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Author(s): NAOKO SHIBUSAWA

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The Lavender Scare and Empire: Rethinking Cold War Antigay Politics*

On March 31, 1950, the U.S. House of Representatives debated whether the United States should offer technical assistance to the poorer nations of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The bill under consideration proposed to widen the purview of the Economic Cooperation Agency (ECA), which was established two years earlier to implement the Marshall Plan. Opponents of the bill balked at the potential cost, fearing that the program could become an unending “world-wide WPA” paid by the U.S. taxpayer.¹ Proponents like Representative Mike Mansfield (D-MT) argued that the provision would serve to “bulwark as much as we can” these peoples from “undeveloped areas” so that they would not be an “easy prey to communism.”² Opponents like Representative James P. Sutton (D-TN) remained unconvinced that giving other people money and resources was the best way to combat communism. This money, he asserted, would be better spent fortifying America by balancing its budget, building up its military, and “then tell[ing] Russia to go straight to hades.” “If she will not go there, let us send her there,” Sutton blustered. Of course the congressman was not truly advocating armed conflict; he was raising concern that the federal government’s deficit budget could irreparably damage the nation. Communism, he claimed, was “a result of governments overspending beyond the reach of its people.” Such governments became socialist and then went “right into communism . . . almost without exception.” Summing up his arguments against the bill, Sutton declared, “I hate communism, I detest socialism, and I love Americanism. Let us not take a chance of bankrupting America. Let us be Americans and build America great so that the world will follow our leadership of being Governments ‘of the people, by the people and for the people.’”³

Sutton’s rousing call for patriotic stewardship of the nation was followed by a statement by Representative Arthur L. Miller (R-NB). Although he was sympathetic to Sutton’s fears of excessive foreign aid, Miller ignored the topic at hand. Instead, he inserted into the record an amendment banning gays from

*For their helpful suggestions and unflagging encouragement, I thank Laura McEnaney, Cynthia Franklin, Monisha DasGupta, John Rosenberg, Oddný Helgadóttir, and Andrew Cook.

1. 81 *Cong. Rec.* H4518 (daily ed. March 31, 1950) (statement of Rep. Smith).

2. 81 *Cong. Rec.* H4520 (daily ed. March 31, 1950).

3. 81 *Cong. Rec.* H4527 (daily ed. March 31, 1950).

the federal government. A physician by training, Miller deployed an anatomic metaphor, diagnosing that “the fetid, stinking flesh . . . [on] this skeleton of homosexuality” posed a serious threat to the nation’s well-being. He observed that the recent “spotlight of publicity” on government employment of homosexuals raised awareness about this danger. Indeed, the State Department announced it had ousted ninety-one homosexuals from its offices. But “[w]here did they go?” Miller wanted to know; he voiced fear that they most likely went elsewhere in the federal government. His amendment was thus necessary, he asserted, to ensure that the government would be free of homosexuals. Pointing out that the army did not knowingly retain gays, Miller reasoned that the government should not do so either. “I trust both sides of the aisle will support the amendment,” he concluded.⁴

The *Congressional Record* shows that the discussion following Miller’s statement returned once again to the subject of foreign aid, with no comment on the amendment banning homosexuals from government. Either the House representatives had no reaction, or Miller added his amendment as a written statement afterwards. Congressional rules at the time allowed members to revise and extend spoken comments, or even to include new unspoken comments into the *Congressional Record*.⁵ It is therefore difficult to know with certainty if Representative Miller spoke these words to the larger body or whether he inserted them later as a written statement. Whichever was the case, Miller had to find the opportune moment or space to insert his amendment. He chose to do so after a colleague reminded the rest of the House of the greatness of America vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Whether or not this was entirely purposeful, this choice and his words reveal how he juxtaposed the “sex perverts” from upstanding Americans who hated communism, detested socialism, and loved Americanism. Miller stated that he “sometimes wonder[ed] how many of these homosexuals have had a part in shaping of our foreign policy. How many have been in sensitive positions and subject to blackmail.” He continued,

It is a known fact that homosexuality goes back to the Orientals, long before the time of Confucius; that the Russians are strong believers in homosexuality, and that those same people are able to get into the State Department and get somebody in their embrace, and once they are in their embrace, fearing blackmail, will make them go to any extent.⁶

Today, we in turn have to wonder where did the congressman get his facts? Why did he pinpoint homosexuality as originally an “oriental” practice? He seemed unaware that homosexuality was a crime in Stalin’s Soviet Union, as it was in

4. 81 *Cong. Rec.* H4527–28 (daily ed. March 31, 1950).

5. The practice of distinguishing original spoken remarks from revisions or additions began only in 1978. Michelle M. Springer, “The *Congressional Record*: ‘Substantially a Verbatim Report?’” *Government Publications Review* 13 (May–June 1986): 371–78. Thanks to Dan O’Mahoney for this source.

6. 81 *Cong. Rec.* H4527–28 (daily ed. March 31, 1950).

Imperial Russia from the time of Peter the Great. (The Bolshevik government decriminalized homosexuality in 1917, but Stalin's government recriminalized it in 1934.) What Miller says makes little actual sense, of course; he appears to have linked what he called "sex perverts" to the assumed perversion of the enemies. By this date in March 1950, China was "Red China," and thus Miller was explicitly characterizing homosexuality as a trait of the Communist enemies. This moment was also almost two months after Senator Joseph McCarthy made his infamous accusation that he held in his hand a list of 205 known Communists in the federal government.

