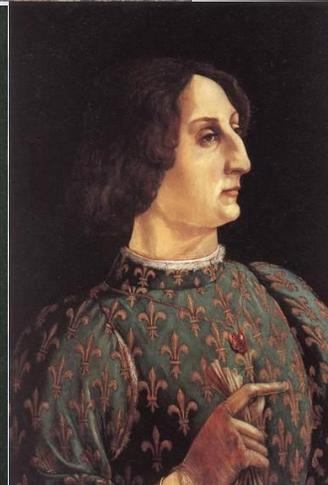
Portrait of the Donor Nera Corsi,
Domenico Ghirlandaio, c. 1485



*Giovanna degli
Albizzi
Tornabuoni,*
Domenico
Ghirlandaio, c.
1488/1490



Profile Portrait of a Young Man,
Tommaso di Giovanni di Simone
Cassai Masaccio, year unknown



Portrait of Galeazzo Maria Sforza,
Piero del Pollaiuolo, c. 1471



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Collective memory studies as a field has always been the interdisciplinary study of how and why memories have been created. The difference between collective or cultural memory studies and that of a strictly historical study is often discussed and debated as people question whether memory or history is more valuable regarding past events. Jan Assmann explains that “in the context of cultural memory, the distinction between myth and history vanishes. Not the past as such, as it is investigated and reconstructed by archaeologists and historians, counts for the cultural memory, but only the past as it is remembered.” Assmann has the perspective that while an historical event took place in a certain way the memory of the event in itself is worthy of recognition and exploration.¹ However, whether or not studying the past as history or as memory is more appropriate is not the concern here. This paper will focus on how the approach of memory studies is able to bring memory into historical perspective as an element of influence and a catalyst for memorialization that took place through painting in Quattrocentro Florence. The use of paintings as objects of immediate memory was practiced by the Florentines as a form of “social memory,” a term coined by art historian Aby Warburg to refer to a cultural level of memory. Interestingly enough despite the use of paintings for immediate memory in fifteenth century Florence, Jan Assmann credits Warburg with being the first art historian to recognize and treat images or “cultural objectivizations” as carriers of memory.² This may be a relevant

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1. Jan Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” In *Media and Cultural Memory: Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 113.
 2. *Ibid*, 110.



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statement for contemporary art history, however a key theorist of the fifteenth century, Battista Alberti noted that in regard to paintings as a form of memory of deceased individuals, “the dead were seen by ‘the living many centuries later,’” referencing a clear recognition of the power of images to act as carriers of memory centuries before any field of memory studies was formalized.³

Paintings occupy one space in the material aspect of a theory of culture in memory studies. Astrid Erll’s theory on memory studies is a perfect introduction to the study of memory in paintings in which Erll states that “culture can be seen as a three-dimensional framework, comprising social (people, social relations, institutions), material (artifacts and media), and mental aspects (culturally defined ways of thinking, mentalities) (cf. Posner).”⁴ The intersecting pillars of the theory are evident in Renaissance Florence where each aspect can be seen to play a role in the creation of these memories -- from the political motivations for commissioning works to the cultural influence on ideals of beauty and fashion, to the resulting paintings themselves. These “reminding objects” are important as intermediaries between the rememberer and the thing to be remembered, as Assmann states that “things do not ‘have’ a memory of their own, but they may remind us, may trigger our memory, because they carry memories which we have invested

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3. Patricia Simons, “Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization: Ambiguous Individualism in Representations of Renaissance Women,” In *Language and Images of Renaissance Italy*, ed. Alison Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 264.
 4. Astrid Erll, “Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction,” In *Media and Cultural Memory: Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) 4.



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into them.”⁵ The use of paintings to create an immediate memory is done not by the object itself but through the interaction between the painting and the viewer in which the symbols convey a meaning particular to the content. These “outward symbols” of memory are able to influence and create immediate memory through this dialogue.⁶

Painting was a form of memory creation for the city of Florence as a public and propagandist means of spreading political influences as well as a form of memory creation for family memory, or what Erlil considers “group memory.”⁷ The creation of memory is an appropriate phrase for the art of this time and place in regards to both the content of religious paintings and the manipulation of individual portraits. Patricia Rubin has written that in “Florence the endowment, construction, decoration, and display [of the city and individuals] are instruments of status and affirmations of a desired *status quo*. They are also, to some degree, a false memory. The results of these activities created an alternative reality.”⁸ The obvious grandeur of the city and individuals was apparent in the decoration and display however the memory creation took place in the paintings themselves. The immediate effect of this falsified memory was the establishment and maintenance of political power and the reputation of individuals to fit the ideals for men and women in fifteenth century Florence. The power to shape the immediate memory of the viewer existed through both the selection of the occasion for

5. Jan Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” 111.

6. Ibid, 111.

7. Astrid Erlil, “Cultural Memory Studies,” 2.

8. Patricia Rubin, “Art and the Imagery of Memory,” In *Art, Memory, and Family in Renaissance Florence*. eds. Giovanni Ciappelli and Patricia Lee Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 68.



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commissioning a painting and the individual's desire to convey a certain ideal or message within it. The management of perception was evident in the style and symbolic value of the Florentine art. For paintings with an intended political or public message there was always a need to control the message and include republican ideals. "Remembering needs occasions and it is selective by necessity. What is remembered and what is forgotten first of all depends upon the subjective management of identity, which in turn is steered by emotions, needs, norms, and aims."⁹ The messages of paintings commissioned with political intentions were influenced ultimately by the desire to maintain a powerful and charitable public image. For more personal memory creation "Florence's citizens produced a more autonomous, privatized family memorial in the form of commissioned portraiture."¹⁰ This creation of immediate memory through the fifteenth century art in Florence is challenged by Allison Wright as not intentional memory creation as much as the act of commemoration.¹¹ The commemoration of events was not the only purpose for the portraiture, as Wright seems to acknowledge, and for those that were created to commemorate a family member (as was often the case for women) the act of commemoration itself must be investigated. Ultimately, the commemoration through portraiture took place with the result in

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9. Schmidt, Siegfried J., "Memory and Remembrance: A Constructivist Approach," In *Media and Cultural Memory: Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) 193-194.
 10. Patrick Geary, "The Historical Material of Memory," In *Art, Memory, and Family in Renaissance Florence*, eds. Giovanni Ciappelli and Patricia Lee Rubin, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 24.
 11. Alison Wright, "The Memory of Faces: Representational Choices in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Portraiture," In *Art, Memory, and Family in Renaissance Florence*, eds. Giovanni Ciappelli and Patricia Lee Rubin, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 88.



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mind that the individual would be remembered for his or her dignity and high social rank. Whether or not commemoration was an aspect driving the commissioning of a painting, the desire to fashion an idealized and manipulated image and memory played an undeniable role in the creation of some paintings in Quattrocentro Florence, especially those used in commemoration. Those pictured were meant to be remembered, in the immediate memory, as dignified members of an elite class worthy of memorialization.

Patrick Geary wrote that “the study of historical memory is a study of propaganda, of the decisions about what should be remembered and how it should be remembered” and although Geary was referring to written texts this statement is certainly applicable to visual texts as well.¹² Historical memory and collective memory must be carefully investigated as terms, but when using art as the historical text in the exploration of collective memory the distinction does not seem necessary, especially in the case of a falsified memory. To worry about the historical accuracy (and therefore the historical memory) of any piece of art would shed light on the intended inconsistencies, however, the falsified memory was created in just this light with intentional manipulation and allegorical references. Italian Renaissance art has been studied from the perspective of its use as propaganda specifically in the political realm as a way for leading families to gain political prestige, secure a position of power, and to promote the family’s memory throughout time.¹³ Patricia Rubin states that the “visual arts played a key role in

12. Patrick Geary, “The Historical Material of Memory,” 17.

13. Patricia Rubin, “Art and the Imagery of Memory,” 69.



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securing and declaring positions” for elite families.¹⁴ The well known Medici family has been a prime example of how elitist families used art in this fashion.

A popular piece commissioned by rich patrons, including the Medici family, was the altar piece set within the family chapel.¹⁵ The desire for these massive and elaborate decorative scenes on religious subjects emerged around the thirteenth century with advances in art techniques.¹⁶ Jacob Burckhardt notes that many monasteries preferred outside patronage for works within their cloisters rather than commissioning the works themselves. They relied on wealthy patrons who in turn wanted to instill a sense of memory for their families within many of the works, such as the altar piece.¹⁷ These paintings were meant to create a memory of pious citizens and by extension the entire family, as Rupert Shepherd notes that “certain practices regarding religious art in Renaissance Italy were predicated upon the belief that images in some way embodied the individuals they represented.”¹⁸ Cosimo Medici’s motivations to fund the restoration of the San Marco Dominican convent and commission the San Marco Altar Piece along with several other major works flowed out of the need to establish himself as the “effective ruler of Florentine

14. Ibid.

15. Brian Kempers, *Painting, Power and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Beverley Jackson (London: Penguin Group, 1987) 171.

16. Jacob Burckhardt, *Italian Renaissance Painting according to Genres*, trans. David Britt and Caroline Beamish (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2005) 97.

17. *Ibid*, 117.

18. Rupert Shepherd, “Art and life in Renaissance Italy: a blurring of identities?” In *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. Mary Rogers (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000) 68.



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Republic” following his return from exile in 1434.¹⁹ Cosimo managed to re-establish himself despite the success of his political rivals, the Strozzi family, who had Medici exiled. Cosimo received an invitation back to the city only one year later after Medici partisans regained power in that September’s elections.²⁰

Twenty years after this return Medici’s position as a sort of ruler of Florence was evident through the arrangement of the Peace of Lodi that joined Florence, Milan, and the Kingdom of Naples against Venice and the papacy. Kenneth Gouwens credits Medici with having played a large role in engineering the treaty of 1454.²¹ To have been in the position to arrange such an agreement between three city-states and to establish the “‘balance of power’ (a term used before the end of the century to describe the situation)”²² speaks of Cosimo’s political influence beyond even his locale of Florence. Medici’s unofficial rule falls into a description of tyrannical power which Gouwens describes in the oligarchical republics as illegitimate, taken and by force, and maintained through individual prowess.²³ Medici’s efforts to solidify his power through creation of immediate memory within the city are evident within his patronage of art. The San Marco Altar Piece was commissioned after the restoration of San Marco under Cosimo’s direction to

19. Malcolm Oxley, “The Medici and Gozzoli’s Magi,” *History Today* 44, no. 12 (December 1994) under <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/ehost/detail?vid=6&hid=17&sid=280de518-c3d9-4846-95fc-88ef8b599317%40sessionmgr13&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWVhc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=9501236341> (accessed April 24, 2011).

20. Kenneth Gouwens ed., *The Italian Renaissance: The Essential Sources* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 108.

21. Kenneth Gouwens ed., *The Italian Renaissance*, 3.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*



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serve the Dominicans in an attempt to help beautify the city, provide religious support, and ultimately create a memory of Cosimo as a charitable figure and a member of the elite social class.²⁴ The painting includes Saint Cosmas and Saint Damien, both figures important to the Medici family as the former was Cosimo's patron saint and the latter that of his dead brother.

With an inviting glance at the viewer the Saint Cosmas acts as mediator between the viewer outside the picture and the group of saints in heaven and gestures toward the Virgin Mary sitting in a throne with the child Jesus on her knee. Although Cosimo is not directly inserted into the painting, on an allegorical level he can be seen within the representation of the Saint Cosmas.

The face of this saint is altered and not idealized as are the faces of the other saints, but instead is said to have resembled Cosimo's face. The San Marco Alter Piece has been interpreted to show that as Cosmas was a "patron and mediator in heaven as Cosimo was on earth, Saint Cosmas was his direct link to the supreme intercessors, the Virgin and Christ, as the heavenly court of a judgmental God."²⁵ The implication exists within this piece that Cosimo was a powerful patron able to grant anyone who took audience with him exactly what they required for earthly salvation, where they could find their needs meet by a saintly man. The parallel relationship created between Medici and Saint Cosmas is only a partial explanation for the symbolism within this painting and many more exist to propel the Medici name to the front of the immediate

24. Malcolm Oxley, "The Medici and Gozzoli's Magi."

25. Dale Kent, *Cosimo de Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre* (London: Yale University Press, 2000) 156.



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memory of the viewer. The Medici coat of arms is present in the decoration on the border of the carpet laid out before the Virgin's throne and within the fabric of the carpet are woven zodiac symbols representative of the Medici family.²⁶ The incorporation of finer details to the more obvious reference to Cosimo Medici as Saint Cosmas reveals a clear intention to create an immediate memory of the power of Cosimo and his family for the viewer of the painting.

Including a saint in a commissioned painting was not unusual and did not endanger Cosimo's rule, however, because during this period saints began to emerge as "eloquent personalities"²⁷ and many patrons included saints in their work. The organization, placement of content, and attention to the form of every object demonstrates the use of symbols and relationships facilitating the creation of an immediate memory of the Medici family's charitable works and power.²⁸ Dale Kent points out that Cosimo Medici's intentions for commissioning art are "unrecoverable" and historians can never reconstruct the intended dialogue between the viewer and each piece with absolute certainty.²⁹ Still, there is a general consensus among historians that Cosimo did knowingly and intentionally use paintings as political propaganda. John Paoletti gave the general interpretation held by himself and other scholars in concluding that Cosimo Medici's "use of individual commissions as a means of social and political control

26. Dale Kent, *Cosimo de Medici*, 156.

27. Jacob Burckhardt, *Italian Renaissance Painting*, 70.

28. Dale Kent, *Cosimo de Medici*, 159.

29. *Ibid*, 347.



