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The Media Confronts the Wilde and Confusing Poet

Ella Townsend

When people think of Oscar Wilde, what comes to their minds? Perhaps it's his poetry, his plays, a novel he wrote, the iconic look he showcased, including his long hair and outlandish outfits. Such different angles used to describe Oscar Wilde reflect the fact that his fame – and his infamy – have caused his name to be recognizable even today. His depiction in American newspapers during his lifetime varied a great deal. Oscar Wilde confused the American media of his day. Most newspaper writers didn't really know what to make of him.

Oscar Wilde was an Irish poet, author, and speaker during the mid- to late 1800s. He was born in 1854 to two extremely talented parents. His father was a respected ear and eye surgeon as well as an author. His mother published poetry and was knowledgeable on the subject of Celtic folklore. His parents' talent must have been passed down to him. One historian remarked, "He was deeply impressed by the teachings of the English writers John Ruskin and Walter Pater on the central importance of art in life and particularly by the latter's stress on the aesthetic intensity by which life should be lived."[1] Wilde is often considered a founder of the Aestheticism Movement, which claimed that art had no other purpose than to be art. By that definition, art had no moral or political purpose, but its purpose was only beauty. To those involved in the Aestheticism Movement, beauty was meant to be displayed in art as well as in life.[2] Oscar Wilde promoted aestheticism through his written works.

Wilde was a well-known and recognizable figure in Europe, especially with "his languid poses and aesthetic costume of velvet jacket, knee breeches, and black silk stockings," as historian Karl Beckson described him.[3] He was not as familiar to Americans until he decided to tour the United States, giving lectures and speeches across the country in 1882. Due to the fact that little truth was known about him in the country, his depiction in the American media was interesting, to say the least. It was founded on rumors.

Before his tour in America, he was described in a September 10, 1881, issue of the *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* in an article titled "Who Is Oscar Wilde?" as "The Apostle of the Esthetes… Oscar wears his hair at great length, and it sweeps a broad and furred collar that well-dressed men cannot afford to wear… He has real talent, is a good classical scholar… But he has a creed, wherein his weakness resides, and it is expressed in one word,

Ella Townsend is wrote this paper as a freshman as Samford University.

esthetic." The author didn't care much for Wilde, belittling him by saying, "The esthetic has its place, but too much of it is like too much water in soup, and Wilde is an exponent of too much water."[4]

In the July 31, 1881, issue of the *New York Tribune*, Wilde was not condemned as being "too much" like the previous article. Instead, the writer spoke of him highly, saying, "Mr. Oscar Wilde is not an idiot… it must be acknowledged that his far-fetched words are usually significant, and that they are combined with a due regard to something like sense." The writer was sure that Wilde did not believe the things he was writing so poetically about, saying, "With Mr. Wilde, too, it's only poetry…. He wishes to be taken as a poet under the sway of tremendous emotions, always spontaneous and generally improper; and in carrying out the idea he is careful to commit himself to the most contradictory sentiments." The article went on to paint Wilde not as a madman, despite what people thought. It said, "We do not believe that he has any wild passions, or any rages, or any fixed beliefs. We do not even trust the sincerity of his aesthetic professions." The writer claimed that Wilde's verses were "pretty good examples of a sort of decorative art. Mr. Wilde understands the decorative uses of words; he is like an artist who sets a brilliant palette, without having an idea to transfer to canvass."[5]

Because Wilde was still very much unknown to the American public, it was no surprise that he was confusing the American media. They did not know how to deal with him, the movement he influenced, and his written works. The above two articles displayed the conflicting views of him as he rose to fame. Some thought he was crazy and over the top; others thought he was simply pretending the emotions in his works were his own.

He remained a mysterious phenomenon in the United States until his tour to America, which made him a very real figure. One article in the New York *Sun* admitted that the public knew little truth about Wilde: "The general opinion of him, and of the cause which he represents has not been formed by our actual experience of these, but rather by the amusing satires of their exaggeration." The writer claimed, "America's first impressions were not of the real Oscar Wilde and of the real aestheticism."[6]

In 1882, Wilde decided that he would tour America and give lectures on the love of beauty and art.[7] The *Salt Lake Herald* documented his arrival to America in its January 4, 1882, issue, saying, "A chilled crowd of aesthetic human beings beat their hands and stamped their feet on the dock this morning…waiting for… their apostle Oscar Wilde." Wilde was described as "a man, youthful in appearance…. He has a smooth face and long flowing locks, an overcoat of bottle-green cloth; a fur-lined and fur collar, seal skin cap and yellow kid gloves made the man more conspicuous. It was Oscar Wilde, poet and journalist." The article quoted Wilde, who said, "Already I have experienced something of American courtesy…. I shall remain long enough to see what there is worth seeing in America."[8]

As he lectured across America, the media's opinion of him began to change. Those that attended his lectures left believing that Wilde was not a man without sense, recklessly pursuing the ideas of hopeless romantics, but instead a wise man with a love for art and the passion to defend it. The *Daily Globe* of St. Paul reported on one such lecture in its March 17, 1882, issue, saying, "The subject matter of his lecture was 'art,' consisting of a sort of lament that there was so little 'art,' especially in this country. The lecture was well worded, and at times quite poetical. It was certainly harmless and does not entitle Mr. Wilde to either abuse or ridicule." The reporter concluded, "There is undoubtedly room for a great deal of advancement in 'art' in this busy country, and if Oscar succeeds in accomplishing anything in this direction, he will have done no harm."[9]

Just as the media found peace with Oscar Wilde and respect for him, scandal broke out. In 1895, Wilde, now in England, was accused of being a sodomite and put on trial. The horror expressed by the American media showcases the quick change in its perception of him. In the April 7, 1895, issue of *The Salt Lake Herald,* Wilde was accused of "inciting boys to terrible crimes and actually committing gross acts of indecency."[10] One witness at the trial was a young man named Alfred Woods, who testified that he was "introduced to Wilde in 1893 and he committed indecencies at Wilde's own

house while the latter's family was away…. He was intoxicated at the time as Wilde had previously given him champagne, whisky, and hock."[11] The article quoted Woods, who said that he wanted to "get away from Wilde and people like him."[12]

Wilde's own works were used against him in his trial. In its April 4, 1895, issue, *The Fort Worth Gazette* described the evidence brought against Wilde. A page from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was read aloud in the court and Wilde was asked, "Do you think that the description of Dorian Gray given on page 6 is a moral one?"[13] Wilde responded by saying it was "just what an artist would notice in a beautiful personality… The interpretation of my works does not concern me. I do not care two cents what the Philistines think about me."[14]

The San Francisco Call reported the end of the trial in its May 26, 1895, issue. The judge in charge claimed, "I never before had such a case as this to deal with…. Men such as you are by the nature of your crime lost to all sense of remorse for what you have done…. There is no doubt but that the verdict is a just one, and I shall give you the full penalty allowed by the law, and I only regret that it is not more severe."[15] The justice's attitude towards Wilde's crime was similar to that of the general public.

Wilde's repulsive acts caused his downfall. One St. Louis newspaper commented five years later, "His wife and family deserted him, his plays were withdrawn by theatrical managers on both sides of the ocean, and he was left without resources."[16] The article continued, "After his release [from prison] he went to Paris, where yesterday he died in misery – almost squalor – surrounded only by a few friends of former days."[17] What a bleak ending!

His death caused more confusion in the American media. As articles were published on his death, reporters disagreed once more; should Wilde be recognized for his works despite his criminal actions, or should he continue to be shunned? One Los Angeles reporter, Edward Davis, looked at Wilde's life from two perspectives. He wrote, "It is claimed by the symbolist, Henri de Rignier, that Wilde's classical studies and his research into the social conditions of Greece so accustomed him to certain pathological indications that he was really not aware of the world in which he was living." Davis quoted Rignier, who said of Oscar Wilde, "He lived in Italy at the time of the renaissance or in Greece in the time of Socrates. He was punished for a chronological error." Looking to view Wilde from another perspective, Davis wrote, "Max Nordau classed Wilde as 'a pervert and a degenerate,' but before I had finished reading Max Nordau's 'Degeneration' I was convinced that either Nordau was a degenerate also and a pervert or that I was." Davis concluded, saying, "To my mind, 'As a man thinketh, so is he.' I have found beauty, brilliance, and profundity in the orchidaceous lavishment of Wilde's exotic waste." [18]

Oscar Wilde was a curveball for the American media. He was a mysterious figure who was both respected and shamed. His works were questioned as well as his morals, and no one could agree on what to make of him. He confused the media to no end.

Notes

1 Karl Beckson, "Oscar Wilde," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 12 October 2023, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Oscar-Wilde.

2 "Aestheticism," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9 October 2023, https://www.britannica.com/art/Aestheticism.

3 Beckson.

4 "Who Is Oscar Wilde?" *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* (Sacramento, CA), 10 September 1881, Image 4, *Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014381/1881-09-10/ed-1/seq-4/#words=OSCAR+WILDE.

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6 "Oscar Wilde and Aestheticism," *The Sun* (New York, NY), 1 January 1882, p. 4, *Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1882-01-01/ed-1/seq-4/#words=OSCAR+WILDIS.

7 Beckson.

8 "Oscar Wilde," *The Salt Lake Herald* (Salt Lake City, UT), 4 January 1882, Image 1, *Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.

loc.gov/lccn/sn85058130/1882-01-04/ed-1/seq-1/#words=Qicar+Wilde.
9 "Oscar Wilde, the Appearance of Utterly Too Too, All But, Last Evening," *Daily Globe* (St. Paul, MN), 17 March 1882, Image 1, *Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025287/1882-03-17/ed-1/seq-1/#words=Oscar+Wilde.
10 "Caught in the Marquis' Trap," *The Salt Lake Herald* (Salt Lake City, UT), 7 April 1895, Image 10, *Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85058130/1895-04-07/ed-1/seq-10/#words=Oscar+Wilde.
11 "Caught in the Marquis' Trap."
12 "Caught in the Marquis' Trap."
13 "Oscar Wilde's Libel Suit," *The Fort Worth Gazette* (Fort Worth, TX), 4 April 1895, Image 1, *Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86071158/1895-04-04/ed-1/seq-1/#words=Oscar+Wilde.
14 "Oscar Wilde's Libel Suit."
15 "Oscar Wilde Convicted," *The San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, CA) 26 May 1895, Page 4, *Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1895-05-26/ed-1/seq-4/#words=Oscar+Wilde.
16 "Oscar Wilde Dead in Small Parisian Hotel," *The St. Louis Republic* (St. Louis, MO), 1 December 1900, Image 1, *Chronicling America,* https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020274/1900-12-01/ed-1/seq-1/#words=Oscar+Wilde.
17 "Oscar Wilde Dead in Small Parisian Hotel."
18 Edward Davis, "The Rehabilitation of Oscar Wilde," *The Los Angeles Herald* (Los Angeles, CA), 21 August 1910, Page 4, Image 40, *Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1910-08-21/ed-1/seq-40/#words=Oscar+Wilde.

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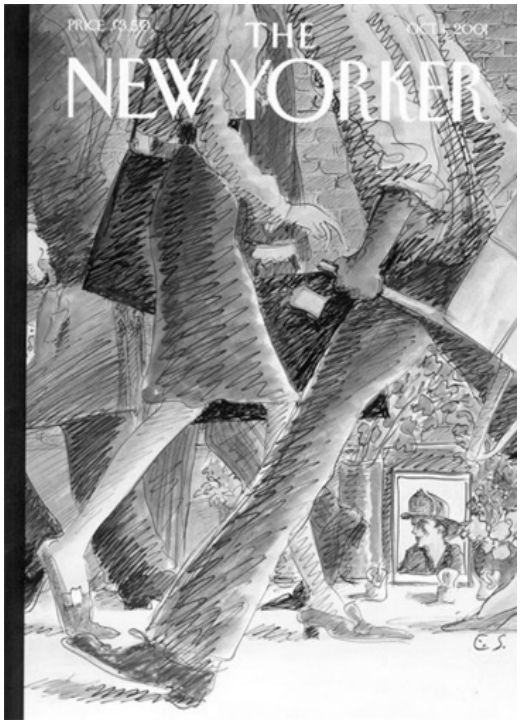
Tragedy, History, Hope: *New Yorker* Cover Art After 9/11

Ella Nix

On September 11, 2001, lower Manhattan, New York, was struck with tragedy as hijackers flew a plane into the north tower of the World Trade Center. When the tower was burning and slowly collapsing, 16 minutes later, another plane crashed into the south tower. Both towers soon tumbled down, producing smoke, destruction, and debris that killed, injured, and terrorized many. The events that took place in 2001 would shock the nation and scare many people.