Those familiar with the history of the Cold War persecution of gays know of the lavender scare's parallels with the red scare. Like communism, homosexuality was seen as a threat to national security. The lavender scare's logic was circular: homophobia supposedly made gays vulnerable and potential victims of blackmail, but the era's policies of increasing homophobia theoretically made gays even more vulnerable to blackmail. Reducing the social opprobrium directed at gays as a solution to their potential disloyalty appears never to have been seriously considered. Neither did it seem to matter that there existed no factual precedent of a gay U.S. government employee or military man being blackmailed into betraying his nation by the Soviet enemy—or even by the recent Axis enemies. But such was the association between homosexuality and potential disloyalty that distinction between the two became blurred. As the junior senator from Wisconsin himself allegedly put it to two journalists visiting his office, "If you want to be against McCarthy, boys, you've got to be a Communist or a cocksucker."⁷

Americanists have studied this conflation of Communist subversion with homosexual perversion largely in terms of "the internal logic of American postwar culture and politics," as Elizabeth Povinelli and George Chauncey have noted.⁸ Since Povinelli and Chauncey's observations over ten years ago, there have been, to be sure, a number of wonderful studies on Cold War homophobia including, among others, David K. Johnson's groundbreaking book on the lavender scare, Margot Canaday's magisterial study on the rise of the "straight state," and Michael S. Sherry's sophisticated analysis of a perceived "gay conspiracy" to take over American culture and arts.⁹ Along with others, these scholars have informed us that Cold War homophobia (as well as a "moral sex panic" that dates back to the Great Depression) occurred in a context of

7. Quoted in Edwin R. Bayley, *Joe McCarthy and the Press* (Madison, WI, 1981), 73. Bayley's source for this oft-quoted sentence is an oral interview with Charles Seib in March 1976. Seib worked for the International News Service (INS) when he covered McCarthy.

8. Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey, "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally: An Introduction," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, no. 4 (January 1999): 443.

9. David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, 2004); Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ, 2009); Michael S. Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture: An Imagined Conspiracy* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007).

perceived shifts in gender relations, race relations, the ongoing dislocations of late capitalism, continuing urbanization, economic and foreign crises, postwar adjustment, and the entrenchment of a consumer society and culture allegedly dominated by women.¹⁰ Likewise we know that Republicans and conservative Democrats used homophobia as a means to whip their congressional opponents into fearful frenzy about appearing “soft” on communism. As Robert D. Dean put it recently, the lavender scare reflected a struggle about “who would control the American empire.”¹¹

But if we understand sexuality also as “a category of historical inquiry”—to invoke Joan Scott—we should see sexuality especially since the mid-twentieth century as constitutive of a wider worldview that looked beyond national borders. Most Americanists, however, who have interpreted Cold War homophobia in a wider framework, have tended to do so only within the context of the U.S.–Soviet rivalry.¹² Yet we know that most of the hot wars of the cold wars occurred in colonized or decolonized nations.¹³ Americanist Cold War historians should therefore take a cue from the Europeanists and others studying European colonialism who have produced a rich scholarship focusing on sexuality and empire. Ann Stoler, Anne McClintock, and others have shown how sex was another significant way that colonists saw and enacted their power over

10. These studies include those by Jennifer Terry and Ellen Herman on the role of psychiatry in antigay measures; Robert Corber’s analyses of how Cold War homophobia were linked to concerns of promoting a “consumption based economy” located in the suburbs to which ethnic whites have fled; Elaine Tyler May’s examination of this suburban, heterosexual domesticity in the context of the Cold War, where the “homeward bound” white families imagined for themselves a haven from an increasingly dangerous world; and Joanne Meyerowitz’s recent work on the influence of the culture-and-personality school’s influence in shaping post-World War II notions of sexuality. Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago, 1999); Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, CA, 1995); Robert J. Corber, *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Durham, NC, 1997); Robert J. Corber, *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America* (Durham, NC, 1993); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, 20th ed. (New York, 2008 [1988]); Joanne Meyerowitz, “‘How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives’: Sexuality, Race, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Social Constructionist Thought,” *Journal of American History* 96, no. 4 (March 2010): 1057–84.

11. Robert D. Dean, comments at a roundtable, “Gender and Sexuality in American Foreign Relations.” Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, University of Wisconsin at Madison, June 24, 2010. Dean reemphasized his argument in *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst, MA, 2001).

12. An exception is Joanne Meyerowitz, whose work on the culture-and-personality school takes a wider view of the mid-century moment. Meyerowitz, “‘How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives’.” Moreover, Americanists looking specifically at U.S. colonial relations have analyzed sexuality as a constitutive element of policy. See, for example, Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870–1920* (Durham, NC, 2000).

13. The best current synthesis of this argument is Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, 2005).

the indigenous/natives. The “civilizing mission” of uplift toward modernity included the policing of sexual practices.¹⁴ The point here is not to argue for investigations of how Americans may have imposed their notions of sexuality onto other nations during this era. (I will elaborate further below, but one reason for not focusing on U.S. imposition of heteronormativity is that Europeans imperialists had already done so in Asia, Africa, and Latin America prior to the twentieth century.) Rather, it is to call attention to how the perceived differences between “us” and “them”—civilized and primitive, modern and backwards, white and nonwhite, masculine and effeminate, mature and juvenile, normal and perverse—have rationalized and justified unequal relationships of power.

