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HUMANITIES

Panoptic Themes Present in PowerPoint Presentations

Miranda Lee Caro

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how PowerPoint Presentations that display the synoptic and analytic modes of power in both the individual format of the slides within the slideshow and through the presentation of a PowerPoint Presentation to an audience by a presenter, according to the definition given by Barton and Barton in “Modes of Power in Technical and Professional Visuals” are instruments of power. Furthermore, this paper will also explain how the PowerPoint Presentation as an instrument of power functions similarly to that of the Panopticon Prison based on how Michel Foucault describes it in the book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* because of the way it utilizes the panoptic mechanism.

Keywords: PowerPoint Presentations, synoptic mode of power, analytic mode of power, Panopticon, technical and professional visuals, panoptic mechanism

In “Modes of Power in Technical and Professional Visuals,” Barton and Barton assert, “technical and professional visuals are not only instruments of communication or even of knowledge but also instruments of power” (138). Throughout the article Barton and Barton explore examples of how “the Panoptic technology of power—specifically its two major modes or strategies: the synoptic and the analytic” work in these types of technical and professional visuals in order to create a system of power and hierarchy (138). The panoptic themes they describe in their article are prevalent in the format of PowerPoint slide shows and the presentation of these slideshows to an audience. This paper will report the results of analyzing the panoptic themes present in PowerPoint Presentations, both in the slide show’s format of slides and in the presentation of the slide show from a presenter to an audience, including how the different elements of PowerPoint Presentations work together to condition a person to think a certain way. Furthermore, this paper will show how PowerPoint Presentations are a form of a panoptic system of power that extends its power not only over a “human multiplicity” but also applies “the panoptic modality” to a “natural multiplicity” of non-human elements via the slide show’s layout and format (Barton and Barton 142).

The similarities between the structures of the Panopticon prison to PowerPoint presentations lies in the fact that the panoptic mechanism of organization is found in both. According to Michel Foucault, “The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately” (200). What Foucault is referring to is the observation tower’s ability to see all of the inmates at a glance as they are all separated, backlit, and within the tower’s range of vision. Eventually after the inmate realizes how their “Visibility is a trap,” Foucault enunciates that the prisoner “inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (200, 203). This means that the prisoner regulates their behavior so that they will not be punished because they are unsure of when they are being watched. This same concept similarly exists in PowerPoint Presentations. In the slide show, the layout of the slide allows for this panoptic structure. Typically, when a slide is being prepared, the slide has a title and then the content beneath that title that explains the concept or idea named on the slide. In this sense, there is no human involved in this panoptic model because the title is the surveyor that dictates the information in the content box below it, meaning it is part of a “natural multiplicity.” It stands at the top, a sign of power that is able to look down at the content in the box below it and regulate the information’s behavior and form, or in other words, the title regulates the analytic mode of power in this slide to create the synoptic mode of power. For example, if the title of a slide were “Colorado,” the text would be forced to regulate itself into information about the state of Colorado, whether that be a picture or text; otherwise, if the information in the box was totally unrelated to Colorado, it would be out of place and would not make any sense in the slide with the “Colorado” title. This Panoptic structure is also present in how the presenter of the slide show stands in relation to the audience and is in the domain of power in a “human multiplicity”. When a presenter presents slideshows, they are typically standing in front of the room next to the projected image of the power point on a wall or screen. When they stand at the front and lecture to the sitting audience, the presenter has a full view of the rest of the audience and regulates how they act. Foucault explains that under this panoptic observation, “Each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does

so at the risk of his life, contagion, or punishment” (1). In this instance, the students watching the presentation do not risk their life or their health but are in danger of punishment. Because the audience does not want to be scolded or chastised for not paying attention, for talking, or for falling asleep, and as long as the presenter is continuous in their observation of the crowd they are speaking to, the audience will make a conscious effort to sit still and pay attention, or at the least, pretend that they are paying attention to what is being said.