The New Yorker magazine published many magazine covers featuring artwork about 9/11 after the event occurred. From 2001 to 2013 there were numerous covers about 9/11 that were not only heavy and upsetting, but also encouraging and even lighthearted as people tried to move forward from the attack.

On September 24, 2001, *The New Yorker* published a cover that contained a drawing called, "9/11/2001." The picture was a black background with the Twin Towers in gray acting as shadows. The eerie colors portrayed the darkness and evil in the world. The cover depicted how America had lost all its light due to citizens believing the nation was under attack or that the world might end. Since there was no real picture on the cover, it showed how no single image would ever be able to fully explain what occurred that day and how the people who experienced the attacks firsthand felt. Those who weren't directly impacted by the events that day would never be able to understand what those who experienced it were feeling.[1]



"Street Scene", Oct 1., 2001

Pictures of those who lost their lives saving others were scattered throughout the sidewalks of New York after the attack on 9/11. Flowers would be placed around the images to pay respect to the deceased. On October 1, 2001, another cover was published by *The New Yorker,*

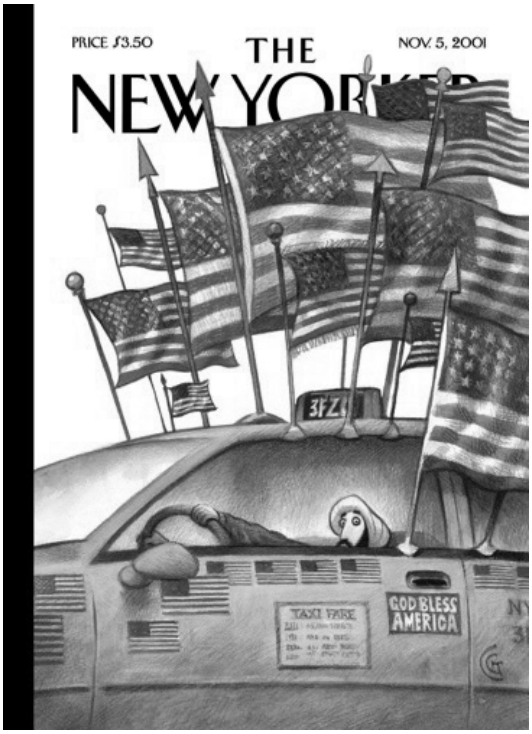
Ella Nix was a senior at Samford Univerisity when she wrote this paper.

called "Street Scene." A number of details mirroring real life were placed in this drawing. A firefighter's portrait was sitting in a picture frame on a small corner of a sidewalk with flowers surrounding him. The frame was placed in the background of the drawing, while the main scene was people of New York walking by the picture, going about their day. After the tragic day, many were trying to go back to their daily lives, so in the drawing, the people seemed to be moving along the sidewalk as they normally would before the terrorist attack happened.[2]

"Local Heroes", Oct.29, 2001

For Halloween in 2001, many kids would dress up as firefighters and policemen to pay homage to the heroes from the wreckage of 9/11. On October 29, 2001, a cover called "Local Heroes" was published by *The New Yorker*. The lighthearted cover contained children throughout neighborhoods dressed as police and firemen as they treat-or-treated from door to door. The image was heartwarming as some kids were depicted as too young to fully understand what had happened, but they still knew how important police officers and firefighters were on that upsetting day.[3]

On November 5, 2001, *The New Yorker* published "What So Proudly We Hailed," which contained a Middle Eastern man driving a taxicab. The message in this image stuck out gravely; life was very hard for New Yorkers with backgrounds in the Middle East after the attack. They were seen as terrorists in America. The Middle Eastern-looking man in the drawing was sitting lower in the cab, trying to hide himself as much as he could. The top of the taxi was covered in American flags, along with the cab's body covered in American flag stickers. The driver was trying to lay low and show that he stood with America, not terrorism.[4]

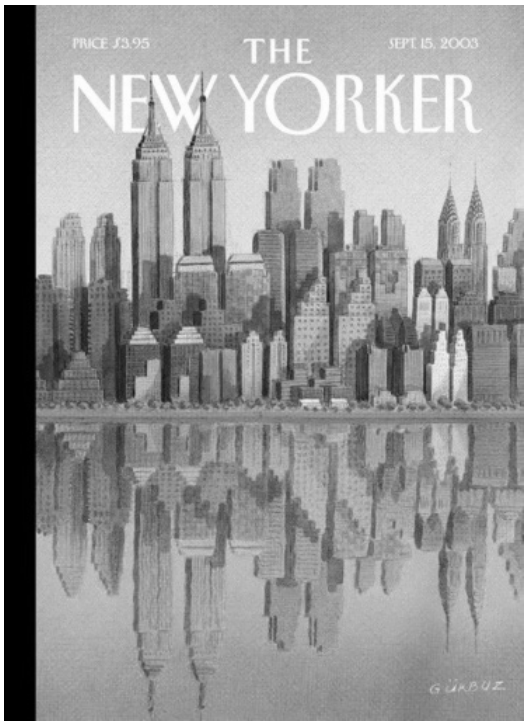


"What So Proudly We Hailed", Nov. 5, 2001

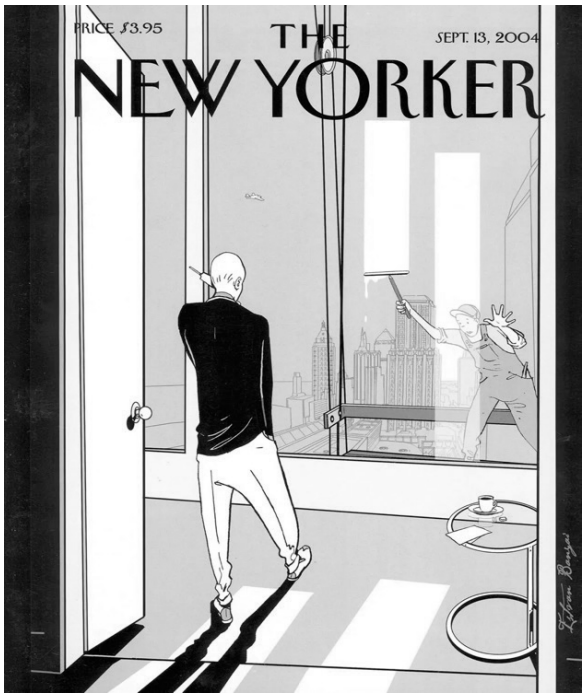
"Fears of July", July 8, 2002

A few months passed, when *The New Yorker* published another 9/11 cover. On July 8, 2002, "Fears of July" showed a man who was lying awake at night in his bed, traumatized by the loud explosions from Americans setting off fireworks for Fourth of July. The man seemed to have PTSD from the crashing of the Twin Towers,

which produced loud sounds and unbearable amounts of smoke. People lay awake at night traumatized, as their minds ran back to that day. At the time, there was no sense of security in America; even freedom that should be enjoyed and celebrated was frightening for some. How could America set off explosives, when a few months earlier, the United States was under attack?[5]



"Twin Towers", August 15, 2003



"Déjà vu", August 13, 2004

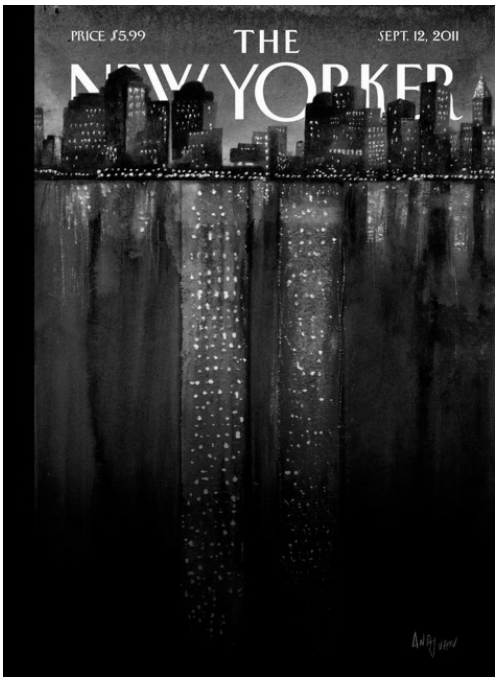
Moving forward two years, *The New Yorker*, on September 15, 2003, published "Twin Towers." The background contained the scenery of Manhattan in vibrant colors. At first glance, everything seemed normal. But, on second glance, the reader saw that every building in this drawing had a twin building next to it. This image specifically showed how much lower Manhattan's skyline had changed due to the Twin Towers not being there. It also showed that New York still grieved the loss of its twin buildings two years later.[6]

In 2004, on September 13, "Déjà Vu" was published by *The New Yorker*. A window washer was seen on the outside of a very tall building, while another man was inside the building, on the phone, looking out at him. Unintentionally, the washer had drawn the rectangular Twin Towers on the glass when cleaning. People who worked in the tall buildings were once able to see the Twin Towers at a great view. This moment portrayed that people would always remember where the towers stood when they were working in their office buildings; they were also very fearful because if such an event were to occur again, they might not be able to make it to safety in time.[7]

On August 7, 1974, a French high-wire artist, Philippe Petit, walked and performed on a high wire from the South Tower to the North Tower. He was 1,350 feet above ground, and he had to walk 131 feet to make it from one tower to the other. Petit successfully made the walk but was arrested after. Yet the charges were dropped in exchange for Petit performing a free kids' show in Central Park.[8] Philippe Petit, five years after the towers fell, appeared on a cover of *The New Yorker* called "Soaring Spirit," on September 11, 2006. The background of the cover was completely white, and a picture of Petit walking on the high wire appeared on the cover, but he had nothing under him, just white. On the back of the magazine appeared the same picture of Petit, but Manhattan was under him, yet he was still floating where the towers used to be. There was nothing there to hold his wire to walk across.[9]

From the years 2007 to 2010, *The New Yorker* did not publish covers containing pictures of what occurred on 9/11/2001. In 2007, *The New Yorker* focused on different hobbies for people in America. Around September 11, a cover showed people playing basketball, watching the game, and sitting on a sidewalk, talking.[10] A year passed, and President Obama was elected to office in 2008, and most people were too focused on politics to remember what took place seven years before. On the front cover of a *New Yorker* around September 11, however, President Obama and his wife were displayed as perhaps Muslim

terrorists as an American flag was burning in a fireplace in the background, reflecting some people's fears about Obama. Overall, New York was too involved with the election to focus on September 11, 2001, although the cover did hint at terrorism.[11] After another year passed, fashion took over the magazine cover. *The New Yorker* published a cover around September 11 that contained high-heel boots as trees in a forest. Instead of respect towards what occurred a few years earlier, attention had shifted.[12] In 2010, the magazine featured a nod to fears about immigration. In a *The New Yorker* cover, a donkey was carrying a little girl's possessions on its back as she pulled the animal along with her. The little girl looked Hispanic, and she appeared to be traveling in in a primitive way.[13] For those who witnessed 9/11, during these years it was perhaps very sad to see how *New Yorker* covers were no longer recalling the events that took place a few years earlier.