As we know, however, these binary categories of identity were not stable; this instability explains the tremendous anxiety about insisting upon difference. In the United States after World War II, American pundits and leaders worried about their nation’s ability to carry on “the torch of Western civilization,” especially in light of the Soviet threat and the nationalist struggles of the colonized. I am arguing therefore that this wider context of maintaining difference must also be considered in understanding why sexuality became so important in defining the “proper” American (male) citizen at the start of the Cold War. The discourse of civilization held that more advanced people adhered to codes of sexual “decency” but that the “overcivilized” were decadent and lacking in proper morals. This concern about maintaining a “vigorous” civilization—advanced but not decaying—helps to explain the existential stakes of the lavender scare. This is why, on the one hand, Representative Arthur Miller (R-NE) could assert that it was “a known fact that homosexuality goes back to the Orientals . . . that the Russians are strong believers in homosexuality” while, on the other, an assistant secretary of state could report that “the strong rise of homosexuality” accompanied “the decline of the Egyptian, Greek and Roman

14. Works include, among others, Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester, UK, 1991); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC, 1995); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, 1995); Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York, 1995); Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford, CA, 1999); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); Robert F. Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (London, 2003); Oliver Philips, “Zimbabwean Law and the Production of a White Man’s Disease,” in *Sexualities and Society: A Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Weeks, Janet Holland, and Matthew Waites (Cambridge, 2003), 162–73; Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge, 2008).

There have been studies of sex tourism and postcolonial queer studies that explore, for instance, the white man/Asian boy dyad across “transcolonial borderzones.” And Joseph Massad has challenged orientalist notions of Arab sexuality as decadent (then later as prudish) by focusing on how Arabs themselves have represented their own sexual desires. See Eng-Beng Lim, *Tropical Spells: Queer Encounters in the Asias* (forthcoming); Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago, 2007).

Empires.”¹⁵ The lavender scare thus reflected not only a struggle on who would control the empire, but also disquiet about the state of the empire, its “civilization.” Grounded in a developmental notion of history, Americans’ attempts to define their world-historic epoch also fed into the postwar fears of moral decline that other scholars have noted.¹⁶ The agitation about potentially traitorous gays, moreover, derived also from efforts to distinguish American civilization or modernity not only from the Soviets, but also from the “masses” of the decolonizing world.

A discussion on the origins of the lavender scare and then a section on notions of civilization will provide an overview of the complex layers necessary to understand the third section on how the lavender scare also spoke to broader concerns about civilizational “vitality” of modern life during the Cold War.

ORIGINS OF THE LAVENDER SCARE

Homophobia predated the Cold War, of course. To be sure, Americans expressed disdain for “fairies” or effeminate men and frowned upon homosexual activity prior to the Cold War. In fact, U.S. federal concern about homosexuals “developed in tandem” during the late nineteenth century with the expansion of the bureaucratic state. As Margot Canaday has demonstrated, new “scientific” understanding about “sexual perverts” as a category of deviant individuals occurred as U.S. institutions, such as the immigration services, the military, and public welfare, were beginning to systematically categorize people as desirable or undesirable and fit or unfit. Thus, homosexuals were categorized as undesirable and unfit along with others such as the “mentally feeble,” “criminally insane,” or “morally depraved.” Yet prior to the mid-twentieth century, the “regulatory response” to homosexuality remained “fairly anemic.”¹⁷ Even during World War II, homosexual behavior was seldom the cause for dismissal from the military. Despite the establishment of new “antihomosexual walls” to exclude gays and lesbians from entering the armed services, these walls were “full of holes,” and the demand for combat troops meant that only 4,000 to 5,000 out of nearly 18 million men examined were rejected as homosexual.¹⁸ It was only after war’s end that the formal prosecution and dishonorable discharges of gays began in earnest.

Exclusion of gays from the civil service, on the other hand, did not seem to be considered prior to the Cold War. In contrast to the military, the State Department was unconcerned about gays in the diplomatic corps during the

15. 81 *Cong. Rec.* H4527–28 (daily ed. March 31, 1950); Carlisle H. Humelsine to [James E.] Webb, “Problem of Homosexuals and Sex Perverts in the Department of State,” June 23, 1950, folder “Information on Homosexuals,” Reading Files of Director Samuel D. Boykin, box 5, Record Group (RG) 59, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland.