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is now commonplace in discussions of his patronage.”³⁰ Evidence of Cosimo Medici’s awareness of how to skillfully use paintings to his political advantage is found in the writing of Machiavelli. He wrote in 1525 that Cosimo was aware not to commission works of excessive style because he knew the dangers of attracting feelings of envy from political enemies and rivals.³¹ Ultimately, refuting Kent’s argument seems almost unnecessary because as Assmann notes it is not so much what actually happened in the past but how it was remembered which is important for memory studies.³² It seems that Cosimo Medici was ultimately trying to preserve the appearance of the republican atmosphere of Florence while undermining the social and political institutions of the city in order to essentially gain the advantages of the feudal lord.³³

The altar piece existed alongside another form of religious painting, the donor piece, which was on occasion substituted for an altar piece but more commonly functioned as an accessory. The donor piece was intended to create a memory of the subject and to increase his or her family’s prestige within the religious community and among fellow laymen. Donor pieces were sometimes used as altar pieces with the distinguishing characteristic that the conventions

30. Ibid, 349.

31. Jonathan K. Nelson and Richard J. Zeckhauser, *The Patron’s Payoff: Conspicuous Commissions in Italian Renaissance Art*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) 57.

32. Jan Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” 113.

33. Robert Williams, “The notion of beauty in Francesco Bocchi’s *Bellezze della citta di Fiorenza*, II,” In *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*. eds. Ames-Lewis, Francis and Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1998) 200.

34. Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender Representation Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) 63.

35. Ibid.



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were to show persons “in profile, kneeling, against a simulated marble background” as opposed to altar pieces showing religious scenes such as the Procession of the Magi.³⁴

The donor piece generally served as an indication that the person pictured was to be prayed for and when placed specifically in a family chapel it was meant to show that prayers for salvation were meant to be directed toward the entire family.³⁵ The portraits of Nera Corsi and her husband, Florentine banker Francesco Sassetti, conform to this idea. Corsi and Sassetti’s donor portraits flank the altar piece of the kneeling Virgin in worship of Christ in the Santa Trinita Chapel.³⁶ In the absence of allegory the donor piece did not create a memory of individuals as being able to directly speak with saints or Jesus, however they did emphasize religious devotion through the proximity of the individual to the Virgin or Jesus. While women were included in the donor portraits it is important to note that they were seen as representations of their family and not as the Renaissance individual. The donor piece included symbols to convey to the viewer that the person portrayed functioned to represent his or her family as a pious and respectable group and therefore serving a similar function as the altar piece in the creation of memory. In the pieces placed around the Sassetti sarcophagi there is a repeated use of the symbolic sling with inset stones, a part of the Sassetti coat of arms.³⁷

36. Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, 63.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*



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Unlike the more elaborate paintings, usually used for the altar piece, the donor piece showed the religious demeanor of the individual and his or her family through the symbolic use of clothing. The clothing of the more dramatic altar pieces was more elaborate in the quality and color while the much more subdued clothing of the donor piece reflected the republican ideals of Florence where “an overt showing of luxury was not deemed appropriate” and instead those pictured were shown in a state of humility.³⁸ The traditional dress for the donor paintings did include expensive garments; however, they created an immediate memory of a more serious and spiritually mature individual. The most important and essential aspect of dress within the art of the period was not the lavishness but actually whether or not the clothing was appropriate for the situation.³⁹ The typical dress for women in the donor portrait is seen in the portrait of Nera Corsi who wears a cloth head covering and a subdued and restrained dark dress.⁴⁰ The persons pictured in these portraits did not always dress in a humble manner in their daily lives and this is exactly why donor portraits played a role in the manipulation of memory. To show these men and women in a humble state where fancy clothing and jewelry were absent created the idealized pious individual in serious prayer.

Another donor piece shows Isabella d’Este dressed similarly to Nera Corsi in the respectable and pious clothing that resembles that which a widow might wear in her time of

39. Jane Bridgeman, “‘Condecenti et netti...’: beauty, dress and gender in Italian Renaissance art,” In *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*. eds. Ames-Lewis, Francis and Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1998) 45.

40. Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, 63.



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mourning. Her “somber and restrained garb” includes a black mantle and a white head cloth that echoes the picture of Dominican nuns on the opposite donor piece flanking the center altar piece.⁴¹ Isabella d’Este did not actually wear subdued clothing but instead, like other women of leading families, wore much more luxurious and colorful clothing. She was sometimes described by her contemporaries as an inventor of new fashion or a woman of great luxury.⁴² Picturing women in the black dress and white head covering was important in facilitating the memory of these individuals as humble and pious. They still maintained their high social rank through the richness of the subdued fabric and therefore were still able to portray an image of respectability and wealth.

In Quattrocento Florence memory within the family itself was portrayed with simpler portrait paintings. These paintings were “equally concerned with a public construction of memory” as with family memory.⁴³ They include both men and women and, like the donor portraits, when women are shown they are intended to refer to the family they represent. Therefore, regardless of the subject of the painting, the ultimate goal was the memory of the individual’s family as a prestigious and beautiful group. Patricia Rubin notes that, in the case of female sitters, regardless of the patron or occasion for memorialization the portrait signified that the woman was respectable but more importantly she represented the wealth and reputation of her family. In the patriarchal culture of Florence women were not credited for the success of

41. Ibid, 62.

42. Ibid.

43. Alison Wright, “The Memory of Faces,” 88.



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their families but instead their husbands were given recognition for a woman's respectable choices and intelligence.⁴⁴ Alison Wright gives the same conclusion. "Of course, in the case of the female portrait, connotations of power associated with the profile are firmly attached to the sitter's family rather than to the individual herself."⁴⁵ This creation of immediate memory for the family made portraits of this sort problematic in the Florentine Republic as they reflected the elevated status of pictured individuals. The manipulation in both male and female portraits was meant to convey the social values of the ideal republican male and the respectable matronly female. For this reason the Medicis themselves appear to have avoided commissioning portraits, instead accepting the honor of being asked to sit as subjects of paintings.

Usually a portrait was created to commemorate a social event outside of the family itself except in the case of those commissioned posthumously, done for both men and women.⁴⁶ The commissioning of the portraits achieved the reflection of the ideals of the Republic through the portrayal of a beautiful person. Italian Renaissance philosopher Marsilio Fincio discussed the outward beauty of an individual as a reflection of the inward soul. This idea was so powerful that the possibility of an unattractive individual having a good soul was outright rejected by Fincio.⁴⁷ The concept of beauty in the Renaissance permeated all aspects of life for men and women so

44. Patricia Simons, "Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization," 275.

45. Alison Wright, "The Memory of Faces," 92-93.

46. Ibid, 88-91.

47. David Hemsoll, "Beauty as an aesthetic and artistic ideal in the late fifteenth-century Florence," In *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*. Eds. Francis Ames-Lewis and Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1998) 68.



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much that Jacob Burckhardt studied “the beauty of women’s role and appearance” and “the beauty of the perfection of man.”⁴⁸ The manipulation of the subject was used to produce an idealized image of a beautiful, well formed person, as was the norm for the portraiture in the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁴⁹ The image of the body in a perfected state was achieved through a manipulation of the sitter to achieve ideal proportions and physical perfection.⁵⁰ Other changes made to a sitter’s appearance included the creation of a pleasing linear form and the use of a lightened skin tone.⁵¹ According to Paola Tingali the “traits of the ideal female beauty fashionable during the fifteenth century seem to have been developed for the purpose of being represented in a profile portrait.” The traits Tingali discusses are certainly evident within female portraits of the time and include the long line that runs from the hair pulled back from the forehead to the neck and the emphasizing of hair braided or somehow made into a bun with rich head jewels to expose the profile. Other ideal characteristics of feminine beauty included the rounded forehead and plucked eyebrows with well defined cheek and jaw bones.⁵² The standard portrayal of physical beauty did involve slight variations among artist and patrons. There were instances when the manipulation of an individual’s characteristics was just varied enough from

48. Elizabeth Cropper, “Introduction,” In *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*. Eds. Francis Ames-Lewis and Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1998) 1.

49. Alison Wright, “The Memory of Faces,” 105.

50. Sharon Fermor, “Poetry in motion: beauty in movement and the Renaissance conception of *leggiadria*,” In *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*. Eds. Francis Ames-Lewis and Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1998) 126.

51. David Hemsoll, “Beauty as an aesthetic and artistic ideal,” 68.

52. Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, 50.



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portrait to portrait to result in a multitude of slightly different portrayals of that person.

According to Patricia Simons the “variations among portraits of the same person, such as Francesco Sassetti or Isabella d’Este, can be so marked that no one work can be considered the authoritative likeness.”⁵³ The manipulation of memory existed not only in the allegorical or religious sense but also in the manipulation of a person’s physical appearance to achieve the affect of an attractive individual. The representation of a physical beauty, whether or not it was accurate, reflected the inward soul of the individual portrayed and therefore created an immediate memory of an attractive, wholesome individual.

The representation of elite individuals in a typical state of dress, one of luxury, was achieved through individual portraiture as a reflection of the status of the individual’s family. Clothing and jewelry were important in portraits of women as both helped to convey the family’s status. Finer cloth and jewelry were regulated in distribution and limited to the consumption of certain class in Quattrocento Florence and therefore valued for symbolic quality. Clothing made from certain fabrics, made with an excess amount of material, or detailed with embroidery was limited to the elite men and women of society. Jewelry restrictions were class based and regulations stipulated how much could be worn at any one time.⁵⁴ Clothing and jewelry regulations were created with sumptuary laws from the thirteenth century and by the fifteenth century these laws appear to have been motivated by economic, social, or moral concerns. In the

53. Patricia Simons, “Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization,” 268.

54. Elizabeth Birbari, *Dress in Italian Painting: 1460-1500* (Chatham: W & J Mackay Limited, 1975) 7.



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Florentine Republic the implementation of these laws would fall on the side of moral and social control to encourage the leveling of social classes. In reality, however, the laws actually increased the distinction between classes as certain types of clothing and jewels became accessible to only the wealthiest members of society.⁵⁵

Clothing played such an important role in Renaissance Italy that it was discussed in private letters between women and sometimes their husbands or sons. Isabella d'Este and her sister Beatrice often wrote to one another about exquisite clothing they were having designed or already possessed, referencing the details of embroidery with "heavy gold thread" or distressing over imperfect details.⁵⁶ In a letter from Alessandra Strozzi to her son she discussed her daughter's wedding and the clothes given to her by her new husband. "When she was betrothed he ordered a gown of crimson velvet for her made of silk and a surcoat made of the same fabric, which is the most beautiful cloth in Florence...And he ordered some crimson velvet to be made up into long sleeves..."⁵⁷ The reflection of the importance of clothing is reflected in secular portraiture where subjects wear expensive, incredibly detailed clothing in the attempt to create an immediate memory of wealth and social standing.

The posthumous *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi* portrays the ideal woman of dignity and honor through ideal physical characteristics, fine clothing, and exquisite jewelry. She is portrayed with all of the physical markers of beauty including fair skin and a rounded forehead

55. Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, 50-51.

56. Elizabeth Birbari, *Dress in Italian Painting*, " 8-12.

57. Kenneth Gouwens ed., *The Italian Renaissance*, 110.



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with barely visible eye brows. Perhaps an important distinction here is that Giovanna's hair although up in a bun has loose pieces falling down which disrupt the line of her face. Tangali notes that this is ideal for the feminine concept of beauty. Aside from the loose pieces, her hair is in an elaborate bun with a fine piece of ribbon intricately woven throughout. Her calm disposition and gently folded hands portray a dignified woman. Certainly her physical features portray an immediate memory of her as an ideal woman worthy of remembrance. Her clothing is made of a rich fabric with layers and a significant amount of embroidery in a beautiful gold color along a majority of the dress, a marker of her high social standing. The sleeves of her dress are of a second fabric with lace and include an intricate design; both also signify her elitist rank. The placement of the sleeve in the picture is important. Sleeves were often made to detach from the dress to be worn often because they were made of particularly rich fabric and had extremely fancy designs.⁵⁸ "Heraldic devices" were often embroidered into the clothing to show the lineage of a woman.⁵⁹

The portrait of Giovanna, like all portraits at this time, was meant to create a memory of her family, particularly the male patriarch and his lineage. The heraldic device is just about the visible sleeve, an 'L' to represent her marriage to Lorenzo Tournabuoni. The device is obviously important in the portrait as it is placed centrally and certainly emphasizes Giovanna's husband.⁶⁰

58. Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, 53.

59. *Ibid*, 50-52.

60. *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*. Ed. Andrea Bayer (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008) 303.

61. Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, 69.