"Reflections," Sept. 12, 2010

2010 marked 10 years since the terrorist attack on Manhattan. *The New Yorker* published "Reflections" on September 12, 2010. This image contained the skyline of Manhattan with the missing Twin Towers reflected in the water. The colors used in this cover were dark and faded, but the scene was gorgeous and heartwarming to look at. All the buildings had lights on, and the scene portrayed how New York was able to rebuild after the tragedy. In the cover, the Twin Towers were not standing in New York's skyline; they were below it in the reflection. The artwork assured that people would not forget what happened in New York in 2001.[14]

"9/11: Then and Now," Sept. 13, 2021

After 2010, *The New Yorker* did not portray images from September 11, 2001, until decade anniversaries. But in May of 2014, the 9/11 Memorial Museum in Lower Manhattan was built where the Twin Towers used to stand. The memorial is very popular, and many people visit it today to understand the events that occurred and to pay respect to those who lost their lives during the attacks. On July 7, 2014, *The New Yorker* published "Memorial Plaza," which depicted the memorial pools, part of the museum, where the towers used to be. People of all races, ages, and genders were shown standing around, taking pictures, looking over the edge, or walking by.[15]

The next cover about 9/11 published by *The New Yorker* was on September 13, 2021, called, "9/11: Then and Now." 2021 marked 20 years since the towers fell. Shown on the cover were two teenagers hugging in front of one of the memorial pools, where the towers used to be. The cover was in black and white to represent the day growing old. Teenagers in this era were not alive to experience the event firsthand, but they still shared moments together from the tragic day. Behind them, the reflections of light seemed to make an airplane in the background of the skyline. This was a very powerful explication in honor of the 20 years that had passed since the event.[16]

Every *New Yorker* cover image of 9/11 shown from 2001 on combined to develop a greater meaning to the

memory of the attack, because they captured the 9/11 tragedy from many angles. Because the covers were artwork rather than photos, the artists could depict various unusual angles on 9/11, some sweet, some fantastical, some historical, some heartwarming, some longing for the lost skyline. The nation will not forget 9/11, and the *New Yorker's* artwork helps them remember – from so many different angles.

Notes

Note: *We had permissions to reprint many of the covers. If a cover is not shown, it's because we weren't able to get permission to reprint it.*

1 Art Spiegelman and Francoise Mouly, "9/11/2001," cover art, *The New Yorker,* September 24, 2001, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/09/24.

2 Edward Sorel, "Street Scene," cover art, *The New Yorker,* October 1, 2001, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/10/01.

3 Peter de Seve, "Local Heroes," cover art, *The New Yorker,* October 29, 2001, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/10/29.

4 Carter Goodrich, "What So Proudly We Hailed," cover art, *The New Yorker,* November 5, 2001, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/11/05.

5 Art Spiegelman, "Fears of July," cover art, *The New Yorker,* July 8, 2002, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/07/08.

6 Gürbüz Doğan Ekşioğlu, "Twin Towers," cover art, *The New Yorker,* August 15, 2003,

newyorker.com, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/09/15.

7 Istvan Banyai, "Déjà Vu," cover art, *The New Yorker,* August 13, 2004, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/09/13.

8 9/11 Memorial Staff, "On This Day: Philippe Petit's Iconic High-Wire Feat," *National September 11 Memorial & Museum*, 7 Aug. 2021, www.911memorial.org/taxonomy/term/1116.

9 John Mavroudis and Owen Smith, "Soaring Spirit," cover art, *The New Yorker,* September 11, 2006, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/09/11.

10 Lorenzo Mattotti, "Playground," cover art, *The New Yorker,* September 17, 2007, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/09/17.

11 Barry Blitt, "The Politics of Fear," cover art, *The New Yorker,* July 21, 2008, *newyorker.com,* https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/07/21.

12 Bruce McCall, "Step Into Style," cover art, *The New Yorker,* September 14, 2009, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/09/14.

13 Peter de Seve, "Beasts of Burden," cover art, *The New Yorker,* September 13, 2010, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/09/13.

14 Ana Juan, "Reflections," cover art, *The New Yorker,* September 12, 2011, *newyorker.com,* https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/911-new-yorker-covers.

15 Adrian Tomine, "Memorial Plaza," cover art, *The New Yorker,* July 7, 2014, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/07/07.

16 Pascal Campion, "9/11: Then and Now," cover art, *The New Yorker,* September 13, 2021, *newyorker.com*, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cover-story/cover-story-2021-09-13.

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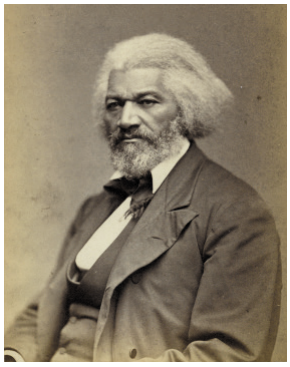
Southern Newspaper Suppression of Agendas

Through Coverage of Garrison, Douglass, Lincoln, Turner, 'The Liberator,' and 'The North Star' 1830-1865

Thomas C. Terry and Donald L. Shaw

William Lloyd Garrison



Frederick Douglass

"History is not a science; it is a method."[1]
– Charles Seignobos

History reflects and expands on the coverage of events by reporters and editors. Based on real-time perceptions, coverage does not necessarily reflect unequivocal truth nor is it always verifiably accurate. Historians later add to the work of reporters by providing structure and organization to the messy, chaotic reality of ongoing events and behavior. This study looks at the dispersal of abolitionist agendas before the Civil War across American newspaper coverage of Nat Turner, Abraham Lincoln, William Lloyd Garrison, the *Liberator,* Frederick Douglass, and the *North Star* by charting the diffusion of their influence through the spread of references to them in newspapers across the country. Newspapers may not predict the future, but they have great power to set and build agendas. The connection between media issues and public awareness is strong and deeply researched.

These keywords were chosen for specific reasons. William Lloyd Garrison and his Liberator were the leading, and often only, voices raised against abolition for decades. Frederick Douglass was an outsized figure and represented the abolitionist struggle both personally and through his several newspapers, most famously the North Star. Abraham Lincoln represented the tipping point in the struggles over slavery, anti-slavery, and secession. Nat Turner's Rebellion galvanized abolitionist fervor and terrified southern slaveowners.

Scholar Marvin Olasky peered at newspapers through the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and provided, if not a justification for this study, at least an explanation of what was attempted. "In Kantian terms, newspapers offer not only phenomena," Olasky declared, "but noumena; not only facts learned from study, but an infrastructure that gives meaning to those facts."[2] This study is scaffolded on Olasky's premise and agenda setting theory.

Background and literature review

Social scientist and historian Donald L. Shaw pioneered the use of newspaper content analysis as a powerful primary source for scholars. "The content of . . . newspapers reflects the day-to-day judgments of the press at one level and the intrinsic values of a

Thomas C. Terry is a professor at Utah State University. Donald L. Shaw was Kenan professor emeritus at the university of North Carolina prior to his death in 2021.

social system and culture at other levels," Shaw wrote.[3] "Newspaper agendas are reflections of the collective cultural values" and "a summary of various social forces" of where and when they are published through their "selection and presentation of news topics," according to Shaw and co-authors Randall Patnode and Diana Knott Martinelli.[4] D. G. Boyce noted that a "historian invariably studies public opinion with reference to specific issues (the Boer War, the New Deal, or whatever)," then newspapers and "other organs of communication" can be used "to discover how issues were first identified, defined, and treated."[5] Boyce also contended that in times of crisis, citizens turn to newspapers for information, context, and perhaps even guidance.[6] Edward Caudill considered it "a reasonable assumption that the press is more useful as a guide to public opinion during times of stress."[7] Caudill added that agenda setting provides a unique tool by which historians, like paleontologists reassembling fossilized bones, can reconstruct an extinct creature; in this case, historical public opinion."[8] Caudill concluded, "Because agenda setting has been demonstrated under a variety of conditions in the 20th century, it should be present under similar conditions in the 19th century."[9]

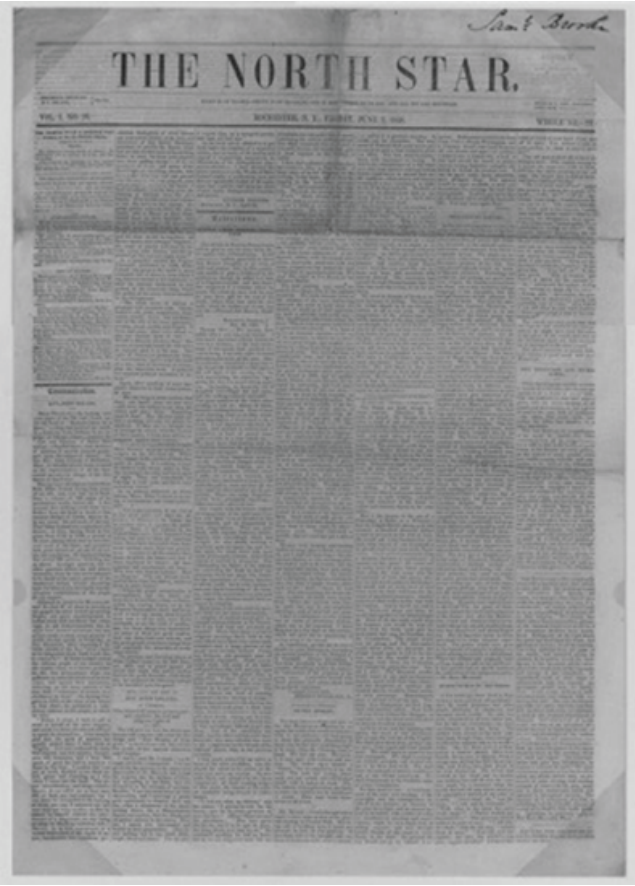
This study gauges the spread of words, stories, and the agendas they create. In the nineteenth century, newspapers exchanged their papers with other publishers. For example, a story on an American slave ship off the coast of Africa first appeared in the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* on January 21, 1843. Within seven days, the article had spread to Vermont, Washington, DC, South Carolina, and Georgia, eventually appearing in 11 other newspapers.[10] This study focuses on the macro and aggregate levels of exchanges, which consists of individual articles constituting data points.

Numbers can be revealing and produce valuable and occasionally unexpected insights. In 1966, political scientist Richard Merritt took random samples of colonial newspapers from the 1735 to 1775 period to determine the rise of American identity through the frequency of use of words such as "king," "queen," or "London," versus the frequency of use of words such as "governor," "Boston," or "Charleston."[11] Use colonial American symbolic words surpassed those of the words "England" or "Europe" by 1765, a decade before the outbreak of the American Revolution. This study revealed a groundswell of support that politicians would not recognize for almost another 10 years. But it was already there.

On the other hand, Shaw conducted an extensive study of more than 3,000 randomly-sampled newspaper stories from 1820 through 1860.[12] Newspapers from the Lower South, upper South, border states (in the Civil War), middle states (including, for example, New York), New England, and West were examined. Each sample was 150 words, so the entire study included about a half million words from stories that could be sorted by topics, sources, and a number of other variables. No deeply embedded differences in the states that composed the Confederacy versus those in the North or West were visible, nor was any emergence of a newspaper awareness of the South as a region apart detected beyond only very, very faint echoes of subtle differences in the agendas of regions.

In a later study, however, Shaw did discern differences between North and South, most obviously in the two regions' approach to the most burning and divisive issue in American history: slavery. However, southern editors were clearly monitoring the news from many sources and locales.[13] This distributed the agenda setting power and process across the country. Shaw graphed news about slavery over time and found evidence that the regions presented a slightly different agenda, with the South, then North, then West carrying more news that involved slavery in descending order.[14] Many of these exchange articles came from northern newspapers and may have played an integral, possibly decisive role, in putting slavery on the national agenda. "It could be argued that news about slavery emerged in Southern newspapers from monitoring this news elsewhere," three scholars stated in a third study, "while it emerged in Northern newspapers from increasing editorial involvement."[15] They added, "Southern editors were reacting to northern abolitionist agendas, attempting to defend and/or justify slavery."[16] The scholars continued, "southern newspapers generally took a more passive outward approach to the topic of slavery as compared with the more aggressive, often angry coverage [of] northern newspapers."[17] Exchange newspapers from most, if not all states, circulated throughout the country, shared among publishers and editors and subsidized by attractive postal rates. That meant editors of the general press, both North and South, were able to respond for their readers to opinions in other sections.

Garrison's newspapers by the early 1830s were exchanged with over 100 other editors, many in the South.[18] Southerners "seethed with rage" at Garrison's efforts, though he remained "serene" in the face of their outrage.[19] *The Liberator* was published in Boston from 1831-1865 and, at its height, had 3,000 paid subscribers.[20] *The North Star* was published in Rochester, New York, from 1847-1851 and had 4,000 subscribers.[21] The reach


THE NORTH STAR.