16. Johnson, *Lavender Scare*, 10.

17. Canaday, *The Straight State*, 2–3.

18. Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire* (New York, 2000), chap. 1 (statistics on page 33).

war. The issue was not on the public's radar, either, except perhaps in a general sense that the diplomatic corps consisted of effete, privileged types. The State Department understood that it had an image of being full of wealthy, Ivy-League graduates; questions about perceptions of its elite status were included in an extensive survey it commissioned from the Office of Public Opinion Research at Princeton University in late 1944. Yet the survey showed that the public's opinion was overwhelmingly positive, with 77 percent of those polled agreeing with the statement that the U.S. Foreign Service was doing a "good job." The pollster who helped conduct the survey thought the main challenge in the department's public image was the impression that unqualified and self-aggrandizing political appointees filled the ranks of the diplomatic corps. Sexual orientation, sexual behavior, or "morality"—a coded reference to homosexuality—was not listed as a complaint or even as a concern.¹⁹

Within a couple of years, however, sexuality became an issue as the State Department attempted to implement Truman's March 1947 executive order to establish a loyalty program for government employees. It was at this point that the department quietly began to search for and force out homosexuals on their rolls. Although Truman's executive order makes no mention of sexuality or even moral behavior, the State Department relied on civil service rules, which forbade the appointment of those who were known to have displayed "immoral or notoriously disgraceful conduct."²⁰ By the time of McCarthy's infamous February 1950 charge about card-carrying Communists in the State Department made national news, the department had been dedicating two full-time investigators of the Security Division to detect homosexuals and devote themselves to "the study of the problem."²¹

Were it not for Truman's "loyalty order" the State Department may not have expended as much time and energy as it did to identify and expel homosexual employees. Unlike the state institutions responsible for the categorization and assessment of millions—such as the military, welfare services, or immigration control—the State Department already had in place a fairly rigorous screening process for its employees. The loyalty order thus seemed to require stricter metrics to determine "security risks," but it gave no direction, leaving it up to the various departments to implement the policy and produce the desired outcomes. The haphazard manner in which the State Department—and

19. The survey was conducted by the Office of Public Opinion Research (OPOR) at Princeton University in the second week of October 1944, under the supervision of Dr. Hadley Cantril, the director of the office. See Frederick W. Williams to S. Shepard Jones, October 26, 1944; "Public Opinion Survey on the Foreign Service of the State Department"; "Comments of Dr. Frederick Williams on the OPOR Questionnaires 33K and 33T of October 5, 1944." All three documents in "Press on Dept. Officers 1944 and also Poll on FS" folder, Reports on Public Opinion on the State Department and its Policies, 1944-65, Office of Public Opinion, 1943-65, box 20, RG 59, NARA.

20. Humelsine to Webb, June 23, 1950.

21. *Ibid.*

presumably other departments—went about trying to fulfill this enormous task can be gleaned from the extensive documentation deposited at the National Archives.²² The order appeared near impossible to complete. Potential propensity for disloyalty, moreover, lacked the physical markers used to reject individuals from entrance into the military or the nation, such as flat feet, hookworm, or syphilis. Still, the pressure was on to rout out possible “security risks” among the civil servants. That they were overwhelmingly white made the task more difficult. The presence of racial minorities in the civil service was negligible until the Civil Rights era; since 1914, photographs were required of those applying for civil service jobs—it was a way to prevent the employment of African Americans after Woodrow Wilson instituted Jim Crow in the federal government.²³ Racial minorities therefore could not serve as convenient scapegoats. But there existed another minority group who could be targeted but whose difference could not be detected through photographs.

McCarthy’s inflammatory accusations resulted in the State Department’s admission to its ongoing investigation of homosexual employees as security risks. Although he was attempting to demonstrate the department’s vigilance against security breaches to a Senate subcommittee, Deputy Undersecretary of State John Peurifoy managed instead to let loose the notion that the presence of homosexuals constituted a serious danger. Peurifoy’s previous testimony to the subcommittee over matters of the Security Division, which he headed, had been behind closed doors. Now, with the publicity generated by McCarthy, the press was present when he admitted that ninety-one homosexuals had been released from the department.²⁴ As David K. Johnson and others have pointed out, Peurifoy ironically widened and intensified the glare of publicity upon the State Department.²⁵ The admission gave greater credence to McCarthy’s accusations, even though his numbers about the security risks varied throughout February 1950. *Los Angeles Times* columnist Frank R. Kent argued that despite his lack of evidence, McCarthy had public sentiment on his side. “An awful lot of people who take no stock in McCarthy still believe he threw a curved ball in the dark and hit somebody,” quoted Kent. The revelation of ninety-one dismissed homosexuals “has revolted people more than anything else—more even than if McCarthy had proven his charges,” and they were

22. Once the federal government decided that loyalty testing was important, a host of decisions had to be made to systematize it, to fund it, to create “fair” procedures, etc. Once they tackled it, they quickly realized the magnitude of the undertaking. As archivist David Langbart put it, “They bit off more than they could chew.” See Reading Files of Directory Samuel D. Boykin, 1931–53, Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs (BSCA), 11 boxes, RG 59, NARA. David Langbart, conversation with author, August 17, 2010, NARA.

23. Kathleen L. Wolgemuth, “Wilson and Federal Segregation,” *Journal of Negro History* 44, no. 2 (April 1959): 161.

24. Johnson, *Lavender Scare*, 16–18.

25. Johnson credits John D’Emilio for first identifying the significance of the revelation. *Ibid.*, 15–39, 200 n.3.

“convinced” that “the 91 by no means were all.”²⁶ The public sent worrisome or outraged missives to the White House, the State Department, Congress, and the media. A “preliminary sampling” of the 25,000 letters to McCarthy reportedly showed only 25 percent concerned with “red infiltration,” whereas the other 75 percent expressed their shocked indignation at the evidence of sex depravity.²⁷ Such reactions, as well as demands from Congress, resulted in the deputy undersecretary of state showing due diligence to the concern, thereafter reporting the status of ousting homosexuals from the department for at least the next two years. Peurifoy’s successor as deputy undersecretary, Carlisle H. Humelsine, reported the dismissal of fifty-four homosexuals in 1950–51 and 119 in 1951–52. These reports, in turn, reinforced the impression that gays were a security risk and even that they constituted a “homosexual international” or “homintern.”