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In the profile picture of an unidentified man, *Profile Portrait of a Young Man*, the viewer is given the impression of respectability through an almost expressionless demeanor and defined jaw. As with the portrait of Giovanna Albizzi, the fair skin is contrasted against a dark background for emphasis. The sitter is wearing a very elaborate head piece and the rounded forehead is also visible. Again, the eyebrows appear to be almost invisible. According to Giovanni Pontano, who wrote at the end of the fifteenth century, it was appropriate for young men to wear garments that were “vivacious and elegant” as this increased respect that one could receive.⁶¹ Certainly the young man has achieved this and although his name is no longer known the portrait would have created an immediate memory of a man with desirable qualities. Another portrait of a male sitter pictures Galeazzo Maria Sforza and appears to be a more honest portrayal of the sitter whose features are less linear. Sforza is portrayed with light skin contrasted against a dark background. His cheeks are well defined and he has a rounded forehead emphasized by a commonly placed hairline. His sleeves are elegant and his clothing conforms to Pontano’s recommendation that they are chosen according to age and rank.⁶² His portrait creates an image of high social standing and respect which would have been transferred to the immediate memory of the viewer.

Whether paintings were commissioned to create an immediate memory regarding individuals and families for political, religious, or social purposes, the culture of the fifteenth

62. Jane Bridgeman, “*Condecenti et netti...*,” 45. Bridgeman notes that “young men” were those under the age of 30.



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century Italian Renaissance played a large role in dictating the content of the paintings as well as the physical appearance and fashion of the subjects. This three dimensional framework of the social, material, and mental aspects as components of memory⁶³ were evident in Florence in the use of the paintings. These representations were meant to influence social relationships, were themselves influenced by culture, and were material components of memory in themselves. Paintings as a medium to create an immediate social memory served as a valuable method for the elite families in Quattrocento Florence to ensure that, through interaction with viewers, the paintings would provide an idealized although manipulated image of families and individuals.

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63. Astrid Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction," 4.



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Samuel Tofte

The Politics of a Gesture: The Impact of Nixon's Visit to China on Nixon's Presidency

The importance of a symbolic gesture in diplomacy is very difficult to gauge. Diplomats often embark on social functions, meetings and trips to international countries in order to make contact with foreign diplomats and build relationships with governments. This is an effective means of forging political relationships, but how important is it when it comes to international policy and treaty negotiation? In short, it is *extremely important* in the process of policy-making, even without the tangible evidence showing its significance. Establishing contact can be the most difficult and arduous step in the road to good diplomatic relations, a fact that President Richard Nixon found out in his attempt at rapprochement with China. A gesture such as Nixon's trip to China also carries with it a fair amount of good political publicity, and Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong of the People's Republic of China (PRC) were well aware of this. The effect of the trip is evident in the public opinion at the time. Nixon gained a lot of support for the trip with a presidential election right around the corner. Political motivations were at play in foreign relations as well, as both China and the U.S. did not want to see the other becoming too friendly with the Soviet Union.¹ By establishing contact with China, and ultimately making his

¹ Geoffrey Warner, "Nixon and Kissinger and the Rapprochement with China, 1969-1972," *International Affairs* 83 (2007), 764.



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historic trip to Beijing, Nixon was able to complete one of the most significant symbolic gestures in 20th century diplomacy. What were his actual primary motivations? Nixon, although he demonstrated a degree of belief in the improvement of Sino-American relations as an instrument of peace, primarily sought rapprochement with China due to political motivations during a period of waning support domestically and internationally.

The conflict between capitalism and communism controlled the political landscape in the 20th century. Led by the U.S., the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC), it was an issue that dominated the international and domestic scene. Wars were fought, such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars, throughout the 1950's and 1960's as a result of the pressure applied by both sides. In the Korean War specifically, Chinese and Americans were engaged in battle, caught between the "civil war" of North Korea and South Korea.² In the U.S., fear of war with mainland China was substantial in the 1950's as a result of the Korean War, clashes over Taiwan, and the rhetoric coming out of both governments. Rapprochement with China was not feasible in this volatile atmosphere, and it did not become an option until late in the 1960's, when Nixon took office and Mao brought China out of the Cultural Revolution and out of isolation.

Mao grew up in the small village of Shaoshan in the Hunan province during the last gasp of the Qing dynasty. It was a constant struggle for Mao to continue his education, as both money

² Lin Lin *et al.*, "Whose History? An Analysis of the Korean War in History Textbooks from the United States, South Korea, Japan, and China," *Social Studies* 100 (2009): 225.



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and pressures at home pushed him toward the family profession of farming.³ His education on a wide variety of literature, covering everything from traditional Chinese literature to books on modern western science, was crucial in Mao's philosophical development.⁴ Mao's childhood was a difficult time of transition in China as foreign incursion from Japan and the West, coupled with the ineffectiveness of Qing leadership, laid the groundwork for Mao and many of those in his generation to look increasingly at alternative and revolutionary solutions to the injustice brought against China.

By 1949, the Chinese Communist Party had driven Chiang Kai-shek and the Guomindang to Taiwan and established the People's Republic of China. Without trying to oversimplify the complex nature of Chinese history during Mao's leadership, China went through a difficult time of social and economic upheaval. Mao preached world revolution for the people of different countries, positioning himself as the anti-imperial and a revolutionary leader. He was anti-American, but more specifically, anti-American government. He believed revolution was imminent for the people of America, thus much of his negative rhetoric was aimed toward the American government.

Domestically, there were two major policies he attempted to put in place, with terrible consequences for the Chinese people. In 1958 he proposed the Great Leap Forward, a radical attempt to move China towards industrialization. The Great Leap Forward failed, leading to

³ Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (New York: Penguin Group, 1999), 2-5.

⁴ Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2007) 82.



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famine until 1961, with huge casualties.⁵ The major social change that Mao attempted was deemed the Cultural Revolution, beginning in 1966. The Cultural Revolution was characterized by Mao-approved mass chaos led by his “shock troops” the Red Guard.⁶ Student demonstrations and riots filled the cities to root out the adversaries of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and expose Mao’s enemies within the communist ranks. It was a time of international isolation for China as it turned inward causing social upheaval. It was also a brand of isolation that had to end in order for rapprochement between the United States and China to come about. On the eve of Nixon’s first term, that isolation ended.

Nixon is often characterized as a villain in popular media and culture; a representation of corruption in politics. One must look no further than the movie, *Frost/Nixon* (2008), to see the disapproving image of Nixon that still thrives in American culture. The Watergate scandal in 1974, for obvious reasons, was a huge blow to Nixon’s legacy. For many Americans, that *is* Nixon’s legacy. The terms ‘secretive’ and ‘brooding’ can be used to describe the common portrayal of Nixon, and these descriptions are not entirely unfounded. Nixon, by all accounts, *was* a very secretive man.⁷ Through all of this perceived villainy, however, this was a man who was popular enough to be elected to several different political offices, culminating in the presidential election in 1968.

⁵ Timothy Cheek, *Living With Reform: China since 1989* (Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2006), 39.

⁶ *Ibid*, 41.

⁷ MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 13.



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Nixon was a prominent lawyer and member of the Republican Party leading up to the election of 1968, and was seen as a counter-balance to President Lyndon B. Johnson. Where Johnson was a stark supporter of the civil rights' movement, Nixon saw it with a lesser degree of importance in light of the turmoil elsewhere in America, and indeed the world. With Vietnam, Nixon criticized Johnson's indecisiveness and called for a stronger war effort and policy. Johnson wanted to contain the war in South Vietnam, whereas Nixon favored extending the war to North Vietnam.⁸

Nixon, following the Republican Party platform, was viewed as a leader of the conservatives, as was seen with the aforementioned issues. He also made no inclination toward normalizing relations with the PRC, or even recognizing the legitimacy of their government. "It would be disastrous to the cause of freedom for the U.S. to recognize Red China or accept its admission in the United Nations."⁹ This was Nixon's stance just eight years prior to his historic trip to China; a stance that conservative Republicans would remind Nixon of once he made clear his intention to visit Mao. Nixon's social predisposition also showed his conservative nature through his dislike of the 1960's American counter culture.¹⁰

Nixon was a major conservative voice in America during the majority of the 1960's—there was a period early in the 1960's in which he felt his political career was through—but his main political interest resided in foreign policy. Historians note his admiration for strong heads

⁸ Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician 1962-1972* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 43.

⁹ *Ibid*, 44.

¹⁰ MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 12.



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of state like Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle.¹¹ He was also a President in the mold of Woodrow Wilson, a man who felt that the president should be the chief foreign policy maker. “I have always thought this country could run itself domestically without a President... You need a President for foreign policy; no Secretary of State is really important.”¹² Nixon’s reasoning for this was due in part to his secret and paranoid nature, evident in the seemingly endless hours of conversations that he recorded. He did not trust the U.S. State Department, often to the lament of the Secretary of State of Nixon’s first term, William Rogers. This mistrust stemmed mainly from Nixon’s fear of leaked information within the government. With fewer people being informed about a particular subject or issue, the chances of information being leaked to the media were greatly reduced.

Nixon was not alone in his construction of U.S. foreign policy, as he relied heavily on his National Security Aide, Henry Kissinger. Kissinger was a very intelligent man who Nixon depended upon to act as an extension of himself when dealing with both domestic and international issues. Kissinger arrived in Beijing in 1971 on a secret mission in order to set-up the historic trip and hash out the issues with Zhou.¹³ This showed the extent of trust that Nixon had in Kissinger to get the job done in foreign policy. Nixon’s paranoia over the State Department was embodied by Kissinger, who was often at odds with Rogers. There was also friction between Nixon and Kissinger. “Ford has just got to realize,” Nixon candidly said, “there

¹¹ Macmillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 8.

¹² Anthony Lewis, “The President’s Coup,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1971, p. 23.

¹³ Kuisong Yang and Xia, Yafeng, “Vacillating between Revolution and Détente: Mao’s Changing Psyche and Policy toward the United States 1969-1976,” *Diplomatic History* 34 (2010): 406.



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are times when Henry has to be kicked in the nuts. Because sometimes Henry starts to think he's president. But at other times you have to pet Henry and treat him like a child."¹⁴ Kissinger is quoted throughout his memoirs giving similarly ill-mannered comments about Nixon. The friction between Nixon and Kissinger paled in comparison to Nixon's rapport with the United States media.

The relationship between Nixon and the media was naturally a poor one. Nixon, being the secretive man that he was, had no inclination of giving the media any information that was beyond necessary. Likewise, the media was in its investigative golden age with the likes of Tom Brokaw and Walter Cronkite in their journalistic prime. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the *Washington Post* were about to solidify their place in journalism history by breaking the Watergate scandal at the expense of Nixon's legacy and presidency. With the trip to China, however, there was an opportunity for mutual benefit for both Nixon and the media to work together. There was a clear emphasis on symbolism as a major proponent of this trip and Nixon needed the media in order to convey the trip to the American people.

The group of journalists sent over by Nixon to cover the trip was some of the only people who actually saw Nixon, and his group, touch down in Beijing on February 21st, 1972. The Chinese government wanted to send a message to the Americans, telling their citizens to disregard Nixon's motorcade as it made its way through Beijing that afternoon.¹⁵ When Nixon

¹⁴ Robert Dallek, "Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power," *American Historical Review* 113 (2008): 226.

¹⁵ MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 22.



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exited the plane, he shook hands with Zhou. This was one of the most important events of the trip because in 1954, secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, pointedly refused to shake Zhou's hand during a peace conference.¹⁶ Almost immediately, an invigorated Mao—who nearly died from pneumonia just weeks prior—agreed to meet Nixon on the first day. The meeting consisted of Mao, Nixon, Zhou, Kissinger, Kissinger's aide Winston Lord, and Mao's interpreter, Tang Wensheng.¹⁷ The meeting did not provide any tangible conversation toward diplomacy between the countries, as the two leaders chose to work around the major issues between them. The meeting always had more importance put upon it than anything that Nixon and Mao would discuss during it. It was a truly historic event and many have argued that it altered the landscape of the Cold War. This would be Nixon's only meeting with Mao during this trip.

¹⁶ Ibid, 31.

¹⁷ MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 71. Photo taken from pictures in *Nixon and Mao*, p. 170.



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During his week in China, Nixon visited Beijing, Hangzhou, and Shanghai in that order. On his first night, he attended a banquet organized by Premier Zhou Enlai; it was broadcast live to the U.S.¹⁸ The banquet was an important part of diplomacy and of Chinese culture. It is difficult to find reactions

to the viewing of this banquet broadcast, but it projected a positive image to televisions across America. During the rest of the week, Nixon visited various historic sites like the Great Wall and the Ming tombs, but he was mainly busy in meetings with



Zhou and Kissinger trying to hash out what would become known as the Shanghai Communiqué.¹⁹ He left his wife, Pat Nixon, in charge of handling the bulk of personal appearances during the trip.