June 2, 1848, issue of Northern Star

of both newspapers, however, was far wider, given the exchange newspapers that quoted from and reprinted their articles.

White southerners and newspaper editors were infuriated by the newspaper coverage as well as the abolitionist pamphlets that managed to circulate in the South, paranoid that this would foment slave uprisings.[22] Political scientist Bernard C. Cohen claimed, "[T]he world looks different to different people," not just because of their own predilections, but also due to the "map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors, and publishers of the papers they read."[23] Finding the outlines of that "map" in the South is the goal of this study.

In the immediate decades before the Civil War, the number of newspapers dramatically increased. In the 1840 census, 1,631 newspapers, both daily and weekly, were published in the United States;[24] ten years later that number had ballooned to 2,526, a nearly 55 percent jump.[25] While the overwhelming majority were weekly newspapers, growth of daily newspapers was even more rapid. In 1840, there were 138 dailies in the United States, a number that nearly doubled to 254 in 1850.[26] By 1860, there were 380 daily newspapers in the United States, a 50 percent increase from a decade earlier.[27] Of those dailies, 105 were published in the South and 275 in the North.[28] The 1860 census showed 864 weekly newspapers in what would become the Confederacy and those border states where slavery was legal, with the exception of Delaware. In the North, there were 1,988 weekly newspapers, including those states and territories that fought for the Union, California and Washington territory.[29] The proportion of weekly to daily newspapers in 1860 was nearly identical between the two sections: 11 percent to 89 percent in the South and 12 percent to 88 percent in the North.

Methodology and sources

Newspapers had little historical value until the twentieth century was underway. *The State* of Columbia, South Carolina in 1905 coined a memorable phrase. "What is 'news' today will be history tomorrow," the newspaper explained. "[T]he happenings of today are but the progress of history . . . The newspapers are making morning after morning the rough draft of history."[30] Historians have come to acknowledge the value of newspapers as primary sources to document events, even though they are, technically, secondary sources. Historians James Ford Rhodes in 1909[31] and Lucy M. Salmon in 1923[32] were among the early scholars to recognize the importance of newspapers as historical sources.

Donald Shaw pioneered the use of newspaper content analysis as a powerful primary source for scholars. "The content of . . . newspapers reflect the day-to-day judgments of the press at one level," Shaw observed, "and the intrinsic values of a social system and culture at other levels."[33] He added that there is an indefinable and complex interrelationship between audience and media . . . and as this study shows, among different media.

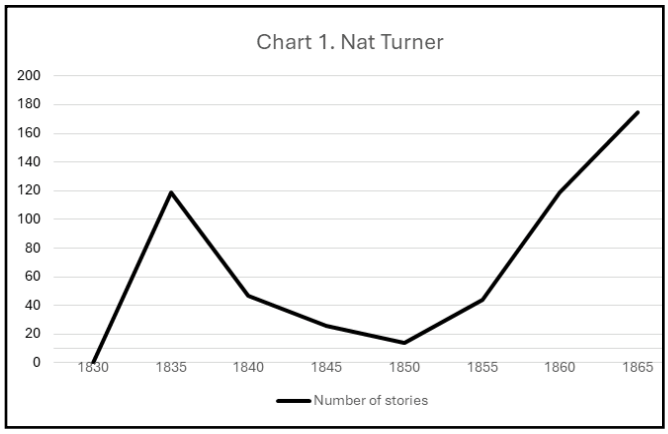
Research sources

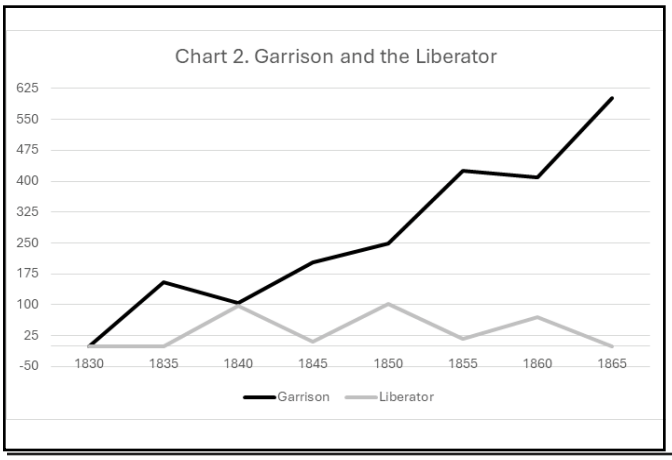
Research for this study was conducted in the historic newspapers databases of ProQuest, Newspapers.com, Historical Newspapers, and Black Newspapers, 1827-1998, accessed at the Harold B. Lee Library of Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and the Marriott Library at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Archival materials were also consulted at the Davis Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Thompson Library at The Ohio State University in Columbus, the University Library at Sacramento State University (CA), the Columbus (OH) Public Library, and the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago. In addition, a unique database of newspaper coverage

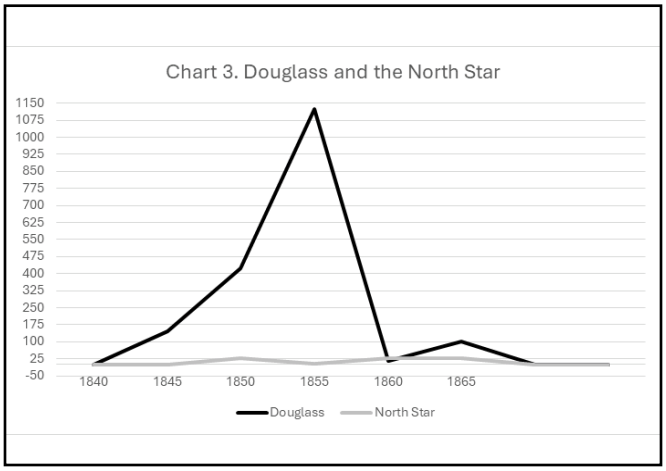
from 1820-1860 in private hands was made available for study.

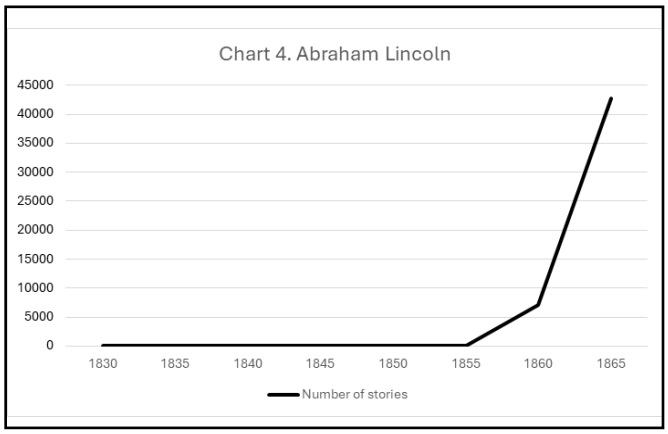
Historical agenda setting

Walter Lippmann entitled a chapter in his 1922 book *Public Opinion*, "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads."[34] The media placed those pictures there, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw hypothesized in 1972, by "influencing the salience of attitudes toward . . . political issues."[35] The agenda-setting theory of McCombs and Shaw "revived Lippmann's conception" of the media's contributions to creating those "pictures in our head."[36] Bernard Cohen declared in 1963 the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."[37] And in 1966, Kurt and Gladys Lang noted the "the mass media force attention to certain issues…[by] constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals…should think about, know about, have feelings about."[38] Two decades after their landmark study, McCombs and Shaw contended, the media also tell us "how to think about it."[39] Agenda setting performs a "linking function" in democratic societies, between "citizens and policymakers," added Stuart Shulman.[40]









Albert Einstein often scrawled a remark from Sir George Pickering on the chalkboard in his office at Princeton: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts."[41] Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. added, "Almost all-important questions are important precisely because they are *not* susceptible to quantitative answers." Counting things can, however, strengthen historians' insights. Perhaps there is an interchange between agenda setting, which is associated with media and audiences who pick and choose messages they favor, and an emerging area of research called agendamelding.[42]

Historical agenda setting is a backwards approach, not only because it looks back into history but because no explanatory theoretical model exists underpinning it. It is quite different from other agenda-setting approaches because it cannot rely on the same empirical basis. It requires counterparts for polling and survey data that did not exist much before the 1930s. Historical scholars direct their agenda-setting research light backwards into history, but it is not a laser beam, nor is it Lippmann's "searchlight."[43] The prism of hindsight mediates the light

Table 1. Nat Turner

Note: Idaho, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Hawaii are listed in the tables based on their future status as states.

Nat Turner
1830-1834

North Carolina	46
Vermont	22
Massachusetts	16
New York	13
Pennsylvania	13
Alabama	4
Kentucky	3
Maryland	3
Michigan	3
Connecticut	2
Mississippi	2
Arkansas	1
Ohio	1
Total	**119**

Nat Turner
1835-1839

Mississippi	23
Massachusetts	13
Virginia	3
Alabama	2
North Carolina	2
Vermont	2
DC	1
New York	1
Total	**47**

Nat Turner
1840-1844

Massachusetts	8
Mississippi	7
North Carolina	4
Vermont	3
New York	2
South Carolina	1
Alabama	1
Total	**26**

Nat Turner
1845-1849

North Carolina	5
Vermont	4
New York	2
DC	1
Massachusetts	1
Ohio	1
Total	**14**

Nat Turner
1850-1854

DC	12
Ohio	9
Massachusetts	8
North Carolina	4
Alabama	3
Virginia	3
West Virginia	3
Michigan	1
New York	1
Total	**44**

Nat Turner
1855-1859

Ohio	45
Massachusetts	18
Vermont	11
Virginia	8
DC	7
New York	7
Pennsylvania	7
North Carolina	6
Wisconsin	5
West Virginia	5
Illinois	4
Tennessee	4
Indiana	3
Kansas	3
Maryland	3
Iowa	2
Michigan	2
Mississippi	2
Alabama	1
Connecticut	1
Kentucky	1
Louisiana	1
Missouri	1
South Carolina	1
Total	**119**

Nat Turner
1860-1865

Ohio	*25*
Massachusetts	*24*
Vermont	*20*
Illinois	*16*
New York	*16*
Pennsylvania	*13*
North Carolina	*9*
Kansas	*7*
Wisconsin	*7*
DC	*6*
Indiana	*5*
Michigan	*5*
Louisiana	*3*
Tennessee	*3*
Virginia	*3*
Alabama	*2*
Oregon	*2*
Texas	*2*
California	*1*
Connecticut	*1*
Iowa	*1*
Kentucky	*1*
Maryland	*1*
Missouri	*1*
Nebraska	*1*
West Virginia	
Total	**175**

and changes it. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Doris Kearns Goodwin remarked, "The past is not simply the past, but a prism through which the subject filters his own changing self-image."[44]

East Tennessee study[45]

S. Kittrell Rushing took a quantitative approach to agenda setting during the 1860-1861 secession crisis. He examined the sixteen antebellum newspapers published in twenty-eight East Tennessee counties in the seven months between the 1860 presidential election and the 1861 secession referendum to determine their political slant. "A standard interpretation," he wrote, "is that after Lincoln's election Southern newspapers led the way in altering Southern attitudes toward the Union," fomenting anti-union and secessionist sentiment.[46] East Tennesseans voted two-to-one against secession, bucking the statewide trend that propelled the state to "officially" secede.[47]

By applying "twentieth century agenda-setting theory to 19th-century press influence," Rushing argued, a more complete understanding may be achieved of the relationship between the antebellum press and its readership."[48] The political leanings of twelve of the newspapers could readily be determined and were split evenly between the Southern wing of the Democratic Party (that supported John Breckenridge in 1860) and the regular Democratic Party (that nominated Stephen Douglas). However, both the state and East Tennessee went for the Constitutional Union candidate John Bell.[49] Rushing's statistical analysis detected only a "tenuous" relationship between the press and the results of the two elections.[50] Anecdotally, he remarked that his research seemed "to support the observation that media reflected the attitudes and values of the readers" in East Tennessee.[51] Arguably, Rushing's article is the only published historical quantitative agenda setting study before Gallup polling began in the 1930s.