The synoptic mode of power is characterized by the ability of a person to look at the totality of a visual and recognize meaning from it. In other words, the synoptic mode of power works similarly to a zoomed-out camera lens that captures the entirety of a landscape. Barton and Barton note that the map “may, in fact, be considered the paradigmatic case of the synoptic visual,” because the map has the ability to relay a large expanse of information of the layout of the land “within the purview of a single viewer” (143). Considering the layout of the slideshow, there is a common style choice of choosing a slide layout that includes a title with content beneath it; usually a paragraph of text, bulleted lists, and/or visuals. With this layout, the maker of the slide show is able to add text beneath a photograph or put two different photographs next to each other. This ability to create a diverse visual that introduces different types of material and information into a single visual and creates an understanding of an issue or of how different topics relate to one another, is an example of the synoptic view of power. PowerPoints are also often used to report large data sets such as statistics, facts, or even historical data, in which the person making the PowerPoint may choose to use a bulleted list in order to add notes about important information pertaining to those topics. This type of PowerPoint slide can give an overview of an issue whose expanse is extensive, by creating a synoptic view of a specific topic. Interestingly enough, PowerPoints also have the ability to display maps, graphs, data charts, all synoptic visuals in their own right, further utilizing the synoptic mode of power.

Unfortunately, because PowerPoints make it possible to condense large amounts of information in a single slide, much information is absent about the topic being covered. According to Barton and Barton, Charles Joseph Minard, a French engineer who made significant contributions to information graphics, focused so strongly on the synoptic mode of power in his maps that he “did not hesitate to sacrifice geographic fidelity to ocular manageability” (143). In this way, the information on the slides presented may omit important concepts that can affect the way a concept is interpreted. Furthermore, a presenter’s act of presenting to an audience itself can include the synoptic mode of power when considered separately from the slide show in a similar fashion. In general, presentations are given orally, and because of this, often times the presenter may stray from presenting too many concepts orally such as important dates, statistics, etc. in order to give a brief and general explanation of the topic they are presenting. This puts the presenter in a position of power especially when the presentation does not rely heavily on the slide show to display information as they speak because the most important information to understand the concepts are explained orally. Respected visual scholar Edward Tufte notes in his, *Cognitive Style of Power Point*, that “by leaving out the narrative between the points, the bullet outline ignores and conceals the causal assumptions and analytic structure of the reasoning” which in turn makes the audience reliant on the presenter to give them information to create a general understanding of the topic (6). The presenter could then manipulate the information they present to make the

audience think a certain way about that topic by carefully choosing what information to relay and what information to omit in their brief explanation.

The analytic mode of power is opposite of the synoptic as it zooms in on specific details or particulars of a concept or topic. Barton and Barton state, “particulars are an equally important source of empowerment” in technical and professional visuals (144). In a power point slide show, the analytic mode of power is what helps make up the synoptic mode of power, that is to say, it is every individual piece of information that culminates to create a slide on a specific topic. Every bullet point, visual, paragraph of text, and every citation is a particular. One cannot dismiss the analytic, because it is continuously tied as the counterpart of the synoptic mode of power. Without the analytic mode of power, the entirety of the synoptic would not exist. PowerPoints are especially adept at being able to emphasize the analytic mode of power because there is no limit on what information or how much information a slide should hold. Slides can hold full bodies of text, a couple of bulleted lists, one image, or even a one-word title. The analytic information guides the entire understanding of a concept.

This dependency on the analytic mode of power to guide the understanding of a topic makes it crucial for the individual units of information displayed to be accurate. A slideshow can be problematic if the analytic information being presented is too vague, inaccurate (such as inaccurate dates or unethical visuals, graphs, etc.) or misleading. This analytic mode of power dependency is also present when a person presents orally. The abundance of analytic information, lack thereof, or inaccuracy of the presentation when presented to an audience orally will shape how the audience understands the entire topic. In order to accurately guide a topic, the presenter putting together the slideshow and practicing presenting orally should therefore use reputable sources and should validate that they have accurately represented information for their topic of choice through their presentation. Furthermore, the audience should be critical when learning new information from these presentations in order to avoid misinterpretations. The audience should engage the presenter by asking clarifying questions, especially about information that may seem inaccurate or incomplete.

It is clear that some panoptic themes are present in PowerPoint Presentations, both in the slideshow and in the format of a presenter presenting to an audience because of the PowerPoint Presentations’ structure and how it utilizes the synoptic and analytic modes of power. It is important to understand how the PowerPoint Presentation utilizes systems of power because it is a tool that is used frequently in various different settings, especially in academia. Classes ranging from elementary school to graduate school utilize the simplistic format of the PowerPoint to present information to a large crowd of students, because it has the ability to outline and explain concepts easily and is interactive with the audience. Tufte notes that “the Pushy PP style imposes itself on the audience and, at times, seeks to set up a dominance relationship between speaker and audience” (13). Tufte makes a valid point about how PowerPoint presentations are structured, and that people should be aware of this structure, not only to improve the presentations that are being created, as was Tufte’s aim, but so that the audience understands how PowerPoints can be misleading, generalized, or even too focused on one concept. With heightened awareness of PowerPoint Presentations’ structure and modes of power, PowerPoint could be utilized more

efficiently, especially in academic settings, and could potentially be improved by its developers to strengthen some of its weaknesses. Most of all, being aware of this panoptic structure will help users of PowerPoint create more reliable slideshows and will motivate audiences of those presentations to evaluate the validity of information presented to them and think critically about the concepts they learn.