¹⁸ *Richard Nixon's Visit to China, 1972*. DVD. National Archives (originally aired February 21-28, 1972).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*



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The joint communiqué, deemed the Shanghai Communiqué, was the statement made toward the end of the trip in which both countries essentially stated their position going forward:

There are essential differences between China and the United States in their social systems and foreign policies. However, the two sides agreed that countries, regardless of their social systems, should conduct their relations on the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, nonaggression against other states, noninterference in the internal affairs of other states, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.”²⁰

This statement is a clear move towards the thawing of relations between the two countries and a hope that they can work together in the future despite the fundamental differences between the societies. There were a few rough areas in the negotiations over what would be included in the communiqué, the main problem residing over Taiwan. The Chinese reiterated that Taiwan was the “crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations.”²¹ The U.S. declared its position favoring a peaceable settlement of the “Two China” issue. The major reason that this communiqué was brought to completion in time for the conclusion of the trip was the shrewd negotiations and wording of the document by Zhou and Kissinger, the main architects of the statement. With a successful joint statement by the two countries, the trip achieved its purpose without any setbacks that were feared by both parties prior to the trip.

The media’s coverage of the trip was essential to the overall success. Nixon needed a steady flow of press bombarding televisions and newspapers in the U.S. in order for the symbolic

¹⁹ MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 343.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ James Mann, *About Face* (New York: Random House, 1998), 13-14.



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aspect of the trip to have its effect, and it was clear that symbolism was Nixon's major goal. "As we have said many times—and so has Mr. Nixon—the purpose of the visit is mainly symbolic. It reflects China's apparent desire to show its sincerity but promises nothing in substantive results."²² Nixon had an upcoming election and his approval ratings were slipping as 1971 came to a close. With the media and the timing of the trip, Nixon had an opportunity to make huge gains in popularity with a successful diplomatic trip to China. Because of this, it can be argued that the overwhelming positive support Nixon received was the most important outcome of the trip for Nixon's presidency and his impending campaign for a second term.

At the beginning of 1972, public approval was waning in regard to Nixon's handling of the Soviet Union and China, along with his overall approval rating. Through most of 1971, his overall approval rating was below 50%, and at the beginning of 1972, it was at a middling 49%.²³ Pertaining to China specifically, a poll by the Chicago Tribune in January 1972 showed that 43 percent of those polled felt negatively about how he handled China, while 39 percent felt positive. Those numbers were drastically down from September 1971, when the approval ratings were 46 percent positive and 36 percent negative.²⁴ A portion of this drop can be attributed to the India-Pakistan war as well as the ongoing struggle in Vietnam, but the public was becoming increasingly wary over the few developments made with the communist powers.

²² *The Associated Press*, "Editorial Opinions in U.S. on Nixon Trip," *New York Times*, February 25, 1972, p. 15.

²³ Louis Harris, "The Harris Analysis; Nixon's Job Rating Improves," *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 1972, p. N24.

²⁴ Louis Harris, "The Harris Analysis: Nixon's Rating as Peacemaker Dips After India-Pakistan Role," *Chicago Tribune*, January 27, 1972, p. 26.



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On the eve of Nixon's trip, however, public opinion in these areas rose once more to a very optimistic level. Nixon's overall approval rating soared to 55 percent, his highest rating in nearly two years. Louis Harris, writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, noted that "it is unusual, short of a national emergency, for an incumbent President to regain the higher levels of public support he tends to achieve in the earlier months of his administration."²⁵ His approval ratings in dealing with China were also up to 44 percent positive and down to 34 percent negative, almost a complete reversal of the numbers from just a month prior. Nixon's only poor approval rating in the eyes of the public pertained to the war in Vietnam.

The American people were also warming up to the Chinese people themselves as a result of Nixon's visit. In a Gallup poll in the *New York Times* conducted after the trip, 68 percent of those polled believed that it would have some degree of effectiveness in influencing world peace.²⁶ 68 was the same percent of Americans who "gave their blessing" to the trip in another Harris poll published in the fall of 1971.²⁷ The Gallup poll also compared results to a poll taken in the mid-1960's about the public's views on the Chinese people. The Gallup organization gave a list of 23 positive and negative terms to choose from for the people polled to describe how they viewed the Chinese people. In 1966, "ignorant," "sly," and "treacherous" were among the most chosen terms, as negative terms outweighed positive terms by a ratio of eight to five. A week after the trip, however, positive terms were atop the poll at a ratio of 3 to 1, including the top

²⁵ Louis Harris, "Nixon's Job Rating Improves," p. N24.

²⁶ "Mainland Chinese Have Risen in Favor in U.S., Poll Finds," *New York Times* March 12, 1972, p. 5.

²⁷ Louis Harris, "President's China Journey Raises Hope," *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1971, p. 20.



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words “intelligent,” “artistic,” and “progressive.”²⁸ It was clear that Nixon was receiving a huge boost in the polls at a very important time, the year of the 1972 election. It is amazing, the impact that a week of news coverage and the opening of dialogue can have on groups that know very little about one another.

The various polls taken before and after the trip give a good barometer of the overall views that the American people had on the trip, but a simple overarching percentage of approval and disapproval is not enough to see into the domestic outlook on Nixon’s trip. Individual and editorial opinions are also essential in order to understand specific concerns and viewpoints. A presidential approval rating of 55 percent was strong, especially in such a divided period in American history. Even with that rating, however, this means that 45 percent of Americans did not give their approval to Nixon, and yet many times, this minority of dissenting voices was buried.

When Nixon announced he would be making a trip to China, there were obvious questions raised. Many of those questions revolved around the Taiwan issue. As the PRC continued to effectively control mainland China, Chi’ang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government’s claim of control over the Chinese people as a whole was losing its luster on the international scene. The biggest worry for many Americans was concern over abandonment of Taiwan. The Chinese Nationalists were already facing removal from a United Nations in 1971 that was increasingly favorable of the PRC holding the China seat. A U.S. driven movement for

²⁸ “Mainland Chinese Have Risen in Favor,” p. 5.



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a seat for both Chinas left the U.N. split on the issue, slightly leaning toward one seat for the PRC.²⁹ In a particularly outspoken manner, the former president of the A.F.L-C.I.O, George Meany, made the comparison between the President's new policy toward China and "the League of Nation's consent in 1935 to the 'rape of Ethiopia' and former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's concessions to Germany in the Munich Pact of 1938."³⁰ Labor unions and liberals were afraid of America pulling support for Taiwan, but for many of them, rapprochement with mainland China was difficult to rail against.

The most outspoken opponents of Nixon's trip to China were not his Democrat rivals, but conservative Republicans that gladly threw their support behind him as the warrior against anti-communism in the past. It was a huge shift from Nixon's previous stance on communism and Republicans were not inclined to let him forget that. Accusations of Democrats being soft on communism were an important aspect of Republican campaign strategy throughout the 1950's and 1960's and many feared that Nixon tarnished that strategy overnight by announcing his trip to China.

*Their criticism takes various forms, but the most anguished and spontaneous complaint is expressed by Human Events, the blunt, but candid, voice of the G.O.P. right wing... 'In view of the debacle that occurred at the United Nations, the Republican Party has probably lost forever one of its favorite campaign issues: accusing the Democrats of being soft on Red China. The issue is now dead.'*³¹

²⁹ Henry Tanner, "U.N. Found Closely Split on Eve of China Debate," *New York Times*, October 18, 1971, p. 1,8.

³⁰ Damon Stetson, "Meany Criticizes Policies on Freeze and China," *New York Times*, October 1, 1971, p. 22.

³¹ Clayton Fritchey, "'Soft on Reds' Issue Wiped Out by Nixon," *Chicago Tribune*, November 28, 1971, p. A5.



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This is the most common complaint among the right wing of the Republican Party and it was an understandable fear from a political standpoint. While Nixon was chiefly concerned with his own reelection in 1972, the Republicans still had to focus on congressional elections as well. The leader of the Republican Party turning away from a huge piece of the party platform creates ammunition for the opposition on the eve of major campaigning.

William Loeb, former editor of the conservative New Hampshire newspaper *The Manchester Union Leader*, was an adamant supporter of Nixon until his announcement to visit China. Loeb was a major conservative voice at the time, although many considered him to have an extreme viewpoint on many issues. Loeb was a “journalist” in a very loose sense of the word, often resorting to name-calling in order to reinforce his point of view. Pertaining to Nixon’s visit to China, Loeb deemed the trip “immoral, indecent, insane, and fraught with danger” and said that Nixon was “too left-wing” now.³² This is obviously an extreme view and one that is in the minority, but it shows the fear brewing among ultra-conservatives due to the trip. It shows an interesting insight that even though the times were changing in regards to politics between the U.S. and the communist superpowers, there was still substantial anxiety over communism with the lingering Red Scare effect.

While it may have been difficult for Nixon to face opposition from those he considered political allies, it was really the only dissent he faced domestically. It was also opposition subdued by other worries inside the Republican party. Newspaper reports in 1971 indicate that

³² Bill Kovach, “Nixon’s too Left-Wing for William Loeb,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1971, p. SM14.



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the G.O.P. had bigger issues on their plate than Nixon's trip to China. Poor economic policies led to fears that businesses, which has always been an ally to the Republicans, could be waning in support.³³ A symbolic trip to China was simply not high up on the list of worries for a party facing losses in the upcoming election.

The overwhelming support from the American public as the trip inched closer also helped quell opposing voices. Shown earlier, the approval ratings were on the rise as a result of the new policies toward the communist powers, and individual opinions supported those approval numbers in the majority of the newspaper articles in the build up to the trip. The term "political coup" is thrown around in several articles, even as a concession by those who do not approve of the trip.³⁴

In the "Harris Survey" in the *Chicago Tribune*, an interesting notion was raised involving the American peoples' willingness to deal with communist powers that were previously feared. The effect of the Vietnam War and other conflicts with communism wore down the American people, and it led to a new sense of compromise and peace by diplomacy.³⁵ This trip would have been wholly rejected by the American public 10 years prior, but it had become apparent that war with the communist powers was not the answer to the problem.

Editorial opinions shared the same cautious optimism that the polling indicated as well. The Charlotte, North Carolina newspaper, *The News*, showed its support pointing out that the

³³ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "GOP Insiders Hide Worries Behind Mask of Optimism," *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 1971, p. A7.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Louis Harris, "President's China Journey Raises Hope," *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1971, p. 20.



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“risks are well worth taking” even if minimal gains are achieved. *The State Journal* of Topeka, Kansas, went as far as to claim that the trip could be a “turning point in world peace.” The *Philadelphia Inquirer* echoed the hopes of many Americans that Nixon’s trip will breed a “common ground” in the search for peace between the world’s superpowers. This trip was accepted in all different regions and groups across America, and it was supported by the collection of editorials showing varying degrees of approval and optimism.³⁶

Statements made in Congress by Democrats, showed optimism for the trip as well. Democratic Senator Robert Byrd recognized the importance of the trip for establishing relations and for securing the “future security of the United States and the world.”³⁷ Upon Nixon’s announcement of the trip, Democratic leader Mike Mansfield was quoted as being “flabbergasted, delighted, and happy” about the proposed trip.³⁸ It is a rare occurrence in such a politically divided period for a president like Nixon to earn such strong support from the opposing political party.

While Nixon was no doubt pleased with the domestic support he garnered for his trip in 1971, the level of importance he placed upon foreign policy also created a level of importance for the international opinion of the trip. International support for the trip was much more mixed than on the home front.

³⁶ *The Associated Press*, “Editorial Opinions in U.S. on Nixon Trip,” *New York Times*, February 25, 1972, p. 15.

³⁷ Robert Byrd, “President Nixon’s Journey For Peace,” U.S. Senate Congressional Record, Remarks in the Senate, February, 18, 1972, p. 4578.

³⁸ Ian McDonald, “Mr. Nixon’s Surprise China Visit Seen as Opening Way to Vietnam Peace,” *London Times*, July 17, 1971, p. 1.



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American allies in the Pacific were worried as to what effect American rapprochement with the PRC would have on the power dynamic in the Pacific. Some Australians echoed the concerns in the Pacific as to the future of the region. “The [Australian] conservatives argue that the U.S. is not only an unreliable ally but also an ‘unpredictable one.’”³⁹ Although this was a period of diminishing U.S. power, many countries still followed the lead of the U.S. in order to determine what future international diplomacy would hold. This is a valid concern of non-communist Pacific allies, because for many of them, the U.S. was their biggest communist deterrent. Japan had similar concerns over this new U.S. foreign policy. Former ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer noted to a U.S. House of Representatives committee that the U.S. actions with China was a complete departure from “Dulles-style inflexibility” but that it was so unpredictable that it was “possibly a sign of emotional instability on our part.”⁴⁰

The Soviet Union was very uneasy over the visit to China, as Sino-Soviet relations had deteriorated dramatically since the PRC took control of the government. The Soviets and the PRC differed on the details of the correct way to follow Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and war became a possibility between the bordering nations. Rapprochement between China and the U.S. was a threat to Soviet power and they believed it would tilt the balance of power in favor of the Chinese in the Pacific region. It was this Sino-Soviet dispute that actually created the urgency

³⁹ “Nixon Policies Upset Allies in Australia,” *Los Angeles Times* October 7, 1971, p. B6.

⁴⁰ *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs*, “New China Policy: It’s Impact on the United States and Asia.” U.S. House of Representatives, May 2-17, 1972, p. 7.