“Homintern,” a twist on “Comintern,” was a camp term coined perhaps in the 1930s. As with such terms, its origins are murky—at least three men claimed to be its originator: Cyril Connolly, W. H. Auden, and Harold Norse.²⁸ It first referred to an imagined cabal of gay men who controlled the art world, but the term later widened to refer to a fantastical gay international that sought to control the world. In an influential 1952 article, R. G. Waldeck argued that the vulnerability to blackmail was a minor reason for expelling gays from the State Department and other federal agencies. It was vitally urgent to do so since gays, “by the very nature of their vice . . . belong to a sinister, mysterious, and efficient International.” According to Waldeck,

Welded together by the identity of their forbidden desires, of their strange, sad needs, habits, danger, not to mention their outrageously fatuous vocabulary, members of this International constitute a world-wide conspiracy against society. This conspiracy has spread all over the globe; has penetrated all classes; operates in armies and in prisons; has infiltrated the press, the movies, and the cabinets; and it all but dominates the arts, literature, theater, music, and TV.²⁹

Read into the *Congressional Record* soon after it was published, this article caught the attention of State Department officials, who preserved it along with other documents on the “homosexual problem,” and was reprinted and cited into the 1960s.³⁰ It did not seem to matter that Rosie Goldschmidt Waldeck, a

26. Frank R. Kent, “In Spite of McCarthy People Are Worried,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1950, A4.

27. Johnson, *Lavender Scare*, 19.

28. Gregory Woods, “The ‘Conspiracy’ of the ‘Homintern,’” *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* 10, no. 3 (May–June 2003): 11. For a book length treatment on the subject, see Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Cultures*.

29. R. G. Waldeck, “Homosexual International,” *Human Events* 9, no. 16, April 16, 1952, found in Reading Files of Director Samuel D. Boykin, box 5, RG 59, NARA.

30. Johnson, *Lavender Scare*, 34.

German-born author and lecturer, had no expertise nor evidence to verify her claims.³¹ What perhaps mattered was that as a writer, she was able to construct a coherent, easily comprehensible narrative. Baseless though it was in reality, it was also compelling because it orientalized homosexuals. By this, I am not saying that she described gays as Asians, of course, but that she “othered” or categorized them as diametrically opposed to Americans and the West. She also wrote,

And here is why homosexual officials are a peril to us in the present struggle between West and East: members of one conspiracy are prone to join another conspiracy. This is one reason why so many homosexuals from being enemies of society in general, become enemies of capitalism in particular. Without being necessarily Marxist they serve the ends of the Communist International in the name of their rebellion against the prejudices, standards, ideals of the “bourgeois” world.³²

That homosexuals would be presumed to be anticapitalist may come as a surprise today given current stereotypes of the consumerist gay lifestyle. In the 1950s, however, it did not seem to matter that she does not support her whopping claim that “members of one conspiracy [were] prone to join another conspiracy.” The parallel juxtapositions of east/west, perverse/normal, conspirator/law-abiding, and Communist/capitalist appeared to be interrelated, neatly putting east-perverse-conspirator-Communist on one side and their opposites on the other. Moreover, the “eastern” side was seen as united in their intent to subjugate the Western, capitalist world.

But the State Department (and Congress) had to take a leap of faith to believe these assertions since the actual connection between state security and sexual preference was far-fetched, as the department acknowledged even at the time. In a June 23, 1950, memo to Undersecretary of State James Webb, Carlisle Humelsine (then assistant secretary prior to his promotion to deputy undersecretary) stated that they had “no evidence” that homosexual employees were a security breach. Still, as a precaution, he explained, “the tendency toward character weaknesses has led us to the conclusion that the known homosexual is unsuited for employment in the Department.”³³ Lacking material cause, the department needed another coherent, comprehensible rationale. And perhaps for this reason unnamed State Department officials found Waldeck’s narrative assuring and thus worth preserving; her interpretation seemed to validate the actions the department had been taking. Without actual evidence, the department resorted to

31. Waldeck’s best-known work was *Athene Palace* (New York, 1942), which described Romania during the fascist revolution of 1940–41 from the perspective of the lobby of the Athene Palace Hotel in Bucharest. She also wrote *Europe Between the Acts* (Garden City, NY, 1951), her survey of postwar Europe. Called “Countess Waldeck” because one of her ex-husbands was a German count, she gained U.S. citizenship and wrote for outlets such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *New York Times*.

32. Waldeck, “Homosexual International.”

33. Humelsine to Webb, June 23, 1950.

orientalist reasoning for expelling gays—“othering” homosexuals as the very opposite of what loyal public servants supposedly stood for. They did not know what to look for in a potential security risk. As Hans Morgenthau later pointed out, “If it were possible to identify the prospective traitor by some outward quality, the commission of treason would by definition become impossible.”³⁴ In other words, if one could see who the traitor was, then the traitor could not commit treason! To cope with this paradox, the federal government’s security regulations thus tried “to localize treason as a surreptitious evil by making it a function of other patent evils.”³⁵ Thus, the State Department followed the logic of categorizing together those with putatively undesirable traits—however illogical such categorizations might have actually been.