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HUMANITIES

Juba, Cleopatra Selene, and the Roman Empire

Victoria McClune

ABSTRACT

Juba and Cleopatra Selene ruled the client kingdom of Mauretania during the reign of Augustus. The couple's rule over the country was different than the way other rulers controlled different client kingdoms. Their rule was bizarre for three main reasons: both of the rulers were children of traitors to the state of Rome, Cleopatra Selene was allowed to follow the role of the Imperial women of Rome, and the couple also followed the example of the Ptolemy's rather than of Juba's dynasty which created largely different rule than the other client kingdoms of the time. Client rulers were not usually allowed to act in this manner.

When Ancient Rome transitioned from a republic to an empire, a lot of new things came out of this transition. We get Augustus as the first citizen of Rome, also known as the first emperor. We get new foundations of family and morals being defined by the government, just to name a few. But we also get the bizarre rule of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene of ancient Mauritania. Juba II and Cleopatra Selene ruled as client kings of Mauritania during the reign of Augustus. Client kings were rulers of a country outside of the Roman Empire that were in the process of transitioning to become part of the empire.¹ Ancient Mauritania covers from modern day Morocco, stretching most of northern Algeria and ending at about the north-western tip of Libya. What makes these two different than a lot of the other client kings of the time was that they were the children of traitors to Rome. Another bizarre part of their past was that the client rulers were raised in Rome in the household of a Julian family member. With this in mind, the reason behind Augustus giving these two children of traitors the kingdom of Mauritania appears to be under the great logic of Augustus. Augustus put Juba and Cleopatra Selene to rule Mauritania to prepare the area for the eventual Romanization of the land. Under their rule, Mauritania became a Romanized area on the frontier of the Roman Empire to help guard the Empire from would-be enemies as well as to transition the people of the kingdom to the Roman style of rule. While they ruled this kingdom, their style of rule was also bizarre. The rule of Juba and Cleopatra Selene was unusual for three reasons: both were children of traitors to Rome, Cleopatra Selene followed the role of the Imperial women of Rome, and the couple also followed the example of the Ptolemy's rather than of Juba's dynasty which created largely different rule than the other client kingdoms of the time.

In order to understand why the rule of Juba and Cleopatra Selene was odd, one must first look at the state of the kingdom they were given. Mauritania was a kingdom where there was a great deal of instability. The area was involved in the Roman civil wars.² The latest one was between Caesar and Pompey, not the civil war between Augustus and Antony.³ During this time, the area was ruled by two kings, who had split the area in half. These kings were Brocchus and Brogudes; after both of their deaths, according to Cassius Dio, an ancient historian, Augustus united their kingdoms into one Roman province; however, Duane Roller, a modern historian, disagrees. Roller believes that Mauritania was not a province at this time because a province by this name is lacking in the list of provinces Augustus, himself, made at Antium.⁴ Antium was the battle between Augustus, who at that time was going by the name Octavian, against Marcus Antony and Cleopatra of Egypt. The status of this area from the death of Brocchus, who passed away last, and the beginning of the reign of Juba still remains unknown. With either of the options given by the sources, the kingdom of Mauritania would have been unstable, likely following as a kingdom without a ruler. If the kingdom was a new province, as Dio claimed, there is no record of there being a governor, other than the one sent by Julius Caesar before the death of the kings.⁵ This does seem unlikely due to Augustus making the area a client kingdom with the rule of Juba

1. Byron R. McCane, "Simply Irresistible: Augustus, Herod, and the Empire", *Journal of Biblical Literature* (2008), 731.

2. Duane W. Roller, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene: Royal Scholarship on Rome's African Frontier* (New York, Routledge, 2003), 95.