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toward improved Sino-American relations.⁴¹ While the Soviets were understandably uncomfortable over Sino-American cooperation, they were not the most outraged group on the world scene.

Taiwan expressed nothing short of disgust over the proposed visit, and for good reason; Taiwan was essentially being abandoned by its strongest and most influential ally in the international scene. One historian contended that Nixon was so ambitious toward Sino-American rapprochement that he gave up far too much to achieve it.⁴² This includes the traditional American stance on Taiwan.

Despite Nixon's assurances that the U.S. would not turn its back on the Republic of China, Taiwan made its opinion known. After Nixon made his announcement of the trip, Taiwan expressed an "overwhelming frustration" to their ally's new found interest in improved relations with the PRC. They had to balance their negative opinion on the trip with the reality that they still depended on the U.S. for aide.⁴³

After Nixon's trip and the joint communiqué was issued, Taiwan did not back down from their disapproval of the trip. An anonymous high-ranking member of the Nationalist party said "People here have had great faith in the leadership of the United States up to now, but the

⁴¹ Geoffrey Warner, "Nixon, Kissinger, and the Rapprochement with China," 764.

⁴² Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan Expendable? Nixon and Kissinger go to China," *Journal of American History* 92 (2005): 110.

⁴³ Donald Bremner, "U.S. Peking Overture Brings Frustration to Taiwan Regime," *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1971, p. 1.



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confidence of the people of the whole Western Pacific will now change.”⁴⁴ The Nationalist Party itself issued a statement shortly thereafter condemning any agreement “involving the rights and interests of the government and people of the Republic of China.”⁴⁵ There was mass condemnation of the communiqué throughout Taiwan and many predicted that this would signal the abandonment of Taiwan by the United States.

European countries, mainly the allies of the U.S., showed their support for the rapprochement as their citizens echoed the same hope for diplomacy through peace that the majority of the American people were calling for at this point. The most interesting country that showed its support for the visit was the communist-led Poland. In an official communist party newspaper, Nixon’s move to improve relations with China was deemed an “overdue reversal” of U.S. policy.⁴⁶ The most impressive aspect of Poland’s support is the fact that at this point, they were very closely tied to the Soviet Union. This positive response from a Soviet bloc country showed the extent that Nixon’s “political coup” would benefit him in the upcoming election.

Whether it is the international support from a Soviet-influenced state or the enormous out-pouring of approval from the American public, Nixon clearly benefitted from the positive view of his trip. How much credit does Nixon deserve for making this trip happen though? It is a difficult question to answer at any point in history for a president because of the multiple factors both with the American system and with other governments abroad. It is hard to imagine

⁴⁴ Tillman Durdin, *Taipei is Bitter*, *New York Times* February 28, 1972, p. 1.

⁴⁵ “Taipei’s Statement on the Communiqué,” *New York Times*, February 29, 1972, p. 16.

⁴⁶ James Feron, “Polish Newspaper Lauds Nixon Move,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1971.



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Nixon, the communist combatant, putting much effort into breaking down barriers with a major communist country. Above all else, the timing of the trip was the most influential factor on making this trip a reality, and Nixon just happened to be the man in charge when the opportunity arose.

From the close of World War II until the end of the Cultural Revolution, America was gripped with the Red Scare. Senator Joseph McCarthy was leading the crusade to root out communists on the home front and internationally, the U.S. was embroiled in conflicts with communist countries abroad. Tensions between China and the U.S. were on the rise, and there was no inclination from either country that they wished to improve relations.

Once Mao brought China out of the isolation of the Cultural Revolution in 1967, however, the opportunity became much more plausible, if not only for the Sino-Soviet relationship deterioration that China was faced with. As troops increasingly populated the Sino-Soviet border as the 1960's came to a close, China was faced with the possibility of a two-front war. Mao, for obvious reasons, wanted no part in this.⁴⁷ The border clashes that took place between these two nations in 1969 was a wake-up call for Mao as to the danger of a major war with the Soviet Union. Fear of war and the possible use of nuclear weapons, acted as the catalyst for Mao's reluctant agreement to begin negotiating a meeting with the U.S.⁴⁸ Mao understood

⁴⁷ Kuisong Yang and Xia, Yafeng, "Vacillating between Revolution and Détente," 399.

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Warner, "Nixon, Kissinger, and the Rapprochement with China," 764.



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that the appearance of improved relations with the Americans would throw off the balance of power in the Pacific and lead to an uneasy and less aggressive Soviet Union.

The idea of nuclear war itself played a large role in actively seeking improved relations on Nixon's part. All-out nuclear war with the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly treacherous if only for the arms race that had been raging since the end of World War II. The U.S. hegemony over nuclear arms was short-lived, and the United States' biggest enemy controlling a massive arsenal of nuclear weapons was a threatening proposition for the president.

In a tape recording concerning the trip to China, Nixon asserted that "getting to know each other better will reduce the possibility of miscalculation and that we established, because we do have an understanding."⁴⁹ It was one thing for the U.S. to loosely talk about the use of nuclear weapons in the Korean War, when there was little danger of a nuclear attack on the U.S., but once China and the Soviets began developing their own weapons of mass destruction, it became a much more dangerous possibility.

After his inauguration in 1969, Nixon understood that the time for a dialogue with the PRC was beginning to present itself. In October the next year, Nixon asked the heads of state of Pakistan and Romania to secretly let the Chinese know that he would like to improve relations.⁵⁰ The timing of this initiation of contact is something to note as it coincides with dipping approval ratings of the Vietnam War and Nixon's approval ratings as a foreign policy maker. Prior to this

⁴⁹ Richard Nixon, "Conversation 92-1," *Third Chronological Conversation Tape Release*, January 26, 1972.

⁵⁰ Kuisong Yang and Xia, Yafeng, "Vacillating between Revolution and Détente," 403.



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initiation, Nixon made very little effort during the first year and a half of his presidency to make it known that he wanted to work on the relationship with China.

Where Mao openly confessed to his attempt to pit the U.S. and Soviets against each other, Nixon was much more subtle on this front. Nixon was always looking for an advantage against the Soviets and driving home the recent division between the PRC and the USSR seemed a great way to do that. He reiterated through multiple channels that his intentions were *not* to escalate the conflict or damage their relationship, but that was going to be a clear outcome of the trip regardless of what anyone said.⁵¹ The constant reiterations of non-interference indirectly had a reverse effect on the American people as they became much more aware of that facet of the trip.

The very idea of dividing the communist powers would also undermine the symbolism that Nixon wanted to portray on this trip. This was supposed to be a trip for a renewed hope for peace and open dialogue between two world powers. Any politically savvy president would jump at the chance to divide the communist powers, but they would be wise not to let the public in on that notion when it involved a trip like Nixon's. Political motivation would have destroyed that image, and that simply was not Nixon's aim. In short, Nixon's political motivations led him to bury the true political motivations of the trip.

⁵¹ Foreign Affairs Division, *A Comparative Analysis of the President's 1972 Foreign Policy Report to Congress*, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972.



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Nixon and Kissinger, while playing up the improved relations as a bridge toward peace to the public, were much less excited over this element of the trip in private accounts. Early on in the presidency, Kissinger was content with an isolated China as far as U.S. interests go, and saw no real reason to attempt rapprochement.⁵² They give off a sense of being chiefly motivated by this event being the pinnacle point in the administrations legacy. This was to be Nixon's finest hour as foreign peacemaker, at least for his first term in office which was coming to an end later in the year.

In Nixon's defense, the trip *was* seen as a new beginning toward achieving peace in the Pacific region. American's were war weary at this point due to the Vietnam War. This surprise announcement by Nixon was heralded as a huge development for world peace between capitalist and communist powers, as was seen in the "Harris Analysis" numbers previously mentioned. "These results are clear-cut signs that the American people are highly sensitive to foreign policy development in 1972 and are thirsting for good news and events which promise peace."⁵³ The people were ready for a development like this trip.

This thirst for hope among the American people, coupled with the timing of the trip in regards to the 1972 presidential election could be the biggest indicator as to Nixon's true political motivation. Nixon's approval ratings were falling on the eve of 1972. Nixon's trip to

⁵² Geoffrey Warner, "Nixon, Kissinger, and the Rapprochement with China," 764.

⁵³ Louis Harris, "The Harris Analysis: Nixon's Rating as Peacemaker Dips After India-Pakistan Role," *Chicago Tribune*, January 27, 1972, p. 26.



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China was a huge boost in his ratings and it played a big role in his landslide reelection later that year. He won 60% of the popular vote and all but 18 electoral votes.⁵⁴

If ever there was a perfect storm for the meeting of two enemies, then that storm was created in 1969-1972. Clearly Nixon did not have to do much other than let the Chinese know that the U.S. was ready for rapprochement. He did not even have to say it to the Chinese directly, as the back channel talks were successful in grabbing Zhou and Mao's attention. Mao was finally open to the idea of this trip due to increased tension with the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ It took multiple factors beyond simply the president's willingness to open dialogue with the communists.

Conclusion

Nixon, ever the politician, showed that much of what made this China trip so important to him was the drive for a landmark moment in U.S. foreign relations. The outlying factors creating a compatible landscape for a trip of this magnitude was due to the primary recognition on Nixon's part for making the trip a reality. Nixon just happened to be the President up for election that year who was along for the ride. Beyond Watergate, Nixon's trip to China in 1972 did become the crowning achievement of his Presidential career, as it paved the way for future politicians to build upon the relationship.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Dave Leip, "1972 Presidential General Election Results," Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections, <http://www.uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=1972> (accessed December 5, 2010).

⁵⁵ Kuisong Yang and Xia, Yafeng, "Vacillating between Revolution and Détente," 399.

⁵⁶ James Mann, *About Face*, 9.



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To his credit, he did show an extent of compromise—the Taiwan issue—and a willingness to get talks underway after decades of silence. During Kissinger’s secret mission, he made assurances to Zhou that the U.S. would soon be pulling support for Taiwan, which was the major “sticking point” for China’s agreement to a meeting.⁵⁷ Even with the ways in which Nixon pushed the trip toward fruition, it was largely due to other dynamics taking place both domestically and internationally.

In some respects, the course of Nixon’s path toward this trip can be seen as a microcosm of his presidency. While he garnered a majority of domestic support for the trip, he did have his opponents. Some of those opponents even accused Nixon of an abuse of presidential power with how he handled the whole process. As a conservative Democrat, Representative John R. Rarick was wholly opposed to Nixon’s trip to China, accusing Nixon of running his “personal diplomacy” on the American taxpayers’ dime. He also accused the president of staging relaxed relations early in 1971 in order to help get people on board with the idea of rapprochement with China.⁵⁸ He was not entirely wrong with his accusation of relaxed relations, either, as the president did promote less restrictive travel regulations and trade in 1971 prior to his announcement of the trip. The “personal diplomacy” was something that Nixon brought upon himself with the way that he dealt with foreign policy.

⁵⁷ Kuisong Yang and Xia, Yafeng, “Vacillating between Revolution and Détente,” 406.

⁵⁸ John R. Rarick, “Nixon’s Personal Diplomacy with Red China,” U.S. House of Rep., Congr Record, Extension of Remarks, July 20, 1971, p. 26308.



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Secret missions and an uninformed State Department characterize his presidency as well. The State Department did not even know that Kissinger was to visit mainland China in July until after Kissinger made his return.⁵⁹ Transparency in government was the last thing Nixon wanted to see, let alone transparency within the government. This was apparent in the methods he used in the run-up to the China trip.

Nixon's love for total control over a situation was seen throughout the preparation for the trip and during the trip itself as well. In a memo to First Lady Pat Nixon prior to the trip, was a list of questions she may possibly be asked by the American and Chinese media and the answers she should give. There is a clear motive in the memo to move the conversation toward how important the trip was for opening up dialogue between two countries that have had silence between them for so many years.⁶⁰ Whether he was keeping the State Department out of the know, or feeding answers to his wife as to the questions she would be asked, Nixon tried to keep every detail under his thumb.

It is common knowledge that Nixon has been accused of abusing Presidential power by many Americans. It is not outlandish to look at his trip to China as an abuse of power, although it does not carry with it the same obvious signs that the Watergate scandal did. With a poor economy at the time, Rarick's accusations of "personal diplomacy" were not just empty words.

⁵⁹ MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 189.

⁶⁰ Patrick J. Buchanan, "Memorandum to the First Lady," *America Since Hoover: Selected Documents From Presidential Libraries, 1929-1980*, February 14, 1972, p. 2-3.



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Nixon and Kissinger's elaborate scheme to send Kissinger through Pakistan in order to discreetly fly to Beijing can be argued to be a misuse of taxpayer dollars.

Regardless of whether or not it was a misuse of Presidential power, Nixon was motivated by political factors in his decision to go through with the historic trip. It was an event that changed the landscape of the international scene, and it altered the power struggle between the USSR, U.S. and PRC. It also helped Nixon close in on his coveted foreign policy title of peacekeeper. No matter how Nixon went about achieving his goal of Chinese rapprochement, it is undisputable the impact this visit had on world diplomacy in the 20th century, but it was also essential in winning a landslide presidential election in 1972.