This effort to categorize “immoral” traits was formalized in Eisenhower’s 1953 Executive Order 10450, a revision of Truman’s 1947 loyalty order that added criteria related to personal character. Acceptance or retention in a federal office now required information about “any criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct, habitual use of intoxicants to excess, drug addiction, or sex perversion.”³⁶ Writing later, toward the end of the 1950s, Morgenthau complained that Executive Order 10450 not only assumed the “existence of two easily discernible types of men, one likely to commit treason, the other not,” but also constructed an unrealistic ideal of a “good” or “normal” American as a “type of a Babbitt with strong pseudo-puritanical connotations.” The security order rendered “virtually everybody a security risk” since no one could meet such a standard.³⁷ This construction of the normative “American” was too uptight and dangerously myopic. Morgenthau’s main criticism about these McCarthyite measures was that they detracted from, and indeed harmed, what he called the “purpose of America” to maintain “equality in freedom.” By this he meant “the establishment of freedom conceived as equality of opportunity and minimization of political control.”³⁸ He also meant that the purpose of America was to ensure “the survival of the human and social achievements of Western civilization.” And unlike in the past, the “arena within which the United States must defend and promote its purpose [had] become world-wide.”³⁹ Morgenthau feared that McCarthyism trivialized the American purpose into a hunt for enemies within—a task that also pigeonholed Americans into a narrow, “puritanical” normative. Moreover, this inclination to domesticate an international threat meant that they were shirking international and historic responsibilities.

34. Ibid.

35. Hans J. Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics* (New York, 1960), 149.

36. “Executive Order 10450—Security Requirements for Government Employment,” <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html> (accessed January 15, 2011).

37. Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, 150.

38. Ibid., 34.

39. Ibid., 5.

Morgenthau, a “father of the realist school,” was also an idealist who held American exceptionalist beliefs and was thus more ideological than perhaps commonly acknowledged. On one hand, he insisted in *Politics among Nations* (1955) that “[p]olitical realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.”⁴⁰ But, on the other, he declared in *The Purpose of American Politics* (1960) that the “American purpose carries within itself a meaning that transcends the national boundaries of America and addresses itself to all the nations of the world.”⁴¹ But he is not necessarily contradicting himself, because in the latter work he was careful to say, “America is not required by this purpose to do for other nations what it would not do for itself.” Instead, he argued that America held a special responsibility to maintain its society in order to be a model to other nations.⁴² Pursuing the national interest meant having a clear idea of the national purpose, and looking back over the years since World War II, Morgenthau worried that Americans did not understand their purpose in the wider world.

It was precisely this argument for or against an understanding of America’s international and historic responsibility that drove the congressional debate on foreign aid to Asian, African, and Latin American nations. Moreover, underscoring the entire vigorous debate about aiding the “undeveloped areas” was an understanding of “us” versus “them.” With this greater context, then, Congressman Miller’s homophobic insertion into the deliberation regarding foreign aid was not the nonsequitur that it seems at first glance. The thread of logic connecting Sutton’s point to Miller’s statement was about American self-definition and strength vis-à-vis the larger world. This stark juxtaposition was mildly challenged a couple of times, once with the venerated Sam Rayburn (D-TX) pointing out,

There are many backward peoples in this world. We were at one time. When our forefathers came into these wildernesses and opened these prairies, they were in danger. The story of their felling the trees, fighting back the enemy, and making this country fit for us to live in, is one the most romantic in all recorded history.⁴³

But this incantation of America’s exceptionalist narrative remained unconvincing to those like Miller and Sutton, who continued to worry more about America’s internal security—and found opportunity in making charges of softness, perversion, and treason. Dean Acheson later called their actions “the attack

40. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2nd ed., rev. (New York, 1954), 10. The first edition was published in 1948, but his “Six Principles of Political Realism” began with this second edition. The volume remains a “geopolitical bible” in international relations and is now in its seventh edition. Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Thompson, and David Clinton, *Politics among Nations*, 7th ed. (New York, 2005).

41. Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 5.

42. *Ibid.*, 34.

43. 81 *Cong. Rec.* H4547 (daily ed. March 31, 1950).

of the primitives.” We should pay closer attention to Acheson’s oft-quoted colorful phrase.⁴⁴ The choice of the word “primitives” was not an idle one. It came from a widely held belief about the development of people from “primitive” or barbarian to “civilized.” This notion about development was then so commonsensical that the briefest pause to consider its genealogy (which continues into the present) is in order before discussing the importance of this concept in Cold War discourse.