3. Roller, 95.

4. Roller, 95.

5. Roller 93.

II and Cleopatra Selene. However, the very claim that Augustus was able to choose the rulers of an area outside of a Roman province, especially if the people ruling the land have no ancestral ties to the country, does seem to be different than how the other provinces were governed. To appoint a king and queen of the area rather than a governor, reveals Augustus believed the area a kingdom rather than a province for senators of Rome to rule. If the area was not under Roman rule, then there was no evidence that Brocchus and Brogudes left an heir to either of their parts of the kingdom, leaving the country as a whole on the edge of disaster. This was the kingdom that Juba and Cleopatra Selene were given.

The rule of the client kingdom of Mauritania begins with the rulers themselves. Juba and Cleopatra Selene were both the children of traitors to the Roman Republic, both having marched in a triumph as children. Juba, as an infant, after the Roman victory in Nubia; Cleopatra Selene at about ten, after the Roman victory over her parents at Antium and the conquering of Egypt.⁶ Both raised in Rome in the household of Augustus' sister Octavia.⁷ Having two children of traitors to Rome being sent to rule one of the client kingdoms as adults is strange for the time frame. The couple had no ancestral rites to the kingdom but natives of the surrounding kingdoms, which was more common of the time. While these two did originate in surrounding kingdoms, citizenship of both of these two would have been first to their native lands, no one would have mistaken them for having Mauritanian citizenship before Augustus gave them titles as such. Both Herod the Great of Judea and Archelaus of Cappadocia followed this example.⁸ They both had ancestral ties to the kingdoms they were given to rule and had actually been living in the country. Whereas for Juba and Cleopatra Selene, it is doubtful that either one of them set foot in the kingdom before the couple was sent to rule the area.⁹ For comparison one should look at the rulers of the other client kingdoms at the time. The client kings for being Herod the Great and Archelaus of Cappadocia because these two Augustus appointed as kings in the same time period. Herod was given his rule in Judea by Antony for his friendship.¹⁰ Archelaus of Cappadocia was a native to the Cappadocia's neighboring land, Pontus. Archelaus' family was not of kings but of priests; another claim was made that the only reason that Antony made Archelaus king was because Antony had an infatuation with Glaphyra, Archelaus' mother.¹¹ Both Herod and Archelaus were confirmed as client kings by Augustus after Antium, despite both of them having sided with Antony.¹² Herod and Archelaus were confirmed to be client kings because they had shown loyalty and leadership skills that Augustus wanted in the outskirts of the empire he was forming. This is where the rulers of Mauritania are different, yet again, Juba and Cleopatra Selene were from neighboring regions, Juba from Numidia and Cleopatra Selene from Egypt;

6. Roller 59, 83.

7. Roller 63, 84.

8. David Jacobson, "Three Client Kings: Herod of Judaea, Archelaus of Cappadocia and Juba of Mauretania", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (2001), 24.

9. Beatrice Chanler, *Cleopatra's Daughter* (New York, Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1934)

10. Flavius Josephus, *Book XIV: From the Death of Queen Alexandria to the Death of Antigonus*, "Chapter 13: HOW ANTONY MADE HEROD AND PHASAELUS TETRARCHS, AFTER THEY HAD BEEN ACCUSED TO NO PURPOSE; AND HOW THE PARTHIANS WHEN THEY BROUGHT ANTIGONUS INTO JUDEA TOOK HYRCANUS AND PHASAELUS CAPTIVES. HEROD'S FLIGHT; AND WHAT AFFLICTIONS HYRCANUS AND PHASAELUS ENDURED", 1.

11. Jacobson, 24.

12. Jacobson, 24.

however, both of them were children of traitors to the Roman Republic rather than friends with the wrong side of the civil war. Augustus viewed the leadership skills and the loyalty Herod and Archelaus demonstrated under Antony to keep them in place rather than replacing them. Rather, Juba and Cleopatra Selene held blood ties to traitors of Rome. Blood ties tend to be more memorable than loyalty ties. Another difference of Juba and Cleopatra Selene's appointment to client rulers was that neither one of them had any experiences leading or running a country. Juba had some military experience on campaign with Augustus in Spain before he was appointed client king of Mauritania, giving him some of the experience necessary to help defend the empire from the frontiers of his new kingdom.¹³ Both of them had been born to ruling families but had both been taken from their native lands before either could have been shown how to rule their countries giving them the ancestral class standing to rule the client kingdom.