Results and discussion

A word-search analysis of tens of thousands of newspaper articles was conducted for the period 1830 through 1865. It used the following terms: Abraham Lincoln, Nat Turner, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, *Liberator,* and *North Star.* The *Liberator* was founded by Garrison in 1831 and ceased publication in 1865. Douglass launched the *North Star* in 1847 before merging it in 1851 with the *Liberty Party Paper,* edited by Gerrit Smith, an abolitionist and eventual Congressman. It ceased publication in 1863.[52] Douglass escaped slavery in Maryland in 1838, and in 1846 as he became increasingly famous and visible – and more vulnerable – friends and supporters bought his freedom while he was on an extended trip to the British Isles. They also obtained a press and shipped it to the U.S. to print the *North Star.* Turner led a rebellion of slaves in Virginia in August 1831. Between fifty-five and sixty-five people were killed, fifty-one of them white. The rebellion was brutally suppressed within a few days, but Turner eluded capture for over two months before being eventually caught and hung. Fifty-five other slaves were executed and an additional 120 were murdered by mobs and militia.

It is important to recognize that the sample sizes in the study vary amongst the many states in terms of the absolute population numbers and in the universe of newspapers that existed in those states. Northern states had greater population and included more urbanized populations that allowed for a concentration of potential readers. In contradiction of that, abolitionist publications enjoyed a national circulation, notably the *Liberator*, *North Star,* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper* felt into this category as did Black newspapers. Competing southern newspapers of a similar, but opposite, approach were essentially unnecessary since, overwhelmingly, southern newspapers supported slavery, either tacitly or specifically.

Lincoln exceptional

With the exception of the massive and overwhelming coverage of Abraham Lincoln, the results reveal almost what a disinterested observer would easily perceive. Newspapers in the states where the *Liberator* (Massachusetts) and *North Star* (New York) were published generated far and away the most mentions or republications of their stories. This applies almost equally to their publisher-editors, Garrison and Douglass. Generally, newspapers in Washington, D.C., also published a greater diversity of stories and references. Given that it was the nation's capital with a greater number of newspapers, this seems logically obvious and makes irrelevant or at least unimportant the fact that the District of Columbia was located in the upper South. The only southern state that consistently published relatively large number of stories from northern abolitionist newspapers was North Carolina, long an idiosyncratic state. It was the thirteenth state to ratify the Constitution, two years after the first state. And it was the tenth state – and next to last – to secede in late May 1861, five months after South Carolina, the first state to withdraw from the Union. Slavery was somewhat less prevalent in

the upper South, and that may account in part for North Carolina's reluctance to sever its ties with the United States. Further, approximately 33 percent of North Carolina's population were slaves and 28 percent of families owned slaves, roughly the same percentage as Virginia.[53] By comparison, South Carolina's population was 57 percent slave with 46 percent of families owning slaves, about the same as Mississippi.[54] In any case, the mentions in the South were very small, almost to the point of inconsequentiality, both relative to the North and in actual numbers.

The gag rule in the House of Representatives was in effect during the middle decade of the study period, from 1836-1844. It was instituted to eliminate debate of antislavery petitions on the House floor.[55] Coverage of congressional debates was a staple of many newspapers before the Civil War, and the gag rule prevented the most incendiary issue facing the nation from being covered. Washington newspapers, notably the *Globe* and the *National Intelligencer* were two of the most widely circulated exchange newspapers at the time and did not anywhere near the number of stories on abolition that it otherwise would have had, given the gag rule, which, naturally, provided fewer stories to be repeated around the country.

Personalities over papers

The results demonstrate that personalities, not newspapers themselves, drove the narrative before the Civil War. This fits neatly with agenda setting theory, which maintains that newspapers tell audiences what to think about, not what to think. Garrison and his *Liberator* and Douglass and his *North Star* barely registered in newspapers over the study period. Garrison personally resonated across the country, but after eliminating the articles from his home state of Massachusetts, a significantly different picture was evident. From 1830-1850, Massachusetts newspapers accounted for between 71-88 percent of all national mentions of Garrison. It was only in 1850-1854 (51 percent), 1855-1859 (36 percent), and 1860-1865 (30 percent) that this changed. This demonstrated the increasing polarization and anger that was building up in the nation as the country stumbled towards Civil War.

For Douglass, the situation was remarkably similar in the earliest years studied before he became a dominant national figure. Douglass was enslaved in Maryland, escaping in 1838, settling in the Boston area. After a two-year visit to Ireland and Britain, he returned to Rochester, New York, and began publishing the *North Star* in 1847.[56] From 1840-1844, 75 percent of Douglass' mentions came from Massachusetts, but during the 1845-1849 period 57 percent of his recognition came from Massachusetts and New York where he later moved. As abolition, defense of slavery, secession, and the Republican Party took over the national agenda, Douglass' percentages from outside his home states grew: 1850-1854 (38 percent, both MA and NY) and 1855-1859 (45 percent, both MA and NY). Over the two decades between 1840 and 1860, Douglass's newspaper influence increased almost three-fold. Most unusually, though, during the Civil War, he almost disappeared from the newspaper pages, with mentions dropping 90 percent. With abolition of slavery a war aim, Blacks fighting for the Union (as high as 18 percent of troops at one point), and the Emancipation Proclamation, Douglass had become sidelined. The country was no longer preoccupied with the central argument of the war, but the war itself.

Douglass' disappearance from the newspapers corresponded with the spectacular rise of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln swept every other person off the national agenda. He came to personify the slavery argument, defense of the Union, and abolition. From 1835-1854, there were only 233 mentions of Lincoln in total. But in the next five-year period, his references exploded to 7,162, followed by 42,767 during the 1860 election and the Civil War (1860-1865). Lincoln was the flashpoint of secession and Civil War and the nation's newspapers reflected that in breathtaking fashion.

War between the states' newspapers

Lincoln's astounding ascendancy onto the nation's agenda was not reflected in the southern press. From 1850-1854, out of 61 Lincoln references, only 20 mentions came from five southern states, and 14 references were from just two newspapers. In the 1855-1859 period, there were 1,353 mentions of Lincoln in southern states, 19 percent of the whole. However, nearly a fourth of those came from just one state (North Carolina, 24 percent). Southern newspaper editors were throttling the national agenda and tamping down mentions of Lincoln and the coming Republican wave. And with southern control over and censorship of the mails once they entered southern territory, dissemination of contradictory newspaper opinions and agendas was almost entirely choked off.

This southern press mastery of the agenda was most evident in the coverage of Nat Turner. White southerners feared slave insurrection above all threats, evinced by their brutal suppression of his 1831 rebellion in rural Virginia that took the lives of 60 white men, women, and

Table 2. William Lloyd Garrison

William Lloyd Garrison
1830-1834

Massachusetts	137
Vermont	7
Pennsylvania	5
New York	3
Michigan	1
North Carolina	1
Virginia	1
Total	**155**

William Lloyd Garrison
1835-1839

Massachusetts	74
Vermont	20
New York	4
Alabama	1
Michigan	1
North Carolina	1
Pennsylvania	1
Tennessee	1
Virginia	1
Total	**104**

William Lloyd Garrison
1840-1844

Massachusetts	160
Vermont	12
New York	10
Mississippi	5
Louisiana	4
Pennsylvania	4
Alabama	2
DC	2
Connecticut	1
Maryland	1
North Carolina	1
Ohio	1
Tennessee	1
Total	**204**

William Lloyd Garrison
1845-1849

Massachusetts	151
Ohio	25
DC	10
New York	10
Vermont	10
Mississippi	8
Pennsylvania	8
Alabama	5
Kentucky	5
Wisconsin	4
Indiana	3
North Carolina	3
Arkansas	2
Louisiana	2
Maryland	2
Michigan	2
Virginia	2
Missouri	1
South Carolina	1
Total	**249**

William Lloyd Garrison
1850-1854

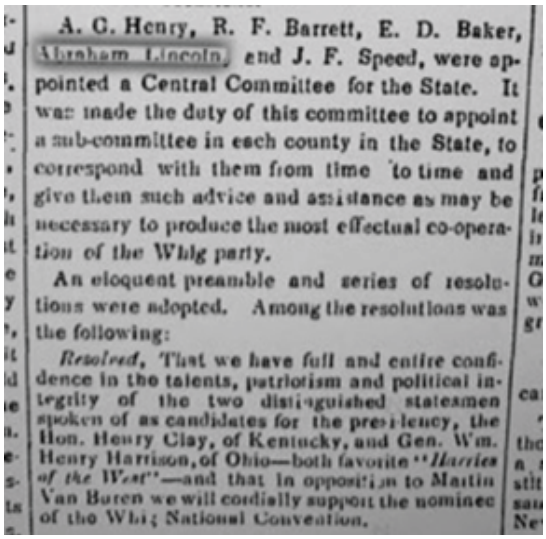
Massachusetts	216
DC	36
Ohio	30
North Carolina	27
New York	21
Vermont	18
Alabama	9
Mississippi	9
Pennsylvania	7
Tennessee	7
Virginia	6
Kentucky	5
Wisconsin	5
Indiana	4
Kansas	4
Louisiana	4
Michigan	4
Maryland	3
Arkansas	1
California	1
Connecticut	1
South Carolina	1
Total	**425**

William Lloyd Garrison
1855-1859

Massachusetts	147
Ohio	46
New York	31
DC	27
Vermont	22
North Carolina	17
Maryland	16
Tennessee	11
Pennsylvania	10
Alabama	8
Illinois	8
Kansas	8
Louisiana	8
Indiana	7
Michigan	7
Virginia	7
Mississippi	6
Wisconsin	6
South Carolina	5
Iowa	4
Arkansas	2
Connecticut	2
Kentucky	2
New Jersey	1
Oregon	1
West Virginia	1
Total	**410**

William Lloyd Garrison		
1860-1965		
Massachusetts		183
Ohio	69	
Pennsylvania	57	
New York	53	
Vermont	53	
Illinois		34
Kansas	20	
Wisconsin	20	
Michigan	15	
Louisiana	14	
DC	13	
Indiana	12	
California	7	
Connecticut	6	
Alabama	6	
North Carolina	6	
Tennessee	6	
Virginia	6	
Iowa	5	
South Carolina		4
Missouri	3	
Texas	3	
Kentucky	2	
New Jersey	2	
Oregon	1	
Utah	1	
West Virginia	1	
Total	**601**	

Abraham Lincoln. Photo by Mathew Brady, c. 1863, National Archives



A. C. Henry, R. F. Barrett, E. D. Baker, Abraham Lincoln, and J. F. Speed, were appointed a Central Committee for the State. It was made the duty of this committee to appoint a sub-committee in each county in the State, to correspond with them from time to time and give them such advice and assistance as may be necessary to produce the most effectual co-operation of the Whig party.

An eloquent preamble and series of resolutions were adopted. Among the resolutions was the following:

Resolved, That we have full and entire confidence in the talents, patriotism and political integrity of the two distinguished statesmen spoken of as candidates for the presidency, the Hon. Henry Clay, of Kentucky, and Gen. Wm. Henry Harrison, of Ohio—both favorite "*Harries of the West*"—and that in opposition to Martin Van Buren we will cordially support the nominee of the Whig National Convention.

First mention of Abraham Lincoln in the newspapers studied Courier-Journal, Louisville, Kentucky. October 18, 1839, page 2

children during a two-day period. Eventually, 17 slaves and one free Black were executed, including Turner, who eluded capture for two months. White mobs and militias indiscriminately killed 120 Black men, women, and children in retribution, most of them uninvolved in the rebellion. Through the 1830-1834 period, there were only fifth-nine mentions of Turner in southern newspapers and forty-six of them from just North Carolina. There was a slight uptick in 1835-1839, though again one state, Mississippi, accounted for twenty-three of the thirty mentions of Turner. This pattern continued throughout the study period: 1840-1844 (twelve southern references of twenty-six, seven from Mississippi), 1845-1849 (five of fourteen, all from North Carolina), 1850-1854 (thirteen of forty-four from four states); 1855-1859 (thirty-three of 119), and (twenty-six of 175). National references to Turner peaked first in about 1835, dipping significantly by 1850, before climbing deep into the Civil War.