THE TORCH OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

The ideas that some people were more “advanced” than others dated back to the Enlightenment. Prior to the Enlightenment, Europeans and Euroamericans did not define differences among people according to a developmental scale. If others were “savages” or “barbarians,” they may have been candidates for conversion to Christianity, but they were not the objects of civilizational (i.e., modernizing) “uplift.” Muslims, or “infidels” in the medieval and premodern European imagination were not considered “primitive,” but instead seen as separate from Christians spatially. Christian Europeans saw Muslims, like Jews, to be residing in different spheres of belief. It was only after the advent of overseas European colonization that Europeans gradually began to see infidels as primitives—as contemporaries who were developmentally behind and thus separated from Europeans in time as well as space. All human societies were now thought not only to be developing, but also to be advancing along a single, universal path of upward development toward a peak where perched were the European societies, in particular the northern and western European societies of the Enlightenment thinkers.⁴⁵ To take one famous example, Adam Smith posited in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) that all societies progressed through four stages of history, from hunting-gathering to commercial-manufacturing.⁴⁶

44. The words come from chapter 39 of his autobiography, “The Attack of the Primitives Begins.” For the name of the chapter, Acheson credits John Duncan Miller, correspondent for the *Times* of London, for coining the phrase “a revolt of the primitives against intelligence.” Acheson cites, however, not the original source but a secondary one. The original phrase in the *Times* differs slightly: “The third, and the most dangerous [reason why McCarthy’s accusations against the State Department has been unsettling], is that the moment had come for a counter-attack by the primitives against the intellectuals and that they seized on this opportunity.” Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, 1987 [1969]), 751, fn. 354; *Times* quote from “Calumny in Washington, II—The Roots of the Isolationists’ Campaign,” *Times* (London), May 11, 1950, 7. No author given; attributed to “Our Washington Correspondent.”

45. Walter D. Mignolo, “The Enduring Enchantment: (Or the Epistemic Privilege of Modernity and Where to Go from Here),” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 927–54.

46. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 5th ed. <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html> (accessed November 7, 2010); Sucheta Mazumdar, Vasant Kaiwar, and Thierry Labica, *From Orientalism to Postcolonialism: Asia, Europe and the Lineages of Difference* (New York, 2009), 22–23; George C. Caffentzis, “On the Scottish Origins of ‘Civilization’” in *Enduring Western Civilization: The Construction of the Concept of Western Civilization and Its ‘Others,’* ed. Silvia Federici, ed. (Westport, CT, 1995), 28–29.

Smith related these historic stages to specific locales and deemed his own “civilization”—a late eighteenth-century neologism that he employed—to be the most “advanced.” (In 1772, the word “civilization” was so new that Samuel Johnson refused to add it to the fourth edition of his dictionary.)⁴⁷ From Enlightenment thinkers like Adams to Hegel to Spengler to Freud and beyond, the notion of “Western civilization” became and has remained the universal standard of human achievement.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the narrative of this civilization—as innovated particularly by Scottish Enlightenment thinkers—was that it traveled westward, from its “cradle” in Mesopotamia, to be sure, but most essentially from the ancient civilizations of Greece, then to Rome, and then to the northwestern promontory of Europe.⁴⁹

That Americans saw their nation as the torchbearers for “Western civilization” at the end of World War II thus makes sense. The narrative allowed them to easily imagine that the torch traveled west once again, across the Atlantic to their nation. “The torch first lighted in Athens is now in the hands of the American people,” as the *Reader’s Digest* claimed in May 1946.⁵⁰ Americans knew, moreover, that all “advanced” societies lay in ruins, including Great Britain, a situation that seemed to be growing dire. A year later, in March 1947, *Time* magazine observed,

Britain, its Government had announced, no longer possessed the resources to continue its comparatively puny military aid to Greece. India had all but left the Empire. Burma and Malaya were going. South Africa was tugging at the tether. In the citadel itself were hunger, cold and socialism.⁵¹

War-devastated Britain seemed barely able to support itself, much less maintain control over its rapidly devolving empire. The responsibility for protection against hunger, cold, and socialism now seemed to rest with the United States, the “great heir and hope” of Western civilization, as *Time-Life* founder, Henry Luce, put it.⁵² To pundits like Luce and other Americans, this was a destined fate that they imagined went back over three hundred years to Puritan John Winthrop’s prediction about a “city upon a hill.” But in his sermon on the *Arabella*, Winthrop did not see New England as a model for the entire world,

47. The verb “civilize,” from which the noun derived, appeared in English at the start of the seventeenth century, the same time the English established colonies in the Western hemisphere. *Oxford English Dictionary* online, <http://oed.com> (accessed November 4, 2010).

48. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817); Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (1918); Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930).

49. Caffentzis, “On the Scottish Origins of ‘Civilization,’” 13–36.

50. Bruce Hutchinson, “Is the U.S. Fit to Lead the World?” (*Maclean’s*, March 1, 1946), *Reader’s Digest*, May 1946, 1–5. Notably, the magazine indicated to its readers that Americans were not alone in this concept. It identified Hutchinson as associate editor of the Winnipeg Free Press and noted that *Maclean’s* was “Canada’s National Magazine.”

51. “The Challenge,” *Time*, March 17, 1947, 71.

52. [Henry Luce], “Western Culture,” *Life*, March 22, 1948, 73.

much less anticipate the United States; it was not until the Revolution that Americans began seeing their nation as a model for all the world's peoples.⁵³ Still, even at the time of their Revolution, Americans were largely alone in this belief of their exemplary status for the next century and beyond, save some European intellectuals and the French—who initially drew some inspiration for their own revolution until its more radical turn. By the end of World War II, however, Americans could justifiably believe that the “eyes” of the world seemed to be looking not only at, but also up to them as the new global power. Perhaps ignorant or forgetful of America's history of settler and overseas colonialism—or even the all-too brief “Wilsonian moment”—the colonial subjects of America's European allies hoped for U.S. assistance in their nationalist struggles. Ho Chi Minh, as we know, modeled the Vietnamese declaration of independence on the American one (with the assistance of an American Office of Strategic Services officer). Meanwhile, Western allies and defeated enemies alike wanted assistance to feed their people and to rebuild their cities and infrastructure for the sake of political stability.