The rulers did another controversial thing for this time period. The coins of Juba and Cleopatra Selene followed the influences of the imperial women in Rome. Cleopatra Selene was able to mint coins with her profile on them without her husband, whereas elsewhere the client queens of the time were not on their country's coins; other client kingdoms have a clear male dominance in their coins. Cleopatra Selene was having coins minted with her face on them alone, similar to Livia, Augustus' wife.¹⁴ This is odd because she was one of, if not the only, client queens to take this liberty during a time when the only women who had a connection to the Roman Empire that were doing this were the women in Augustus' own family. For example, the coin of Livia has her profile with the name Augusta written on the bottom. Augusta was another name that Livia was known as. Cleopatra Selene grew up in the household with Livia and the other imperial women present, possibly while they minted these coins. For her, this would have seemed a natural development for a ruler's wife. Cleopatra Selene's coins feature her profile on one side of the coin and a crocodile on the other.¹⁵ According to Roller none of Cleopatra Selene's coins are dated and there for make placing them on a time line impossible.¹⁶ The coins themselves tell a story of a women who felt she had the right and the obligation to the people she ruled to make her own coins, similar to that of the imperial women in Rome and her own mother, Cleopatra VII. The crocodile of the Nile is thought to represent her dynasty as well as her coins being in Greek rather than in Latin like the coins of her husband.¹⁷ It seems strange for a woman in the time period to not only be minting her own coins but to have them be visually different than the coins of her husband. Instead of a province, the coins continue the story of rulers who chose to go against the grain of other client kingdoms at the same time they ruled. Provinces were ruled by consuls or proconsuls of Rome. Coins at this period would not have had the wives of governors on them when the imperial family just started the trend of having women on coins recently. Cleopatra Selene may have learned to put women on coins in Rome but to use the concept in her own country became a new development. Juba's dynasty does not have many sources on the women rulers, especially not women who had their profile on the coins instead of the kings'. Cleopatra Selene followed the role of the imperial women in Rome and she was allowed to act differently than the other client rulers in the time period; Augustus knew Cleopatra Selene's

13. Cassius Dio, Roman History, "Book 53", 7.

14. Livia, 22CE, Collection L, Edgar L. Owen Galleries, Lake Hopatcong, NJ.

15. Roller 246, figure 26c, d.

16. Roller 151.

17. Roller 151, 245 figure 25.

loyalty by her coins.

Not only was Cleopatra Selene minting her own coins along with those of her husband Juba, their rule also followed a different path than the ones of other client rulers in regards to their family and the influence that ancestry had. Juba and Cleopatra Selene followed the influence of her dynasty, the Ptolemy dynasty rather than Juba's own dynasty. The case example for this is that their son was named Ptolemy. Beatrice Chanler put it eloquently when she says, "In defiance of royal diplomacy [Cleopatra Selene] gave him the name of Ptolemy".¹⁸ Even though what Chanler said might be considered comical, it seems unlikely that Juba would have even considered allowing Cleopatra Selene to name their son such if he was not fully agreed upon the name of Ptolemy. In this time frame, children were named after men and the man's family, not after women or the woman's family. Therefore, their son being named Ptolemy shows that the rule of Juba and Cleopatra Selene was full of the influence of the Ptolemies. The scholarship of Juba also took influence from the Ptolemies. Juba claimed to have found the source of the Nile in Mauritania.¹⁹ Although in modern times, this idea may seem a bit absurd, the very notion of Juba wanting to find the Nile shows that Cleopatra Selene and the Ptolemies had a large influence on Juba even in his studies and his explorations. If these examples were not enough to show the strong influence of the Ptolemies, Juba also had a statue of himself made in the gymnasium of Ptolemy in Athens.²⁰ The gymnasium had been built by one of Cleopatra Selene's ancestors.²¹ The statue shows that Juba placed an important emphasis on his wife's family line, not something one did at this time, especially when Juba himself came from a royal family. To have the influence of the queen's dynasty rather than that of the king implies that the client rulers of Mauritania were following a different path than the other client kingdoms of the time. They were following a woman's influence, something that did not happen very often in the client kingdom let alone in Rome. To have such a difference in the influences of the client kingdoms is bizarre, implying that the rulers of Mauretania might of have had a different relationship with Augustus. The rulers of Mauritania were allowed to rule in this fashion, for what Augustus gave he could easily have taken back if he did not approve of the way the couple was ruling their kingdom.