Then there were three

What stands out is how Ohio and, especially, Massachusetts loomed large in all the results. For Turner, Ohio led in numbers of references in three of the seven periods, North Carolina was first in two of them, and Massachusetts led in one, but was second in four others. For Garrison, his home state of Massachusetts was first in all seven periods, with Ohio second three times and third once. In four of six *Liberator*-only eras, Ohio was first in four of the six and Massachusetts was second in all of them.

For Lincoln, Ohio led one and was third in another during the six periods. The *North Star* periods were the only real outliers, though the number of references were small. New York led in two of the four periods (it was published in the state), while Massachusetts led in one era and was second in another. Frederick Douglass lived in both New York and Massachusetts after escaping and in three of the six eras studied Massachusetts led with the most references to him. In another period, Massachusetts was second. Ohio was second three times and third once.

Among southern states, only North Carolina appeared consistently in any of the study periods. The Tar Heel state led in two Turner eras and was in the top dozen in all seven. North Carolina was in the top 12 in three Lincoln periods, six Garrison periods, three *Liberator* eras, all five Douglass eras, and one *North Star* period.

The prominence of Massachusetts is obvious: it was home to Douglass, Garrison, and the *Liberator.* Moreover, editors in the state were well-acquainted with them and their stature and would be more inclined to mention them. Without considerable further and more detailed investigation, a preliminary supposition about Ohio and North Carolina would deal with the quirks and particular political orientations of editors (probably) who wanted to extend and diversify the sources on the most burning and controversial subject in American history, that of slavery. Overall, Southern editors and newspapers clamped down on individuals that represented their biggest challenges: Turner, to their lives, and Lincoln, to the existence of slavery. Ultimately, their tactic had little effect on the wider agenda and national narrative. Their biggest mistake was not in limiting references to Lincoln and Turner, but in allowing the grand coalitions that had elected presidents who would not upset the slavery status quo to splinter into three candidacies that allowed Lincoln's election with under 40 percent of the popular vote.

Conclusions

The most significant and inescapable conclusion that arises from this study is that there was widespread and intentional suppression of coverage by southern editors of the individuals and newspapers examined. The Mason-Dixon Line was an almost impenetrable barrier. Post-1830, not only were newspapers largely barren of anything approaching debate on slavery, the mails and trains were scourged of materials that presented opposing views. Southern editors were employing their agenda setting power to create – or so the data strongly suggests – a unified and cohesive agenda that brooked no contradictions or interruptions by alternative viewpoints about slavery. The South and its newspapers recognized they were metaphorically surrounded and that the expansion of slavery, let alone its defense, was a difficult, if not impossible, task. So, they deliberately prevented their readers from hearing the other side of the argument, which kept them from questioning the dominant southern agenda. Whether, as Rushing discovered, newspaper editorial policy actually reflected the opinions of readers is as impossible to establish as whether there was an organized effort by editors to deny their audiences competing viewpoints. The charts undeniably demonstrate an inexorable increase in the number of stories that featured the search terms. Most were relatively gradual, though Turner's coverage oscillated and Lincoln's was meteoric.

In a very real sense, this study points to strong intermedia agenda-setting effects. Southern editors did subscribe to northern newspapers, the mention of any articles testifies to this. If, as social and political

scientists Shaw and McCombs contended, the media's influence derives not from their ability to tell people what to think, but rather what to think about, then what newspapers decide their readers should not think about is equally powerful, maybe more so.

Final lessons

Newspaper editors – the gatekeepers of any media outlet in the present or past – wield enormous power to control what their readers are told and the information base on which those audiences build their political opinions. In the wake of Nat Turner's rebellion and an increasingly virulent northern abolitionism, the South walled itself off from the North, withdrawing into a Dixie bunker. Southern politicians capitalized on the Supreme Court's decision in Barron v. Baltimore in 1833 that limited the Bill of Rights to the federal government and did not apply to the states, allowing them to restrict the freedom of speech and the press and the other Bill of Rights' provisions as they chose.[57] The results of this study show how little the northern abolitionist agenda trickled down from North to South. However, the most poignant overriding conclusion that even the most casual glance at the tsunami of Lincoln's coverage provides is that the agenda setting power of the media can be swept away by one individual, whether Napoleon, Churchill, Lenin, Washington, or Lincoln.

Notes

1. Seignobos was arrested by the Nazis and died in April 1942 while under house arrest, demonstrating the ironic power of his opinion.
2. Marvin N. Olasky, When World Views Collide: Journalists and the Great Monkey Trial," *American Journalism*, I3:1987, 133-146, 143.
3. Donald L. Shaw, "At the Crossroads: Change and Continuity in American Press News 1820-1860," *Journalism History*, 8:2 (1981), 38-50, 39.
4. Donald L. Shaw, Randall Patnode, and Diana Knot Martinelli, "Southern vs. Northern News: A Study of Historical Agenda-Setting, 1820-1860, *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism*, David Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, Roy Morris, Jr., eds. (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008), 15.
5. D. G. Boyce, "Public Opinion and Historians," *History*, 63 (June 1978), 221.
6. Ibid., 225.
7. Edward Caudill, "An Agenda-Setting Perspective on Historical Public Opinion," in *Communication and Democracy: Exploring the Intellectual Frontiers in Agenda-Setting Theory*, Maxwell E. McCombs, Donald L. Shaw, and David Weaver, eds. (Mahway, New Jersey and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 182.
8. Ibid., 169.
9. Ibid., 180.
10. "An American Slaver, *Daily Evening Transcript* (Boston, MA), January 21, 1843, 2. The other newspapers were *Boston Courier* (Boston, MA, Jan. 23); *Daily National* Intelligencer (Washington, DC, Jan. 23), *Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ, Jan. 24); (*Southern Patriot* (Charleston, SC, Jan. 25); *New Bedford Mercury* (New Bedford, MA, Jan. 27); *Vermont Phoenix* (Brattleboro, VT, Jan. 27); *Easton Gazette* (Easton, MD, Jan. 28); *Augusta Chronicle* (Augusta, GA, Jan. 28), *Maine Cultivator and Hallowell Weekly Gazette* (Hallowell, ME, Jan. 28; and *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA, Jan. 28).
11. Richard L. Merritt, *Symbols of American Community 1735-1775* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).
12. See: Donald L. Shaw, "At the Crossroads: Change and Continuity in American Press News 1820-1860," *Journalism History*, 8:2 (1981), 38-50; and Donald L. Shaw, "Some Notes on Methodology: Change and Continuity in American Press News 1820-1860," *Journalism History* 8, no. 2 (1981): 51-53, 76.
13. Newspaper editors also clipped from English newspapers often, though more frequently lifting them from U.S.-based newspapers that took them from other sources.
14. Donald L. Shaw, *The Southern Challenge to American Cultural Union: Newspaper Symbols of Public Thought* (unpublished manuscript, Chapel Hill, NC, 1984), 262.
15. Thomas C. Terry and Donald L. Shaw, with Milad Minooie, "Newspapers, Agenda Setting, and a Nation Under Stress," *The Antebellum Press: Setting the Stage for Civil War*, David Sachsman, ed. (New York and London: Routledge Press, 2019), 18.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. David Paul Nord, "William Lloyd Garrison," *American Newspaper Journalists, 1690-1872,* vol. 43 (1985), Perry J. Ashley, ed., 232,247, 238, *Gale Literature: Dictionary of Literary Biography* that began publication in 1978. As of 2022, it has 378 volumes, plus 23 yearbooks and 50 documentary volumes, and includes approximately 16,000 biographies. Above 85 percent is available online and is currently published by Thomson Gale. Frederick G. Ruffner, Gale's president, proposed the book in 1975.
19. Ibid.
20. *Britannica,* accessed online.
21. Ibid.
22. See generally: David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, Don E. Fehrenbacher, ed. (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1976: Walter M. Merrill, *Against Wind and Tide: A Biography of Wm. Lloyd Garrison* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963); and Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1978): see pages 7-39 and 53 specifically.
23. Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

24. Weekly totals include twice-weekly and tri-weekly newspapers; monthly and annual periodical are excluded from all figures.
25. "The News Media and the Making of America, 1730-1865 – The Early Nineteenth-Century Newspaper Boom," American Antiquarian Society, accessed online.
26. Ibid.
27. "Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census," Table No. 37, Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States in 1860," 211-212, accessed online.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. "The Educational Value of 'News,'" *Columbia* (SC) *The State,* Dec. 5, 1905, 1.
31. James Ford Rhodes, "Newspapers as Historical Sources," *Atlantic Monthly*, 103: May 1909, 650-657. From a paper read before the American Historical Association conference (AHA) in Washington, DC, on December 29, 1908. Rhodes as a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and president of the AHA.
32. Lucy M. Salmon, *The Newspaper and the Historian* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).
33. Donald L. Shaw, "At the Crossroads: Change and Continuity in American Press News 1820-1860," *Journalism History,* 8:2 (1981), 38-50, 39.
34. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (1922; reprint, New York: The Free Press 1965).
35. Maxwell E. McCombs and Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Summer 1972): 176–87, 177.
36. McCombs and Shaw, "The Evolution of Agenda-Setting Research: Twenty-Five Years in the Marketplace of Ideas," *Journal of Communication* (Spring 1993): 58–67.
37. Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 13.
38. Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "The Mass Media and Voting," in *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, ed. Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz (New York: Free Press, 1966), 266.
39. Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Evolution of Agenda-Setting Research: Twenty-Five Years in the Marketplace of Ideas," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 58-67.
40. Stuart W. Shulman, "The Origin of the Federal Farm Loan Act: Agenda-Setting in the Progressive Era Print Press" (PhD dissertation, University of Oregon, June 1999), 399.
41. Charles Garfield, *Peak Performers: the New Heroes of American B*usiness (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 156. Some historians believe this anecdote to be apocryphal or credit it to others.
42. See: Donald L. Shaw, Deb Aikat, David H. Weaver, Chris J. Vargo, and Milad Minooie, *Agendamelding: How We Use Digital Media to Create Personal Community* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, scheduled for publication in 2018).
43. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*.
44. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).
45. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Doris Kearns Goodwin remarked, "The past is not simply the past, but a prism through which the subject filters his own changing self-image." Keith Jenkins added, "In the end, history is theory and theory is ideological and ideology just is material interests." Few historical agenda setting studies exist before the advent of Gallup (and later) polls in the mid 1930s.
46. S. Kittrell Rushing, "Agenda-Setting in Antebellum East Tennessee," *The Civil War and the Press.* David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Debra Reddin van Tuyll, eds., with Ryan P. Burkholder (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 147, 149. See also: David Paul Nord, "The Politics of Agenda Setting in Late 19th Century Cities," *Journalism Quarterly,* 58, no. 4 (December 1981), 563-74, 612; and Jean Lange Folkerts, "William Allen White's Anti-Populist Rhetoric as an Agenda Setting Technique." *Journalism Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (March 1983): 28-34.
47. Ibid., 148.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 149-150.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid. Several editors who bucked the trend were quite literally tarred-and-feathered and driven out of town on a rail.
52. He subsequently published *Frederick Douglass' Monthly* from 1859-1863.
53. Figures are from the 1860 Census.
54. Ibid.
55. The gag rule prevented hundreds of thousands of antislavery petitions that flooded the House of Representatives in the 1830s from being discussed on the floor. All were tabled without consideration because of a May 26, 1836, House resolution introduced by Rep. Henry L. Pinckney of South Carolina, son of a signer of the Constitution, that created the gag rule. It passed the House 117-68, but generated little real opposition, other than from a few congressmen, most notably Massachusetts representative John Quincy Adams, the former president. More stringent resolutions followed, given that the original resolution had to be reauthorized every session. Adams and supporters attempted to circumvent the gag rule by employing various parliamentary tactics. Eventually, increasing abolitionist fervor in the North and a general feeling, even among southern sympathizers, that citizens had the right "to petition the Government for a redress of grievances," as guaranteed by the First Amendment. spelled the end of the gag rule. Adams proposed the motion that rescinded the gag rule on December 3, 1844, which passed 108-80 . Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, a former vice president, tried to get the Senate to adopt a similar gag rule in 1836 as well, but was rebuffed, mainly because opponents feared it would actually encourage abolitionists. The dramatic increase in petitions after the institution of the gag rule certainly led credence to that argument: In 1837-1838 alone, there were as many as 130,000 petitions presented to the House. However,

the Senate did create a quasi-gag rule that took splitting hairs to the level of an art form: If an antislavery petition was presented, senators would vote on considering the question of whether to accept the petition, rather than whether to accept the actual petition itself. The Senate never voted on considering that question for any petition. Leonard L. Richards, *The Life and Times of Congressman John Quincy Adams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). See especially pages 30-50.