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Jacob Cassens

From Citoyenne to Amazon:

The Evolution of Women's Political Self-Identity during the French Revolution,

1789 – 1793

French women were already presenting concerns and ideas into the charged atmosphere during the summoning of the Estates General before the Revolution of 1789 began. This meeting of members from all classes of French society was elected to present the citizens' concerns to King Louis XVI. From their petition to the king on January 1, 1789 to the laws prohibiting women from gathering in clubs in 1793, women made themselves heard by many means, yet there was never any one particular group or movement which encompassed the entirety of the female population of France. Women's involvement varied from impassioned pleas for assistance and new guarantees of rights for women before the Revolution to "Amazons," a reference to the classical warrior women who dominated their society and lived separately from the rest of the world. These "Amazons" used radical democratic methods, such as rioting and protesting in large crowds, to control or make changes to affairs and activities within the new Republic. During this time, however, some women paid in blood for expressing their views and



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the newly formed “representative” government used their executions to inspire fear in these upstarts who dared to create chaos in New France.¹

This paper will analyze how the words and deeds of women from 1789 to 1793 showed progression from loyal subjects of the king to *citoyennes* and revolutionary “Amazons” based on primary source documents and historical studies covering this period. Women of all classes and from all regions in France were involved in the revolution from its inception, in ways that varied distinctly for each of the many various manners by which they categorized themselves. This essay will also delve into the relationships these women had developed with the new state as well as their actions and reactions to its governance.

During the French Revolution women began to view their place in French society in a new manner based in part on institutions of Old Regime French Society. Women had already

¹ The secondary books dealing with women’s involvement in the Revolutionary period are Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); For a collection of essays which contains some great emphasis and a wide variety of perspectives on women’s role in the period of this paper, see Catherine R. Montfort, ed., *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789* (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, Inc., 1994). The books which deal with French history and society as a whole at this time are David Andress, *The French Revolution and the People*, 3rd ed. (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007) William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Steven Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005). For specific references to laws and the constitution of 1791 I referenced *The French Constitution, Revised, Amended, and Finally Decreed by the National Assembly* (Philadelphia: Peter Stewart, 1791) (<http://exproxy.library.unlv.edu/>). Besides this, the following two works provided invaluable access to translated secondary sources: Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History* (Boston: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, eds., *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979).



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become accustomed to roles as leaders of guilds, skilled artisans, merchant-women, and *salonnières*.² Some women, such as Olympe de Gouges, did not fit neatly into any of these categories, yet still created documents such as the “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen” during this period of great uncertainty. This bold declaration was filled with concerns which are still rallying points for women’s rights to this day, and was written at a time when women were testing the boundaries of democratic participation of *citoyens* and *citoyennes* of all social classes.³ The distinction between the two terms is purely a matter of feminist identification, because the women were merely identified as *citoyenne* due to it being the feminine linguistic term for *citoyen*, which was the term granted to define all male participants in the new French society.

Pre-Revolution: January – July, 1789

Even before the Estates-General and the Revolution began to take root in France, women had carved out a niche for themselves within the larger framework of society. They held positions of varying rank and privilege in this complex system, but were still expected to maintain their households as wives, mothers, and educators for their children. Some women, particularly in the cities, began to fill roles as guild seamstresses and ribbonmakers, while others had become various sorts of merchants, or *marchandes de mode* (female assistants in dress

² For more on *Salonnières*, please see Steven Kale *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

³ *Citoyen* and *Citoyenne* are the masculine and feminine versions of the same noun, commonly used during the French Revolution to recognize the citizens as members of the new society, rather than subjects



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shops), fish-sellers (fishwives), and flower sellers. The women's trades which had organized themselves into guilds had taken over their administration themselves, placing women into positions of leadership and authority within their trades, particularly as "mistresses" instead of "masters" of their guilds.⁴

These guilds had allowed women a certain level of self-governance within their own trades – and of course only over other women. The guild structure created a sense of social identity among these tradeswomen by allowing them to progress through the ranks of the guilds, from apprentice to mistress. Thus, a woman could gain a level of respect which was not available otherwise in the social conditions present during the Old Regime. Some of these women even shunned marriage and families in order to focus on their work within their trades, thus empowering themselves over their own financial gains, but more importantly also over their own households.⁵ Guilds provided a rigid and time-consuming structure through which apprentice-women had to pass, and endowed women with a sense of empowerment which would be let loose during the chaos and disorder caused by the Revolution in 1789.

Another prominent role for women in the Old Regime, at least from the mid seventeenth century, was as a *salonniere*, which was essentially a hostess for a meeting of individuals to discuss all sorts of topics. The most common were literature, enlightenment, politics, and

⁴David Andress *French Revolution and the People* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 46. See also Clare Haru Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁵ Andress, *People*, 45-7.



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sciences both social and natural.⁶ Though they seemed only to play the part of hostess in these meetings, and thus often excluded themselves from actual discussion or debate, these *salonnières* were the common thread that would bring together these social elites. In some instances, the *salonnière* directed the conversations by asking questions to either bring subjects for discussion or prevent disputes which could have developed regarding a sensitive topic or issue.⁷ This may not seem a particularly prolific role in which a woman could gain ideas about feminine independence and rights; however, the proximity to, and sometimes involvement in, the discussions about the states of current affairs gave these women unprecedented access to knowledge of current trends both in society and government. Another benefit for a *salonnière* was her position to learn the political leanings and ideas of not only those who gathered in their waiting rooms, but most of the leading society as well.⁸

Revolutionary Reform: 1789 – 1791

Etta Palm d'Aelders stands out as a striking example of a *salonnière* and *citoyenne* who became very vocal in her desires for equal rights for *citoyennes*. She also presented very particular examples of how women could become involved in the new revolutionary regime without breaking down general societal norms and mores. Of particular notoriety were her ideas to create networks of women's groups throughout the country so women could serve the country by "[propagating] enlightenment" and "[making] it possible to break up more easily the plots

⁶ See note 1

⁷ See note 1

⁸ See note 1



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hatched by malevolent persons.”⁹ While not yet the militant revolutionary woman she would later become, these ideas were extraordinarily radical for their time. Men could no longer deny that women had participated in many ways, both direct and indirect, in the revolution, but acknowledging their participation did not incline them to grant women such rights as were seen to be the *duties* of men.¹⁰

In 1789, the French Revolution was beginning to rearrange political affairs. The actual control of the government was in flux as the Estates General, a meeting of all the social classes of France to petition King Louis XVI, was organized and members elected in order to present the king with *cahiers*¹¹ representing the concerns of the French people. These were to be presented via the elected members of the various estates and districts in order to confront and, hopefully, resolve the issues causing disturbances in France. This same year there were many instances of women becoming actively concerned about themselves and their families. Women in France had been performing certain public functions, such as the aforementioned guilds and merchants, for a century or longer. Since the rest of the people were working out whom to send to the Estates General, a large group of women created a petition in order to beg for assistance for these loyal subjects.

⁹ “Etta Palm D’Aelders Proposes a Network of Women’s Clubs to Administer Welfare Programs in Paris and throughout France.” in *Women in Revolutionary Paris*, Darlene Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 69.

¹⁰ Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 77.

¹¹ *Cahiers* were the actual complaints filed by the regions which were passed up through their elected officials to be heard at the Estates General.



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The general discontent of society on the whole had surged so greatly by this point that the king, at the behest of his ministers, attempted to address public concerns. By allowing the meeting of the Estates General, he hoped to satisfy the concerns and requests from each district for review. This meeting created unprecedented popular representation, yet women were still mostly left out from these events. In most cases they could neither legally vote for a delegate nor attend the meeting themselves. Women's traditional roles were in the home, but the group of women concerned that their grievances would not receive due attention if left in the hands of men presented a petition directly to the king.

These women belonged entirely to the third estate of France, which included around 97% of citizens at this time in this "peasant" class.¹² This was only a legal term and not necessarily reflective of the actual wealth, social presence, nor occupation of the individuals so categorized.¹³ As women workers and individuals responsible for raising the families of their husbands, they presented the king with concerns that reflected issues they were concerned about on a daily basis, such as punishing prostitutes by making them "work in the public workshops" if they ever removed some sort of "mark of identification," and by requesting that "men not be allowed...to exercise trades that are the prerogative of women" specifically.

The women promised they would gladly maintain their current place and fulfill their duties as loyal subjects to their "tender Father" if only they were "left at least with the needle and

¹² Popkin, 11.

¹³ There were three estates in France, the First Estate was the Nobility, the Second Estate was the Clergy, and the Third estate was the (poorly defined) peasantry. These served as legal definitions to bind people to laws accordingly, primarily those of taxation, which the peasant class paid exclusively.



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the spindle” and promised thus also “never to handle the compass or the square.”¹⁴ The only right these women sought that was not included in their current set of rights and privileges was the desire for free schools wherein they might “learn the language on the basis of principles, religion, and ethics,” all in order to give their children a “sound and reasonable education so as to make of them subjects worthy of serving [the king].”¹⁵ Darlene Gay Levy points out that these women made their request to the king instead of the Estates General because “they [did] not conceive of [it] as an institution truly representative of the nation.”¹⁶ This accurately summarizes the lack of awareness, not only among women but the whole society, of how much their country would change in the months and years to come.

As the Estates General evolved into the National Assembly and France was plunged into uncertainty as the remaining members of that institution debated the future, women began to participate in the revolution itself, such as when Marguerite Pinaigre attended the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. At this battle, Pinaigre’s husband had been wounded and, due to his state, was assigned a pension. She argued that the pension was not enough for them to survive on any longer, and requested money for not only her husband, but his “citoyenne wife...who worked equally hard” as her husband in this iconic moment in French Republican history. In this petition, Pinaigre described her husband’s and her own invaluable assistance in the assault, emphasizing her own role. She had run “to several wineshops to fill her apron with bottles...to

¹⁴ “Petition of Women of the Third Estate to the King.” in Levy, 18-20.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.



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be used as shot...to break the chain on the drawbridge of the Bastille.” She was seeking a pension for her husband, but she reinforced her request with her *own* merit and contribution to the liberation of France. She added in her plea that she “believe[d] herself justified in coming before the National Assembly” not only because her husband became crippled during the assault on the Bastille, but because she, a woman, actively participated in the event and thus had earned the right to present her case before them.¹⁷

On October 5 and 6 1789, women once again set out en masse to speak to the king about their plight. This time, however, it was a group of patriotic revolutionary *citoyennes* who would go, not a group of loyal subjects to the king. Many women were swept up along the way, sometimes against their will but unable to defy a group so large and claiming so strongly to be patriotic. The purpose of this march was to go directly to the king for bread and to declare opposition to the counter-revolutionary ideas which were supposedly spreading among the population. The spark which incited this, though likely a culmination of myriad events and circumstances, was the purported stomping on the tricolor revolutionary cockade by some national guard troops at a banquet. When the march reached Versailles, however, the primary concern presented to both the National Assembly and the king was the shortage of food – particularly bread.¹⁸

¹⁷ “A Woman Recounts her Role in the Conquest of the Bastille” in *Ibid.*, 29-30.

¹⁸ Popkin, 44.



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The king and the assembly both assured the female delegates presented to them that all would be done to try to ease their suffering caused by the lack of bread.¹⁹ The large number of people and the rainy conditions on the two days over which this event spanned made it apparent that simply *promising* to assist with the bread shortage would not satisfy the *citoyennes* and their entourage to return to Paris. On the morning of October 6, the king and his family were persuaded to move to the Tuileries palace in Paris from Versailles by the Marquis de Lafayette, with the women, National Guard, and cannons as an escort and bearing on pikes the heads of two royal guards who were caught in the frantic chaos which had ensued during the night.²⁰

Madelaine Glain and Marie-Rose Barré, two women who were among the delegations presented to the king and to the National Assembly, made statements after these “October Days” to the Châtelet Commission investigating the events. In their testimonies, they pointed out how they were “forced, as many women were, to follow the crowd”²¹ in the case of Glain, and because of “not being able to resist this great number of women” by Barré.²² Each of them focused on different points of interest in their interviews. Glain, for example, was mostly concerned with the incidents involving patriotism and the problems of prostitution, as she pointed out a woman whom she “knew to be a prostitute” who had said she was “going to Versailles to bring back the queen’s head.” This prostitute also threatened a Royal Guardsman on

¹⁹ “Women Testify Concerning their Participation in the October Days” in Levy., 50.

²⁰ Ibid, 48.

²¹ Ibid, 47.

²² Ibid, 49.



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a horse “with a bad, rusty sword which she held open in her hand.”²³ At this early point, such negative sentiment toward the royal family had not yet become prominent since many people were still convinced that the king was a good man, but that his ministers were misleading him. The other noticeably unacceptable action was the beheading of the two Royal Guards, “who had been massacred by the people,” though by a man, not the women.²⁴

Glain mentioned food only briefly, having referred to women asking “for the four-pound loaf [of bread] at eight *sols*, and for meat at the same price.”²⁵ Barré, however, focused upon it as the primary cause for her involvement in the march on Versailles.²⁶ She emphasized how women told the King’s Guards that the reason for their presence was to “ask him [the king] for bread,” and also the king’s compassion as he promised to provide escorts for the flour transports to Paris. The escorts were deemed necessary based on a claim that only two wagons had made it there out of the seventy commissioned.²⁷ Barré presents little concern regarding revolutionary matters, however. When asked whether a minister of the king had said, “When you had only one king, you had bread; now that you have twelve hundred of them, go and ask them for it,” the investigator only records her response as “in fact she did not hear the minister say this.”²⁸ This particular instance of women’s democratic activity, acting as a united body of concerned citizens to make the government hear them, elevated them above the roles of housewives and mothers.