Juba and Cleopatra Selene came to a country that was on the edge of disaster. The status of the kingdom being unknown. During their rule, they were able to stabilize the country enough to be able to lead their country in a new direction before it would become part of the Roman Empire. Having two client monarchs behave this strangely in the Roman empire is not normal for the time period. The children of traitors to the state were not given kingdoms. Women did not go around putting their faces on coins. And men did not allow their children to be named after the wife's family. For Juba and Cleopatra Selene to be able and permitted to behave in this fashion implies that they more than likely had a strong relationship with Augustus. If they did not have a strong relationship with him, then the couple more than likely would not have been following the role of the Imperial women of Rome, they also would not be following the example of the Ptolemy's rather than of Juba's dynasty which resulted in a largely different rule than the other client kingdoms of the time. The impact of their rule was not long lived. Their son, Ptolemy,

18. Chanler 261.

19. D. Braund, "Juba II, Cleopatra Selene and the Course of the Nile", *The Classical Quarterly* (1984) 177.

20. Braund, 178.

21. Braund, 177.

briefly took on the role of co-ruler before his father died.²² Mauritania's role as a client kingdom came to an end with the death of Ptolemy at the hands of Caligula, the third roman emperor.

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- Livia, 22CE, *Collection L*, Edgar L. Owen Galleries, Lake Hopatcong, NJ.

22. Chanler, 315.



Figure 1. Livia's coin.

HUMANITIES

Work by God or By God We'll Have Work

Darek L. Thomas.

ABSTRACT

America has been founded on the principles of hard work and industry. From its early beginnings with indentured servitude and chattel slavery to its more republican and free-labor ideologies. Through the literature one may trace this theme of labor from the early stages of the Spanish conquest of Central and South America, to one of the bloodiest conflicts that ultimately abolished chattel slavery and ushered in the free-labor system that we are currently under today.

Keywords: chattel slavery, indentured servitude, work, free-labor, capitalism, Antebellum

The dichotomy between free-labor and chattel slavery has always been a part of America's existence. From the earliest discoveries of the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico to the mainland colonies of Virginia and the Massachusetts Bay, people have slaved, labored and toiled this land to render it useful and industrious in the name of their God, their religion or their principles. The reasons to which Americans would till the land would drastically change, moving from a slave-based labor system—inspired by their God—in the eras of Bartolome de las Casas, John Smith, William Bradford, Benjamin Franklin and Olaudah Equiano to the more republican free-labor based system of the American Antebellum period with writers such as Henry David Thoreau, John Brown and Fredrick Douglass. The question of free-labor and chattel slavery would play out for nearly three centuries in the American past, and on each side of the question proponents would use their God and their religion to justify their morals and actions.

On the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, the Spanish quickly subjugated the native population into chattel slavery by forcing them to dive for pearls. De Las Casas claimed that immediately after the Spanish landed, they had begun to depopulate the islands through their cruel treatment of the natives. Instead of performing the extraneous task themselves the Spanish used their might and religious tactics to subjugate the native population. They stole their food stocks, wives, children and forced them into enhanced labor roles. "Then," De Las Casas wrote, "like sheep, they are sorted out into flocks of ten or twenty persons, separating fathers from sons, wives from husbands, and the Spaniards draw lots, the ship owners carrying off their share, the best flock, to compensate them for moneys they have invested in their fleet of two or three ships."¹ The Spanish designed a system that exploited the abilities of the natives to dive to great depths and hold their breaths for long periods of time. The *Repartimiento* was supposed to convert the natives to Christianity, however, it ceased to be anything more than a slave-holding system.² The Spaniards dehumanized the natives and denied them of basic rights, forcing them to dive for hours and days without food or basic nourishment. "And in this extraordinary labor," claimed De Las Casas, "or, better put, infernal labor the Lucayan Indians are finally consumed as are captive Indians from other provinces."³

On the mainland of America labor took a different course. John Smith, the President of the Virginia Company, promised the sons of England upward mobility and social change if they would venture to come to America. "Now that carpenter, mason, gardener, tailor, smith, sailor, forger, or what other, may they not make this a pretty recreation though they fish but an hour in a day, to take more than they eat in a week."⁴ He desperately needed people to labor in his new found colony. "They are building a strong fort, they hope shortly to finish, in the interim they are well provided: their number is about a hundred persons, all in health, and well near sixty acres of ground well planted with corn, besides their gardens presented with useful fruits."⁵ Smith then goes on to plead for more supplies, lest all his hard work in the Virginia colony go to waste.

Almost six hundred miles to the north of John Smith and the Virginia colony, William Brad-

1. The Norton Anthology of American Literature 7th Edition, (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2007) 39.