56. Douglass met Garrison soon after he escaped from slavery, and they became friends. Douglass later wrote that he considered the *Liberator* his favorite reading material after the *Bible.*

57. Barron v. Baltimore, 32 U.S. (7 Pet.) 243 (1833). It took the Civil War, the 14th Amendment, and numerous late 19th Century and early 20th Century Supreme Court cases to rectify this wrong-headed decision by the high court. It is perhaps the most influential case in U.S. judicial history that very few know about. The case also confirmed that Americans are citizens separately of two sovereign entities, their state and the nation. This added some support to state's rights arguments.

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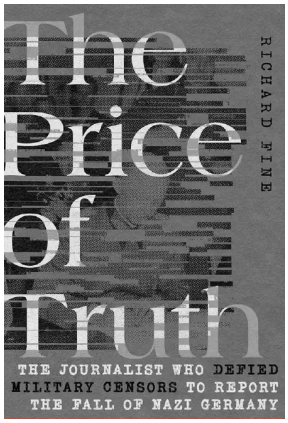
The Price of Truth
The Journalist Who Defied Military Censors to Report the Fall of Nazi Germany

Book by Richard Fine



The Price of Truth: The Journalist Who Defied Military Censors to Report the Fall of Nazi Germany. By Fine, Richard. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023, 312 pp. ISBN: 9781501765964.)

Richard Fine's *The Price of Truth: The Journalist Who Defied Military Censors to Report the Fall of Nazi Germany* recounts the controversial disclosure of German surrender at the end of World War II as revealed by Edward Kennedy's reporting for the Associated Press. Kennedy bypassed military censors on May 7, 1945, to break the news of the formal Nazi surrender in Reims, France and in doing so, set a precedent for wartime reporting. At the behest of Soviet leaders, Allied authorities had prohibited release of the story, but Kennedy released the information, which he believed the public deserved to know. In doing so, he both defied and upset the Paris press corps, among others, who blasted him for allegedly unethical practices. Military authorities threatened to court martial Kennedy before expelling him from Europe. Kennedy attempted to defend himself by insisting the news was being withheld for political reasons unrelated to military security, but his efforts failed and his career was ruined.

Fine, Professor Emeritus in the Department of English at Virginia Commonwealth University, provides a compellingly revisionist approach to previously understood narratives about media-military relations. In this account, the popularized descriptions of generally cooperative relations between the media and military during the "Good War" emerge with a different perspective with Fine's suggestion that the press began a departure from reporting on behalf of the government during World War II and well before the traditionally described divisions apparent during the Vietnam War.

Kennedy, the Associated Press's Paris bureau chief, was one of 17 journalists allowed to witness the surrender ceremony. The military had agreed to place a 36-hour embargo on the release of news to meet the demands of the Russian government, which sought to end fighting with the Germans on the Eastern Front. Kennedy, however, learned that the Germans had already broadcast the news of their own surrender via radio in Allied-controlled territory, and frustrated by the arbitrary restriction on dissemination of the news, he decided to bypass military censors and release the surrender story to the American public. In his view, the

Allied command had not kept the surrender secret, so neither should the press. Kennedy even told his military minders in Paris about his plans, but they did not take him seriously until after he had used a private telephone line connecting the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* with the AP desk in London about the news. Initially, the AP enjoyed a sensational scoop, but the reporting behind it became increasingly troubling when it was learned that Kennedy had broken censorship protocols. Other outlets became attacked the messenger because they had followed the embargo and consequently missed the publicity. Kennedy was subsequently fired after a prolonged discussion among AP leadership and its members.

Fine's historical narrative shows that members of the press were patriotic and supportive of the war, but they were also eager to scoop their competitors and often frustrated by the public relations officers with whom they had to work. Moreover, the ethical guides placed on reporters at the time had not developed to the level of sophistication articulated by the Society of Professional Journalists in following decades, leaving interpretation of military orders in somewhat ambiguous territory. The military establishment hounded Kennedy after his disclosure that he had committed a violation of confidence and a breach of promise, but the exact promise described remained undefined. "Indeed one striking feature of the debate during the Kennedy affair was the application of a genteel rhetoric (confidences, oaths, sacred pledges, honor and such) to the competitive and at times cutthroat business of daily journalism," Fine writes. "There was some dispute, though about whose confidence Kenney had violated, and what promise he had breached." (228)

In context, Kennedy's actions marked a departure from standard practice. "Reporters could endorse US war aims, support the troops, *and* hold authorities to account," Fine writes. "The relationship of the media and the military in the Second World War, shorn of the Good War nostalgia, then, looks more and not less, like that in future conflicts than most accounts would have us believe." (241)

Fine uses surviving archives and writings left by Kennedy, other journalists, AP leadership, military public relations officers, and various military and government leaders to paint a colorful and balanced portrait of U.S. press-military relations in the last two years of the war in the European Theater. "Overall, the scattered historical record once assembled makes visible what lies beneath Kennedy's brief mention in journalism history," Fine writes. "It tells us much about the war's biggest scoop, which in turn prompted the stooshie over the war's most entangles media story." (226-27) Fine's archival research brings to life the public relations officers who struggled to satisfy the news media's many needs while meeting their military commanders' demands.

The Price of Truth offers an excellent new study in the history of wartime journalism, as well as an important contribution to the history of journalism in general. Richly sourced and meticulously detailed, the scholarship featured includes use of unpublished memoirs, military documents, and hundreds of editorials, articles, and press accounts. The resulting text places the Kennedy incident in within a trajectory of press development that helps understand both the complicated issues of reporting on World War II and reporting on issues of governmental importance generally.

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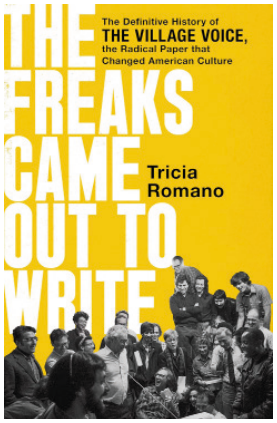
The Freaks Came Out to Write
The Definitive History of the Village Voice

Book by Tricia Romano



The Freaks Came Out to Write: The Definitive History of the Village Voice, the Radical Paper that Changed American Culture. By Tricia Romano. (New York: Public Affair, 2024, 571 pp. ISBN: 978-1541736399.)

Within the annuals of journalism history, if the Fourth Estate had an equivalent to the Island of Misfit Toys, it may be the *Village Voice*. Located in the bohemian enclave of Greenwich Village in New York City, the alternative weekly gave rise to a new form of journalism that rejected objectivity for advocacy. In *The Freaks Came Out to Write: The Definitive History of the Village Voice, the Radical Paper that Changed American Culture*, Tricia Romano offers a detailed and nuanced history of the trailblazing publication, utilizing the testimony of a dizzying array of journalistic luminaries, celebrities, and politicians. Within the narrative, Romano captures both the frenetic energy of the *Voice* and the sobering realities of the news industry.

Founded in 1955 by Dan Wolf, Norman Malier, and Ed Fancher, the *Voice* separated itself from local news stalwarts like the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker*, offering a vibrant journalistic alternative to the masses. An expertly crafted oral history, *Freaks* documents the newspaper's rich and unique 68-year history through the pages of the *Voice,* archival materials, and 200 interviews conducted during a four-year period. The voluminous, near 600-page text consists of 88 chapters divided by the five decades of its existence.

Romano's intent is to, not only document the history of the *Voice*, but to illustrate how the media has been impaired by the "rise of the internet, by the loss of advertising revenue to sites like Craigslist, and by the greedy, imperious, and/or incompetent and negligent management."[1] Throughout the text, the author makes a concerted effort to balance the gregarious personalities and the journalistic efforts of the *Voice* with the intricacies of the business. This focus is never more evident in the latter stages of the book, when Romano details the *Voice's* fall from journalistic grace, culminating with the elimination of the print edition in 2017 and the ending of all editorial content in 2018. The paper has since resumed publication.

As an alternative newspaper, the *Voice* broke typical journalistic conventions. The paper believed that life experience was what made a reporter, not any sort of formal education. In turn, the writers harbored little concern for the standards of the industry and produced content that was personal, emotional, and raw. While Romero offers examples of this first-person, experience-

driven journalistic model throughout *Freaks*, there may be none better than Mark Schoofs. Then a staff writer with the *Voice*, Schoofs was tagged to cover the AIDS epidemic, primarily because he lost a partner to the disease. He would subsequently win the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting in 2000 for his eight-part series on the AIDS crisis in Africa.[2]

At its heart, the *Voice* catered to the rich, vibrant, and offbeat culture of New York City. The paper took a particular interest in the arts, focusing on trends in theatre, music, and film. The *Voice* was the first publication in the New York to focus on Off-Broadway productions, starting in 1956 with the establishment of the Obie Awards.[3] In the 1980s, the *Voice* took note of graffiti and the rise of artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.[4] The *Voice* was also on the ground level of the emergence of hip-hop and rap. While the narrative presence of recognizable names like Andy Warhol, Chuck D, Spike Lee, and Kevin Smith, gives credibility to the *Voice*'s cultural impact, it is the efforts of writers Lester Bangs, Hilton Als, Vernon Reid, and Greg Tate, among others, that truly illustrates the paper's commitment to the arts.

Throughout, Romero weaves a fascinating tapestry of tales that detail both the journalistic efforts of the *Voice* and the individuals that covered them. Romano allows the dynamic personalities of its participants to shine. Look no further than ridiculousness of editor Dan Bischoff and his contention that "cops will run from cat urine" rather than a gun when discussing the Tompkins Square riot in 1988.[5] Whether it's the brilliance of volatile music critic Stanley Crouch,[6] the tales of investigative reporter Wayne Barrett's dealings with Donald Trump,[7] the iconic fashion sense of future Vogue fixture Lynn Yaeger,[8] or the cheeky testimony of gossip columnist Michael Musto, the eclectic mixture of individuals makes for an enduring and memorable text.

However, it is the sobering reality of the times that truly resonate with the reader. Perhaps there is no greater example within *Freaks* then Musto's admission that, during the emergence of AIDS in the 1980s, he was "showering in the dark" to avoid finding a lesion.[9] The fear within Musto's commentary is palpable and highlights *Freaks* primary strength. Romano allows the insecurities, the fears, and the hopes of these dynamic individuals to take center stage, humanizing its participants.

It is not surprising that Romano has crafted such an endearing narrative, as she spent eight years with the alternative weekly. Such a historical exploration is a labor of love and, while not explicit within the text, it is evident that Romano holds the unique history of the *Voice* in the highest regard.

Overall, Romero's work is a revelation. There is a humanity present in the pages of *Freaks,* and, like the human condition, there are a myriad of dichotomies and contradictions. The narrative is inspiring, yet frustrating; hilarious, yet depressing. What emerges is a very human story about a collection of oddities who wanted to challenge the status quo, give a voice to the voiceless, and change the world around them.

--Jason Peterson
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Notes

1. p. xii.
2. p. 462.
3. p. 206.
4. p. 228.
5. p. 373-374.
6. p. 322.
7. p. 187-191, 270
8. p. 181.
9. p. 347.

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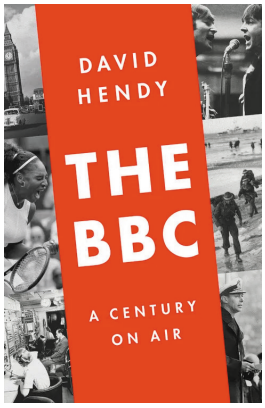
The BBC: A Century On Air

Book by David Hendy



Hendy, David. *The BBC: A Century on Air*. (New York: Public Affairs, Hachette Book Group, 2022, 656 pp. ISBN: 978-1-6103-97-049.)