²³ Ibid, 48.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 49.

²⁷ Ibid, 50.

²⁸ Ibid.



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This event began to show the solidarity of their newly-gained moniker, *citoyenne*, and the beginning of a trend toward their future identity as Amazons.

Women Become Activists and Members of Political Clubs 1791-1793

1791 saw the rise of women's involvement in political activity brought about by their increased acceptance into political clubs and organizations. The most prominent clubs in Paris at the time were the Cordeliers Club, which was opposed to a wealthy elite forming within the National Assembly; the Jacobin Club, which was an ultra-revolutionary political group (also called *Society of Friends of the Constitution*); and the Cercle Social, a club in Paris founded on the ideals of true political and religious democracy.²⁹ The exclusion of women, though easily noticed, should not be considered anti-feminist because the exclusion usually also included poorer people and all other "passive" citizens. Abbé Sieyès defined passive citizens in his August 1789 "Preliminary to the French Constitution," as "women, at least in their present state, children, foreigners, those who contribute nothing to maintaining the public establishment..." He proceeded to define active citizens as "those alone who contribute to the public establishment" and so who were "like the true shareholders in the great social enterprise."³⁰ Eventually, in the Constitution of September 1791, the ranks of active citizens would be based upon how much a *man* paid in taxes, with those who paid the highest levels gaining access to national and regional

²⁹Popkin, 56.

³⁰"Preliminary to the French Constitution," Abbé Sieyès in *French Revolution and Human Right*, Lynn Hunt (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 81.



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elections and offices. This was complemented by a lower tax level wherein a man could vote and hold office in local assemblies.³¹

The Cordeliers Club was open to women from its inception, allowing them to attend the meetings and even to contribute to the debates.³² While initially there was no restriction on the number of women, eventually a limit of 60 women's seats was instituted. The Jacobins were slower to accept women even into the meeting halls, in part because of initially high membership fees. Eventually, however, in late 1790 and early 1791, the 'Fraternal Society of Both Sexes, meeting at the Jacobins' was introduced and met in a room directly below the regular Jacobin meeting hall. This group stands out because of its admittance of women to full membership and also to active roles as officers.³³ Finally, the *Cercle Social* was a group of both *citoyens* and *citoyennes*, founded in January 1790, who advocated women's rights using journals, articles, and active lobbying to obtain their goals. A prominent male member of this group, the Marquis de Condorcet, wrote in favor of women's equality in French society, including politically.³⁴ All of these groups represented women's political involvement on a large scale from 1791 to 1793, but also provided a springboard from which individual women gained both fame and notoriety.

Olympe de Gouges and Etta Palm d'Aelders stand out as remarkable figures who participated in these groups and also came to gain a level of recognition on their own as

³¹ *The French Constitution, Revised, Amended, and Finally Decreed, by the National Assembly* (Philadelphia: Peter Stewart, 1791) Chapter I, Section 2

³² Andress, *People*, 143.

³³ *Ibid.*; "Stanislas Maillard Describes the Women's March to Versailles, October 5, 1789" in Levy, 42.

³⁴ Hunt, 26-7, 119; Levy, 62.



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individuals. Olympe de Gouges came from a poor background, had educated herself and became a playwright in Paris, where she formulated her ideals for female equality. Etta Palm d'Aelders, on the other hand, came not only from a wealthy background, but was born in the Dutch Republic, so was a foreigner.³⁵ She worked to bring about changes in women's rights through equality in divorce, education, and other basic needs rather than appealing directly for active female political rights.³⁶ Both stood adamantly for direct democratic involvement of women in all levels of society, however, and each contributed according to her own abilities and status to present her message to France.

Etta Palm D'Aelders, Olympe de Gouges and Charlotte Corday

Etta Palm d'Aelders played a vocal role in the *Cercle Social* and in providing her opinions regarding the roles of women in the new social order. Her membership in the *Cercle Social*, however, was only part of her identity, and she spoke repeatedly of her concerns to members of political clubs and the National Assembly. She wrote a document addressed to the National Assembly in the summer of 1791 appealing to the "august senate" to "no longer allow woman to groan beneath an arbitrary authority."³⁷ Palm appeals to their pride and honor by the myriad forms of address she chooses: "Fathers of the country," "Majestic legislators," "Representatives of the nation, in the name of your honor..."³⁸ Palm's moderate approach to seeking women's equality is evident in the seemingly mild requests she makes, specifically that

³⁵ Levy, 62.

³⁶ Hunt, 122.

³⁷ "A Call for an End to Sexual Discrimination" by Etta Palm d'Aelders in Levy, 75.

³⁸ Ibid., 77.



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the National Assembly give “girls a moral education equal to that of their brothers,” and that they “vote down the unjust and unpolitic code” being considered that allowed only husbands to pursue adultery charges.³⁹

On April 1, 1792, Palm addressed the newly formed Legislative Assembly with her renewed plea for education for girls. This time, however, she also added requests to specify girls’ coming of age at 21, to allow divorce, and to grant complete “political liberty and equality” to men and women alike.⁴⁰ She used language that implied that women were requesting a restoration of their rights, not seeking new ones, when she asked the assembly to “take into consideration the state of degradation to which women find themselves reduced as far as political rights are concerned.”⁴¹ The common idea of women’s rights as based upon responsibility and duty to the state were reiterated as well in her request for women to be “admitted to civilian and military positions.” She implied that women not only deserved the rights granted to men, but given the chance they could equally earn them. The president of the assembly, however, merely passed the petition along to the Committees on Legislation and Education, with a vague promise to “avoid...everything that might provoke their [the women petitioners’] regrets and their tears.”⁴²

Olympe de Gouges, self-educated *citoyenne* in the new French Republic and daughter of a butcher, meanwhile wrote and published her Declaration of Rights for women in reaction to the

³⁹ Ibid., 76-7.

⁴⁰ “Etta Palm D’Aelders’ Plea to the Legislative Assembly, April 1, 1792.”. in Ibid., 123.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.



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passage and implementation of the new French Constitution in September 1791. This constitution noticeably neglected the mention of women in its articles, particularly in the preamble, The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (Declaration of Man in this work). This essentially failed to address the issues women had been fighting for, such as divorce rights and education for girls and women. This led Gouges and others to believe their appeals and efforts had been entirely ignored, which is supported by the lack of attention these issues did receive in the constitution.⁴³ Gouges' response was to rewrite the Declaration of Rights of Man to either include women or to alter sections where women had been most noticeably left out of it. The result was a radical document in which Gouges declared, in Article I, that "woman is born free and lives equal to man in her rights."⁴⁴

Gouges' Declaration of Woman provides insight into the concerns she and other women felt the National Assembly had neglected in drafting the Constitution of 1791, particularly in the preamble. She argues in Article Two of her Declaration, for example, that women were not guaranteed any rights in the original when she declared that "the purpose of any political association is the conservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of *woman* and man."⁴⁵ She continues to express that she feels she is doing her patriotic duty by emphasizing "resistance to oppression" among the original document's right by adding "especially" before it.⁴⁶ One of the most exceptional ideas she offered in her declaration was Article Thirteen, where she stated

⁴³ Levy, 61.

⁴⁴ "The Declaration of the Rights of Woman" Olympe de Gouges in Levy, 90.

⁴⁵ Ibid. – *emphasis mine*; Ibid in Hunt, 78.

⁴⁶ Ibid. in Hunt, 78; Ibid. in Levy, 90.



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that woman “shares all the duties and all the painful tasks; therefore, she must have the same share in the distribution of positions, employment, offices, honors, and jobs.”⁴⁷ The original Declaration of Rights in its corresponding article had been centered on the idea that “common taxation is indispensable.”⁴⁸ Investing women into roles within the administration of the new Republic, she argues, would give truly equal rights to women.

In contrast to the articles which Gouges felt necessary to alter significantly, there were a few which she felt needed little or no attention. Her Article Five differs from the original only in her addition of the adjectives “wise and divine” before the word “law,” for example, because the article does not explicitly mention men or women.⁴⁹ In addition to these similarities between the original and her own declaration, de Gouges also deviated entirely on some points. In Article Nine of her pamphlet she completely avoided most of the language in the original Declaration, and left men out of it entirely: “Once any woman is declared guilty, complete rigor is [to be] exercised by the law.”⁵⁰ The same article in the Declaration of Man was not insignificant, having declared that every man was “presumed innocent until judged guilty.” Gouges was more intent upon reinforcing women’s legitimacy by showing that they not only deserved the rights, but should possess the responsibilities as well.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid. in Levy, 91.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. in Hunt, 78-9; Ibid. in Levy, 90.

⁵⁰ Ibid. in Levy, 91.

⁵¹ Ibid. in Hunt, 78-9



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Charlotte Corday stands out distinctly from Olympe de Gouges and Etta Palm d'Aelders because of her unique choice of self-identity. As Jean-Paul Marat, editor of *L' Ami du Peuple* and member of the Legislative Assembly, was bathing in his apartment on July 13, 1793, Corday stabbed him to death in a very personal attack which she considered her duty to fulfill.⁵² The most prolific women's political group of the time, the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women (SRRW), condemned this attack as traitorous and used it to show their own patriotism when they later denounced the National Convention for being too moderate toward traitors.⁵³ Corday's assassination of Marat showed that women at that time had already begun to think and act politically and independently instead of as part of a unified system. These divisions were already present in many cases, particularly within the SRRW,⁵⁴ but Corday's very public action became a turning point as the entire society suddenly faced the very real involvement of women in a role considered not only distasteful, but very deeply within the sole realm of men: that of a political assassin.

Corday's trial became an issue not only of the murder of a public official by a *woman*, but also of the role of *women* in this new society where the rules were changing so quickly and severely. The fact that Corday had acted on her own behalf and for her own political feelings regarding Marat seemed either to have been difficult for many in society to comprehend, or to

⁵² Nina Corazzo and Catherine R. Montfort, "Charlotte Corday: Femme-Homme," in *Literate Women of the French Revolution of 1789*. (Birmingham: Summa Publications, Inc., 1994), 41-2.

⁵³ Popkin, 80.

⁵⁴ Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 143-4.



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simply have been put to use very quickly in an effort to place the blame on the opposing factions as propaganda.⁵⁵ A considerable obstacle to these efforts to understand this attack was Corday's sex itself, which was called into question enough that she felt necessary to reply to a question during one of her interviews, "Am I therefore not of my sex?"⁵⁶ Corday came from Caen in northwestern France, so was not directly involved with the Parisian societies and circles working within the capital city. She did, however, read many newspapers, journals, and books, which allowed her to maintain at least some idea of the events and political discussions of the National Convention and the other groups within Paris.⁵⁷ In spite of, or perhaps because of, the severity of the crime and the many difficult questions now facing the members of the National Convention, Corday, who had waited patiently in Marat's room for her arrest, was executed on July 17, 1793, only four days after the assassination.

From Organized Protests to the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women

Women (and men) used *taxation populaire*⁵⁸ both before and during the revolution to combat what they considered to be excessive prices caused by hoarding, speculating, and simple greed. Particularly, in April through May 1775 there were market riots using this method of "taxation" across the urban centers of France and ultimately stopped, temporarily at least, only

⁵⁵ Corazzo, 40-47.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁸ *Taxation Populaire* was the term used by citizens when they would protest high prices. Essentially they would declare what the market value should be, sell the items at that price, and give the money to the person they took it from. It was possible, of course, that some citizens would simply take the merchandise without paying for it, essentially theft. The term, therefore, was vague but used mostly to gather support for their actions, whether well-intended or otherwise. See Andress, *People*, 74.



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after military forces were deployed to protect the markets.⁵⁹ The leaders of these episodes took goods from merchants and spread them amongst the crowds at a price they considered fair.⁶⁰ During these outbursts of public emotion, there were inevitably disturbances and acts of pillaging. The various political clubs and politicians used those acts as propaganda against each other.⁶¹ Women, who were responsible for most household shopping, invariably participated in these riots in at least some form, and the clubs and National Assembly members used this knowledge in their attacks on each other.⁶² These massive democratic statements made by protesting and using mob activity to present a desire for change provided a precedent for demonstrations and petitions women continued to press throughout the revolution. The tone and content gradually began to lean towards more political issues through 1792 and into 1793.

The Jacobin party, although greatly divided in its political views about concepts such as war and radical popular uprisings, nevertheless inspired one of its members, Louvet, to appeal to women to stop the “sugar crisis” of January and February 1792.⁶³ The divide in the Jacobin party was between the Montagnards and Girondins, who disagreed particularly on the issue of popular uprisings. Girondins began as the more pro-war members of the Jacobin club, so named because most of their primary members were from the Gironde, the department of Bordeaux.⁶⁴ The Montagnards, however, were more concerned about the lower classes and so were less afraid of

⁵⁹ Andress, *People*, 74-5.