2. Ibid. 39.

3. Ibid. 39.

4. Ibid. 68.

5. Ibid. 71.

ford, in the Massachusetts Bay colony faced a similar labor problem. As more and more English poured into the colony, the production of corn and cattle soared and spread the boundaries too thin. “Also,” Bradford wrote, “the people of the plantation began to grow outward estates, by reason of the flowing of many people in to the Bay of Massachusetts by which means corn and cattle rose to a great price, by which many were much enriched, and commodities grew plentiful.”⁶ However, the spread of outward estates created the colony’s first religious and labor crises. As the boundaries spread further and further people began to demand more say in their religious institutions. Colonist wound up breaking off from the Plymouth colony and forming their own church at Duxbury. Vast tracts of land were given to loyalists that stayed on the Plymouth plantation and indentured servants were then put to work. One such indentured servant—who was subsequently executed for acts of buggery—was Thomas Granger. Not to make excuses for Granger’s lewd acts, but, the life of an indentured servant was atrocious. They often fared no better than an African or Native slave.

So atrocious were the conditions of servitude that Benjamin Franklin, one of our founding fathers, ran away from his indenture to his brother. “At length a fresh Difference arising between my brother and me, I took upon me to assert my Freedom, presuming that he would not venture to produce the new Indentures.”⁷ He claimed that his brother treated him no differently than any other indenture and acted tyrannical. “But my brother was passionate and had often beaten me, which I took extremely amiss; and thinking my apprentice very tedious, I was continually wishing for some opportunity of shortening it.”⁸ He was under contract with his brother for a total of nine years of which he only served four.

As Franklin came of age the ideology of capitalism began to take root in the colonies. Capitalists preached some of the same doctrines that the Christians preached, mainly hard work, industry, and capitalizing on land, time and commodities. For example, Benjamin Franklin told the people of Europe they should not come to America expecting a life of ease. “There are few great proprietors of the soil, and few tenants; most people cultivate their own lands, upon their rents or incomes, or to pay the high prices given in Europe for paintings, statues, architecture, and other works of art that are more curious than useful.”⁹ Franklin thought that the arts were more suited for Europe, and that America was for the industrious and hardworking. “The husbandman is in honor there [America], and even the mechanic, because their employments are useful. The people have a saying, that God Almighty is himself a mechanic, the greatest in the universe.”¹⁰ Franklin, had continued the tradition carried out during the Enlightenment of creating the “God Mechanic” that more properly fit the image of their era.

The capitalistic values that shaped Franklin’s world in the American colonies began to creep onto the sugar and cotton plantations in the Caribbean and the American South. The usage of chattel slavery became a vital part of the American mercantile economy. Olaudah Equiano gave his narrative of the life of an African slave. He claimed that his master was not a typical slave

6. Ibid. 129.

7. Ibid. 485.

8. Ibid. 484.

9. Ibid. 463.

10. Ibid. 464.

owner, in that he had never beat his slaves; rather, he: “possessed a most amiable disposition and temper and was very charitable and humane. If any of his slaves behaved amiss, he did not beat them or use them ill, but parted with them.”¹¹ Equiano’s master was not a cruel at all. He allowed his slaves a certain amount of freedom in which they would in return repay him with their loyalty, hard work and dedication. “I can quote many instances of gentleman,” Equiano wrote, “who on their estates in the West Indies, and the scene is quite changed; the Negroes are treated with lenity and proper care, by which their lives are prolonged, and their masters profited.”¹² Equiano pleaded with slave owners for the fair treatment of slaves. He felt that if slaves were properly cared for, they would live longer lives, be more productive, and it would reduce the number of slaves needed throughout the colonies. Within a half of century, the pleas for fairer treatment of slaves would spill over to an all-out resistance to a government that would support such uncivil policies.

Henry David Thoreau challenged the authority of a government that would enslave a population and give them no return for their labor. In his essay titled “Resistance to Civil Government” Thoreau stated: “This American government—what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity?”¹³ In Thoreau’s eyes America was developed to permeate republican and capitalistic ideals; however, he knew that intentions did not always match conventions. Thoreau felt that as America enslaved almost a fourth of its nation it diminished its full potential when it swayed from the principles it was founded upon: Christianity, capitalism and republicanism. “How does it become of a man,” Thoreau asked, “to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as *my* government which is the *slave’s* government also.”¹⁴ Many Americans answered Thoreau’s call, some did so violently.