With tennis coverage at Wimbledon, stories about the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth and the funeral of Princess Diana, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has provided British and international listeners with news and entertainment since its first broadcast at six o'clock in the evening on Tuesday, November 14, 1922. At the time of its inception, radio was still a relatively new medium, so the BBC taught people how to listen. "To keep your mind from wandering," it advised, "you might wish to turn the lights out, or settle into your favorite armchair five minutes before the program starts; above all, you should remember that 'If you only listen with half an ear, you haven't a quarter of a right to criticize'" (85).

While the story of the BBC has been told before, David Hendy ponders whether a history of the BBC is even possible. A professor of media and communication and former BBC producer, Hendy paints a meticulously-researched picture of the people who made the BBC—a unique institution that has influenced British culture unlike any other media organization. After all, and in Hendy's own words, "we can't hope to understand modern Britain—its politics, its culture, its sense of itself—without understanding the role of the BBC in the life of the nation" (xi).

At the onset, the author notes that the BBC is not a government-run entity, but one that exists by Royal Charter, funded by a license fee set by Parliament; however, Hendy's story is not about BBC's fiscal structure and operations. His account is also not one about technology, although he spends ample time touching on major technological innovations, such as the entry of TV and later live-streaming services, that have guided programming shifts at the BBC. Hendy's tale is also not one about politics, although he delves into BBC's fight for editorial independence through Churchill's and Thatcher's scathing critics, its coverage of the 1926 General Strike when the BBC averted a threat of government takeover, and BBC's close collaboration with the government during World War II. Instead, Hendy's historical account is one about the difficulties and successes of the founders, directors, editors, producers, presenters, engineers, secretaries, telephone operators, and lift attendants who have made the corporation what it is today (xv). *The BBC: A Century on Air* is intentionally a "people's history" because, as Hendy states, to get a clearer picture of not just *how* the BBC emerged, but *why*, we must try to understand the

fears, hopes, ideals, values, and passions of those who built it (xvii).

BBC's story begins with founders Cecil Lewis, John Reith, and Arthur Burrows, who had all seen World War I firsthand and were influenced by the horror of the conflict. A former pilot for the Royal Flying Corps in 1915, Lewis was disillusioned by the dark and troubling landscape and felt the need to participate in rebuilding peace and security. "In a world, shadowed by death, Lewis decided, it was the enduring power of culture that offered the only hope of immortality'" (11). Coincidentally, a friend of Lewis who had been exposed to radio broadcasting in the United States suggested that Lewis might contribute to the emerging field. Even though Lewis knew nothing about the medium, he responded to an advertisement in the *Morning Post*.

Burrows had grown up surrounded by academics and as a result was a firm believer in education. After teaching himself photography, he had joined his local newspaper, the *Oxford Times*, performing "a little of everything;" from typesetting to maintaining machinery, to cycling around the city in pursuit of stories. Burrows had also been in charge of pre-BBC experimental radio transmissions and had championed the use of wireless technologies for the public good.

Among the three founders, perhaps the best known is Reith, also credited as responsible for setting the initial culture that shaped BBC radio. Reith was a Scottish minister's son who, like Lewis, knew nothing about broadcasting, but he too was an idealist and a philosopher destined to serve others. Reith responded to the same ad in the *Morning Post* Lewis did and began at the radio station as its head alongside Burrows as the director of programs and Lewis as his assistant. What dictated the next century was firmly grounded in these men's beliefs, prejudices, fears, and hopes—"the whole crooked timber of their humanity: twisted together: this made up the DNA of the BBC" (34).

From the start, the radio service set out to work for the public and to give its listeners not what they want, but what they need, to hear (85). Its mission statement was clear: "to inform, educate and entertain" (xvii). Throughout the day, BBC's early audiences were amused with plays, concerts, sports, and lectures. Then, by sundown, the Big Ben signaled the start of the evening news. An affordable source of news and entertainment, the radio served the lower classes who could not frequent the high-end theater or opera halls. Tuning to the BBC became a daily ritual for the British nation.

Beyond the initial inspirational accounts about BBC's founders, Hendy's +500-page volume follows a chronological structure and narrative approach across four sections titled "Crucible," "War," "Consensus and Conflict," and "Attack and Defense." He delves into the nitty-gritty details of the working relationships between the BBC and the British government, as well as the interactions among BBC's staff and their efforts to establish unique programming for the British, and global, audiences. These efforts, as Hendy discloses, have been obscured by numerous conflicts over most of BBC's history, including financial troubles, government animosity, and an enduring fight for diversity, equity, and freedom of expression.

As Hendy wraps up BBC's long and colorful story, he spends a few pages with the past two decades of the millennium, focusing on the ways in which globalization and digital technologies have affected the once-enduring BBC tradition. Most of the British public currently subscribes to TV cable and streaming services, such as Netflix and Apple TV—a phenomenon seen not just in Britain, but all around the world. Yet, to continue supporting his argument about BBC's authentic role in the nation's life, Hendy intercepts his tale citing a 2015 experiment regarding the number of households claiming the BBC was poor value for money. The experiment went on to cease these households' BBC radio reception, broadcast TV, and online transmission of BBC TV. Just two weeks later, two-thirds of the former BBC consumers had changed their minds and wanted reconnection as they had felt detached from national life. By 2020, more than 91 percent of households in the U.K. still used some BBC service, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, they turned to the broadcaster to obtain information about the global crisis.

Without a doubt, *The BBC: A Century on Air* highlights Hendy's' remarkable research skills and attention to detail, yet at times he delves into a rather overwhelming amount of programing information and technicalities that may be intriguing for a radio or TV producer, but likely prove too tedious for the average reader. Hendy may also be too ambitious in his claim that one cannot begin to understand England without understanding the BBC. While the BBC, as he writes, may occupy "a quasi-mystical place in the national psyche," throughout the book it becomes evident that it is the author himself who echoes this sentiment (xii). After all, journalism is deemed as the first draft of history making any national broadcaster around the world as the heartbeat of its nation. Nonetheless, Hendy's nostalgic, almost lyrical, narrative style successfully serves a complex history of the world-renown corporation that may make any reader think longingly back to the pre-

Internet days. As Hendy describes BBC's precarious position today, "we sometimes never know just how much we need or want something until it is gone" (571).

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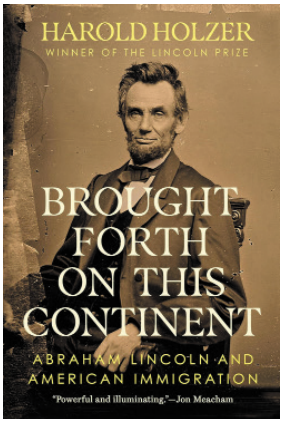
Brought Forth on This Continent

Abraham Lincoln and American Immigration

Book by Harold Holzer



Brought Forth on This Continent: Abraham Lincoln and American Immigration. By Harold Holzer. (New York: Dutton, 2024, 464 pp. ISBN: 978-0451489012.)

Although Harold Holzer's *Brought Forth on This Continent: Abraham Lincoln and American Immigration* at first glance does not appear to be a mass media history book, in many ways Holzer's scholarship in this study is rooted in mid-nineteenth-century newspapers.

This comes across throughout the book and particularly in his depiction of the coverage of the German immigrant soldiers in the disastrous Union defeat at Chancellorsville, Virginia, during the first week of May 1863. In that Confederate rout of the Army of the Potomac under Fighting Joe Hooker (who had replaced Ambrose E. Burnside after a previous disaster, the Battle of Gettysburg in December 1862), German immigrant soldiers allegedly ran when the firing got hot on May 2, and Major General Carl Schurz paid the price in newspaper accounts, which referred to his troops as the "Flying Dutchmen." On that day, Confederate General Stonewall Jackson performed a flanking maneuver to the west of the amassed troops at Chancellorsville. Hooker warned Eleventh Corps Commander Oliver O. Howard to be vigilant about such a move by the Confederates, but Schurz and Howard thought the woods too thick for the Confederates to contemplate such a tactic. Indeed, Howard believed the woods to the west to be the Union's best line of defense in the battle.

The Germans had performed no better and no worse than other regiments in Hooker's army, but the terrible loss—17,300 Union casualties out of 98,000 men engaged in the battle, compared to 13,500 out of 57,000 for the Confederates—needed a scapegoat, and Schurz's men, who were stationed on the Orange Turnpike to the west of the Chancellor house (which operated as an inn at the crossroads with Ely's Ford Road), were the convenient and obvious choice. Indeed, there were some holes—or thin pockets—in Schurz's line, which he thought too extended, out to the northwest of the main battlefield.[1] Hooker did send an urgent message to Howard's headquarters at Dowdall's Tavern more than a mile from the Chancellor house with a warning that a Confederate group was going to flank the Union Army from the west. Soon after, a second courier came with the same warning. However, Howard did not respond—which doomed Hooker and the Army of the Potomac. Howard's only response was to send a Signal Corps captain to monitor the western section of the Orange

Turnpike, as the general continued to believe the thick woods would protect Hooker's army.[2]

Eventually, when Jackson's amassed men were seen by multiple reconnoitering Union soldiers, the view of the Union leadership came to be that Lee was retreating, instead of Jackson performing his audacious flanking action. Soon enough they would discover how wrong the top brass had been, and Jackson began his slaughter from the west.

When it was clear that the Union military had been routed, the Northern press pounced on Schurz and his men. For example, Henry Raymond's pro-Republican *New York Times* called Schurz's men "panic-stricken Dutchmen" (of course, they were German, not Dutch, but factual precision did not seem to matter in 1863).[3] The very conservative (and generally pro-Democratic) *New York Herald* said that Schurz's men fled the battlefield "in a panic," which "nearly" caused "the total demoralization of the entire army."[4] Of course, the *Herald* praised the Union soldiers from Scotland who fought in the battle. *Herald* editor and publisher James Gordon Bennett was born in Scotland. Even Horace Greeley's *Tribune* piled on and criticized the German soldiers. It is worth noting that the German-language press came to the defense of Schurz and his men. The German newspapers claimed the anti-immigration Know Nothings who were now Republicans were the ones grousing about the failure of the German troops at Chancellorsville.

It did not help that Hooker would later testify before Congress's Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, to which he stated that the Eleventh Corps had run. Schurz was not asked to testify. Howard did tell Lincoln that the rumors that Schurz's men had run were false. Later, Schurz would inveigh against Hooker, suggesting that the general's inebriation was the reason for the loss at Chancellorsville.

Holzer goes on to make the larger point that the effect of these negative attacks in the press had a depressing effect on morale of the German immigrant troops in the Union Army. The Germans would begin to turn their support away from Lincoln, who had had their votes in 1860—and, indeed, Lincoln owned a German-language newspaper back in Illinois. Part of their venom for Lincoln was directed at the president for demoting Franz Sigel, the previous leader of the Germans in the Eleventh Corps and a veteran of the 1848 revolution in Germany (and very much against slavery). Lincoln, who claimed Sigel asked to be relieved, then replaced him with Schurz. The poet and editor William Cullen Bryant urged Lincoln to demote Schurz and reinstate Sigel, who was more popular with the German troops, who would also struggle in the very narrow Union victory at Gettysburg.

The author does well to show the importance of news media frames during the Civil War; that is, how journalists often painted with broad strokes that did little justice to the facts on the ground. The German troops at Chancellorsville performed fair to middling. Schurz did not believe in retreat, which might have made sense as Jackson's flanking maneuver began to maul the Army of the Potomac. Graver still was the failure of Howard, who was not of German descent, to counter Jackson early enough to prevent the rout. Schurz and his German troops were no more to blame than Howard or Hooker—or for that matter Lincoln, who would soon be on his fourth commander of the Army of the Potomac in only a half a year.

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Notes

1 Stephen W. Sears, *Chancellorsville* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 237.

2 Ibid., 247.

3 Harold Holzer, *Brought Forth on This Continent: Abraham Lincoln and American Immigration* (New York: Dutton, 2024), 264.

4 Ibid., 265.

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