⁶⁰ Levy, 5.

⁶¹ Andress, 75-7.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “A Jacobin Appeals to the Women of Paris to End the Sugar Crisis” in Levy, 112-4.

⁶⁴ Popkin, 65.



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the mobs and riots which the Girondins feared could not be controlled.⁶⁵ Louvet's appeal, based on the Girondins' idea to ask women to stop buying sugar as a "patriotic sacrifice,"⁶⁶ sought an end to the *taxation populaire* during these riots, which actually were used to procure most dry goods, though sugar was the primary concern.⁶⁷ This abstinence from sugar was expected from all *citoyens* and *citoyennes* equally and even refers to other districts that already had begun to do so. This request could not overcome need and discontent, however, as national guardsmen proved when they required significant reinforcements to disperse the women who led February's Monnery sugar riots in the Faubourg Saint Marceau of Paris.⁶⁸ Female leaders had begun to stand up more fiercely for their causes, and proved they would only back down when faced with threats by armed soldiers.

Though *taxation populaire* predated the revolution and continued to be used throughout, women began using petitions as the primary means of addressing their issues. Petitions became prominent after they gained exposure to the new political processes by sitting in and, sometimes, participating in political club meetings. Pauline Leon, who would later become one of the leaders of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, led a group of women to petition the National Assembly in March 1791 for permission to obtain "pikes, pistols, and sabres" and to be allowed to "practice maneuvers" with them.⁶⁹ Significantly, Leon did not request autonomous

⁶⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁶⁶ "A Jacobin Appeals" in Levy, 112.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Levy, 108-114.

⁶⁹ "Petition to the National Assembly on Women's Rights to Bear Arms in Ibid., 72-4.



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female leadership at this point, but instead requested that the French Guards command them.⁷⁰ Leon used strong language throughout her petition to make demands for women's individual rights. She does not, for example, *request* the petition's privileges, she "demand[s]...the honor of sharing their [male guardsmen's] exhaustion and glorious labors..." This demand followed the pattern of other revolutionary women, such as Etta Palm and Olympe de Gouges, by requesting rights based upon a willingness to earn them.⁷¹ Men and women also sometimes signed petitions together, such as to the National Assembly in July 1791 wherein they declared their distaste for "a leader who broke his most sacred oaths," King Louis XVI. They further stated that "Frenchmen chose representatives to give them a constitution, not to restore" this type of leader to any form of monarchy, even the Constitutional Monarchy of the 1791 Constitution.⁷²

From 1792 to 1793, women were fighting to maintain the ground they had already gained as *citoyennes* and *against* new opposition in the radical government which had begun to settle into a permanent form. In July of 1792 another group of women, this time from the Hotel de Ville section of Paris, petitioned to arm themselves for "the defense of the capital" after presenting a "pike with a liberty cap on its tip" before the National Assembly.⁷³ The following February saw severe discontent turn into more riots, uprisings, and appeals to the Legislative Assembly for assistance. Many of these actions were, as usual, led by concerned *citoyennes* who were seeking aid from the political clubs and Legislative Assembly. One such group sought

⁷⁰ Ibid., 74.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "Women Sign a Petition to the National Assembly on the Fate of the King" in Ibid., 78.

⁷³ "Women from the Hôtel de Ville Section of Paris Ask for Arms, July 31, 1792" in Ibid., 124.



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permission to appeal to the Assembly to reduce the price of food and to “denounce hoarders,”⁷⁴ while another group sought permission from the Jacobins to use their meeting hall to gather and “discuss hoarding.”⁷⁵ Though the main concern on these women’s agenda was hoarding and speculating, which pertained to survival, they claimed and used their right to gather and participate in the formation and building up of their society. By presenting their cases before the government and meeting in large groups to “discuss” their well-being, they took their political lives into their own hands.

These advances in empowered self-identity were best represented by the formation of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women (SRRW) in May 1793. These self-proclaimed “amazons,”⁷⁶ admitted only women to their society, claimed that moniker with pride and used it to describe their willingness to “[objectively deliberate] on the means of frustrating the projects of the republic’s enemies.”⁷⁷ The classical imagery of Amazon warriors was appropriate to the period of the revolution because classical feminine symbols were commonplace in the new government, particularly as Liberty and Justice. Claire Lacombe, an actress from outside of Paris, and Pauline Leon, a chocolatier who had been petitioning and attending political clubs since 1791, were among the leaders of this society who endorsed and proposed radical activity and changes.⁷⁸ Radicalism caused division not only within the society, but also among the

⁷⁴ “A Deputation of Citoyennes at the Commune, February 24, 1793” in *Ibid.*, 126.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ “Account of a Session of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women” in *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷⁷ “The Society of Revolutionary Republican Women Registers with Authorities at the Commune” in *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷⁸ Levy, 144-6; “Lacombe’s Demand for the Replacement of LaFayette as French Chief of Staff” in *Ibid.*, 156.



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political groups that were involved in the Assembly. The radical Jacobin Montagnards began to attempt to restore order in France, and so began to concede many of their former demands in order to win a broader support base. This encouraged the SRRW to begin to align itself more with the *Enrages*, a group of extreme radicals who fought against what they saw as a new oppressive government, and so pushed away support of the Jacobins.⁷⁹

From its creation, the SRRW was designed as a militant group. Article I of its regulations stated this clearly: “The Society’s purpose is to be *armed* to rush to the defense of the Fatherland.”⁸⁰ Article XV, which lists the vows that new members made, emphasized this further: “I swear to live for the Republic or *die* for it.”⁸¹ They also made sincere efforts to become recognized as a serious group and so they formed in the same format as mainstream male societies – with a president, vice-president, and secretaries to handle various functions, including “keeping a register of all the deliberations of the society.”⁸² The significant difference was the placement of women in *all* leadership positions within the society. The seriousness with which these women took their new responsibilities was described in a transcript of Pierre Roussel, who attended one such meeting as a guest. The topic for discussion was “the utility of women in a republican government,” which led to suggestions such as “raising an army of 30,000 women to go into battle” and a proposal to allow women “into all branches of

⁷⁹ Levy, 146.

⁸⁰ “The Regulations of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women” in *Ibid.*, 161. *Emphasis mine.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 163. *Emphasis mine.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 162.



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administration.”⁸³ The women of the SRRW continued to gain ardor and devotion to the republic, which they considered as much theirs as the men’s who were fighting and dying to maintain it.

By September 1793, the SRRW had begun to alienate all but the most radical groups and citizens because of its increasing fervor. Specifically, these women began to appear as Amazons not only in the sense of being militarily inclined, but as separate and different from the rest of French society. They were not solely feminist because they often confronted and challenged women in the streets of Paris regarding their republican spirit. Most of these conflicts related to the wearing of the tricolor cockade, showing their divided mission of empowering women politically while also focusing strongly on patriotism.⁸⁴ These attacks regarding the cockades caused enough trouble that the National Convention on the 21st of September actually sided with the SRRW in passing a law requiring women to wear the tricolor cockade with penalties ranging from eight days to six years in jail depending on the particular offense.⁸⁵

The violent and conflictive interventions and patriotic activities of the SRRW, as well as other less-known individuals and groups, eventually led the National Convention to outlaw clubs and women’s popular societies. Andre Amar, a member of the Committee of General Safety, tied the need for this law to the actions of members of the SRRW when they had supposedly

⁸³ “Account of a Session” in *Ibid.*, 169.

⁸⁴ “Decree of the National Convention Requiring the Wearing of the Tricolor Cockade” in *Ibid.*, 197.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*



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attempted to force market women to wear the patriotic red bonnet.⁸⁶ This bonnet was worn as a “liberty cap” throughout the revolution as a sign of men’s patriotism, and had been an iconic part of King Louis’s proof of devotion to the new constitutional government.⁸⁷ Women’s use of the cap was sporadic throughout the revolution, but following their victory with the law of September 1793, these Amazons of the SRRW felt that these (mostly) market-women who would not don their liberty caps were unpatriotic. On October 28, these two groups began the process by which Amar, on the thirtieth, effectively nullified all the gains of the SRRW and other independent-minded women during the previous four years of revolution.⁸⁸

Amar discounted the patriotism of the SRRW by claiming that some of the members “may have been led astray by an excess of patriotism,” but that many were “motivated only by malevolence.”⁸⁹ He went further to discredit the actions of these women by claiming that “several malevolent persons have put on the mask of exaggerated patriotism to foment disturbances...and a kind of counterrevolution in Paris.”⁹⁰ In effect, these Amazon women believed they were, and had been, gaining political rights and presence by organizing and fulfilling patriotic duties. Amar claimed that these gains had been misguided and ineffectual, and moreover that they had actually caused this wickedness in otherwise normal *citoyennes*.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 213.

⁸⁷ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 180, 186.

⁸⁸ “The National Convention Outlaws Clubs and Popular Societies of Women” in Levy, 213; Doyle, 420.

⁸⁹ Ibid. in Levy, 214.

⁹⁰ Ibid.



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These women had dedicated themselves to a complicated collection of causes which included patriotism, belief in the revolution and the rights of *all*, and the opportunity for women to come out of their homes and take their place in the world to which they had already been contributing. Amar finally accomplished what no one else had during the revolution: he defined women's roles in the new society. These roles centered around educating young children, "preparing [their] minds and hearts for public virtues, . . . to educate them in the political cult of liberty."⁹¹ Women had been relegated to the household not by culture or tradition, which they had shown could be thrown aside, but by law that the dominant men could enforce. They proved their willingness to do so by executing several women, including the former queen Marie Antoinette on October 16, 1793, and the outspoken author of the "Declaration of Rights of Woman and Citizen," Olympe de Gouges on November 3, 1793.

Conclusion

The French Revolution allowed people of every part of the society, from all categories of wealth, class, and even gender, to participate in and recreate themselves in new ways and with new perspectives on how their world could operate. Women had expanded their roles in France by gaining new rights over their trades in the formations of guilds, by assisting husbands, fathers, and brothers with their trades, by selling goods, and by maintaining a near-monopoly on shopping. As they fought for these positions and earned their tenure in them, the benefits and expansion of rights had begun. These had allowed women to maintain their own households and

⁹¹ Ibid., 215-6.



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businesses as master seamstresses, ribbon-makers, and even as leaders of guilds representing their trades, consisting entirely of women. These sorts of gains were not sought, nor even desired, by all women. They were, however, sought by enough of them to seek and define their identities themselves, creating the groundwork which other women during the revolution began to build upon with the access to new, previously unknown freedoms.

As men were granted the title of *citoyen* and women were granted the honorary title of *citoyenne*, some women began to think of themselves not as “partners of citizens,” but as “citizenesses” entirely in their own right. Citizens were defined by the rights granted to all French men in their Declaration of Rights. Even though the men who wrote it did not see a need to specify whether *l’homme* meant “man” or “mankind,” this very lack of specificity allowed women to see a possibility for involvement, acceptance, and equality that men could not have imagined prior to the writing of this document. These politically-minded women took a term granted to them in passing, and only by the nature of the French language’s distinction of masculine and feminine words,⁹² and made it their own by identifying themselves as active *citoyennes* of the new revolutionary France. They knew they would have to deal with a long history of women’s oppression, but battled this by removing themselves from the roles of

⁹² In French, words have a “gender,” which does not necessarily reflect the word’s actual gender, but in situations where a word refers to a person there are usually both a masculine and feminine version. In this case, *citoyenne* was not intended to empower women, but simply was the feminine version of the word *citoyen*.



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dependents of men and focused on their willingness to suffer, work, and perform all the duties required of them in order to *earn* their citizenship.

As time passed, some women became content with the level of political participation allowed by their acceptance into the galleries at political meetings and the idea of an eventual, gradual progression into new roles. Other women, however, felt they had to pursue the ideal of the ultimate female equality by behaving in a manner which seemed absurd not only to the men, but many of the women of revolutionary France. Women had gained rights such as the ability to speak out about their concerns, to be represented in the Assemblies, and in their acceptance by at least some as true members of the new society. The Amazons, however, felt they had already earned their rights to equality, and used force of words and, in the events which led to the removal of women's rights to organize, sometimes used physical force as well. A lack of a finite definition of women's role in the new society was essential to the growth of both of these self-identities for women, and the factionalism of politics at the time prevented any of the groups, before Amar, from actively restricting women's actions to keep the support of the groups to which these women belonged.

Ultimately, the legal restriction of women's rights passed, but only backed by the threat of execution, exemplified in the cases of Olympe de Gouges and Charlotte Corday. The end of organized women's clubs and groups allowed the government to control an otherwise powerful and focused democratic force which asserted its rights as members of the French world at the least, and as proud defenders of their rights with the force of arms if necessary. *Citoyennes* or



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Amazons, these women had made their mark on not only France, but also the world. Their peers may have silenced them for a time, but they did so only by the threat of death. Their voices remain today in their writings to remind all citizens of all countries that the first step toward rights may not have taken them very far on the path to equality, but the journey continues, and those pioneers of the French Revolution are not forgotten.

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