In his plea for John Brown, Thoreau deified Brown as if he had been anointed by God to carry out the antislavery rebellion. He wrote: “They talk as if it were impossible that a man could be divinely appointed in these days to do any work whatever; as if vows and religion were out of date as connected with any man’s daily work.”¹⁵ Thoreau felt that as long as there were injustices, such as slavery, that many Americans would be divinely inspired by their principles to work towards eliminating those injustices. He claimed that if one did not die for standing up for their principles, like Brown did, that they in fact did not live at all. No man, Thoreau said, “had ever died in America before, for in order to die you must first have lived.”¹⁶ For Thoreau, John Brown was held up as a Jesus-like figure for his defense of Christianity, the free-labor system, republican values.

Thoreau had an ability to inspire others by placing himself in the shoes of others. “I speak for the slave when I say,” Thoreau wrote, “that I prefer the philanthropy of Captain Brown to that

11. Ibid. 694.

12. Ibid. 696.

13. Nina Bayam. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2007). 1857.

14. Ibid. 1859.

15. Ibid. 2058.

16. Ibid. 2058.

philanthropy which neither shoots me nor liberates me.”¹⁷ Many of Thoreau’s contemporaries, including Fredrick Douglass, felt that Brown and his men were on a suicide mission. However, John Brown was a religious fanatic, and he and his fellow abolitionist drafted a provisional constitution in hopes of ending slavery. Robert L. Tsai wrote, in an essay titled “John Brown’s Constitution,” that Brown’s drafting of the constitution, his analogue of the Declaration of Independence and his antics during his trial should all dismiss the claims that Brown was on a suicide mission. Tsai argued that Brown was a statesman that saw no other option but the use of violence to solve the slavery versus free-labor problem.¹⁸

John Brown and his fellow abolitionists drafted their constitution at the Chatham Convention in Chatham, Canada. They then took it, along with a provisional army, down to Virginia and raided the federal fort at Harper’s Ferry. Their hopes were to destroy the American government and install a new government more friendly to the principles of God and free-labor. Nicole Etcheson, in her essay “John Brown Terrorist?” claimed that historians often label Brown as a terrorist on a suicide mission, and they refuse to see the real aims of him and his men. Brown created a new state, backed by a provincial government and a provincial army. Etcheson also claimed that although Fredrick Douglass, one of John Brown’s good friends, refused to participate in the raid on Harper’s Ferry, he did champion it for “the fear it instilled in slaveholders.”¹⁹ Douglass, again like Brown, saw no other option than the use of violence in order to free the slaves from the horrors of the chattel system.

Fredrick Douglass also saw the raid on Harper’s Ferry as a suicide mission and refused to participate in it. It is surprising, though, that Douglass felt that the US constitution was an anti-slavery document, considering that he supported John Brown in the drafting of a new one. Douglass broke with his longtime friend and fellow abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison over their interpretations of the U.S. Constitution, and after the Dred Scot decision Douglass became more militant in his approach to abolitionism. He felt that African Americans must be their “own representatives and advocates, not exclusively, but peculiarly—not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends.”²⁰ Although Douglass did not participate in Brown’s raid at Harper’s Ferry, he was one of the great recruiters of and advocates of African-American soldiers in the Union Army during the Civil War.

From the literature of the Americas one can trace the institution of slavery back to its founding and hear the voices of its discontent, from writers like Bartolome de las Casas we find the horrors of Native subjugation with the case of the pearl divers. On the mainland, the early colonies were shaped by hard-working religious zealots who only turned towards a watered-down system of slavery—indentured servitude—after a split in the church at Duxbury left so many acres of land to be worked by so few colonist. In the American South the principles of free-labor capitalism crashed head-on with the ideas of chattel slavery. Writers like Henry David Thoreau, John Brown and Fredrick Douglass used ethical appeal and religious ideology to address the problems of slavery. Ultimately, the question of free-labor versus chattel slavery would be settled in one of

17. Ibid. 2057.

18. Robert L. Tsai, “John Brown’s Constitution, *Boston College Law Review* 51, no. 1 (January 2010): 153.

19. Nicole Etcheson, “John Brown, Terrorist?” *American Nineteenth Century History* 10 (1): 37.

20. Nina Bayam. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 2062.

the bloodiest conflicts in American history on the battlefields of the American Civil War. When it was all said and done, there was work to do by God.

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