That the United States now played a vital role “stabilizing” the global arena formerly controlled by the European imperial powers became a recurring theme in the larger public discourse. This was evident not only in the Luce media, but also in another widely read publication: the *Reader's Digest*. The magazine *Reader's Digest* served important pedagogical, nationalist, and internationalist purposes during the Cold War. The *Reader's Digest* encouraged a global imagined community through human-interest stories and its humor columns. These efforts, the magazine asserted, would move everyone “toward a friendlier world.”⁵⁴ From the end of World War II, the *Reader's Digest* increasingly called on Americans to reach out and try to understand other peoples of the world. Not confident that their American readership would read articles about far-off lands or foreign policy issues, the editors often placed prompts in the subheadings. One prompt for an article on Iran in 1945 tried to induce readers to peruse it by

53. In his 1630 sermon, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” Winthrop did not say, “the eyes of all the world are upon us,” as commonly believed even today. He wrote, “The eies [eyes] of all people are upon us,” but “all people” meant all the people back in England, not all peoples of the world. Edmund S. Morgan's classic, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (1958), points out that the Puritan migration to “New England” rested on the belief that they would return to reform England. The “eyes” thus referred to those in England, the only ones that mattered to Winthrop; thus his statement, “For wee must consider that wee shall be as a city upon a hill,” urged his fellow passengers to create a model Puritan society for England's sake only.

54. “Toward a Friendlier World,” *Reader's Digest*, June 1945, back cover. Although it had the capital to seek markets abroad even during the Great Depression, the magazine took off internationally, not coincidentally, as the United States developed into a global power after the war. During the Cold War, it summoned Americans to see themselves as global leaders, while it invited its international market-audience to study the American example of an imperfect, but working, democracy. To demonstrate civic responsibility, the *Reader's Digest* printed articles that addressed an array of social problems in race relations, gender equity, and labor-management relations.

insisting, “These events, half a world a way, are important to every American.”⁵⁵ The *Reader’s Digest* also got readers to test their knowledge by providing a map quiz on Europe; it introduced Americans to new important partners in articles such as “Turkey: Tough Ally, Eager Friend”; it warned them that “Democracy’s First—and Last—Chance in Latin America” was now occurring; it pleaded for “Help for Our Steadfast Friends, the Greeks”; and it asked them to consider “Will the Awakening Middle East Turn Toward Russia or the United States?”⁵⁶ A newfound sense of duty propelled the *Reader’s Digest* to urge Americans to be mindful of their historic responsibility. As a May 1947 article intoned, Americans “alone may be able to avert the decline of Western civilization and a reversion to the Dark Ages.”

Underlying these global responsibilities was a profound fear that the torch of Western civilization could be extinguished. The World War II experience—or, again, as Henry Luce described it, “the spread of concentration camps, the revival of torture, the official use of genocide, [and] the splitting of the atom”—made influential editors like Luce, as well as Norman Cousins of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, fear not only for the survival of Western civilization, but also humanity itself.⁵⁷ This insecurity accounted for the postwar popularity of the abridged and multivolume editions of *A Study of History* as well as for the Luce publications’ promotion of Arnold Toynbee’s meditation on the rise and fall of civilizations.⁵⁸ Likewise, libertarian philosophers also expressed their issues in this framework of potential declension. The charter document of Friedrich von Hayek’s Mount Pelerin Society in April 1947 intoned that the “central values of civilization [were] in danger.”⁵⁹ On a lighter note, that same year, two war veterans, Carl Sigman and Bob Hilliard, wrote a hit song, “Civilization” with satirical lyrics that poked fun at the “civilizing” concept, but in so doing, reinforced its primacy to Americans’ self-image. The song appeared in a Broadway revue; a version recorded by Louis Prima remained in Top Ten list for eight weeks in 1947; another version recorded by Danny Kaye and the Andrews

55. The rationale that the U.S. presence abroad is welcomed, if not needed, for its technical know-how, its principle of individual freedom, and its selfless commitment to improving the lives of others has continued to justify U.S. policy. Andre Visson, “Trouble Over Iran” (*New Leader*, September 29, 1945), *Reader’s Digest*, November 1945, 69–72.

56. George Gallup, “Can You Pass This Map Test?” (*Washington Post*, July 20, 1947), *Reader’s Digest*, October 1947, 66; Gordon Gaskill, “Turkey: Tough Ally, Eager Friend” (*American Magazine*, March 1954), *Reader’s Digest*, May 1954, 69–72; Michael Scully, “Democracy’s First—and Last—Chance in Latin America” (*New Leader*, November 30, 1947), *Reader’s Digest*, January 1947, 113–16; Leigh White, “Help for Our Steadfast Friends, the Greeks” (*New Leader*, March 1, 1947), *Reader’s Digest*, April 1957, 59–63; “Will the Awakening Middle East Turn Toward Russia or the United States?” (*Washington Post*, July 14, 1946), *Reader’s Digest*, September 1946, 49–53.

57. [Henry Luce], “How to Think about ‘Civilization’,” *Life*, February 23, 1948, 34; Norman Cousins, “Modern Man is Obsolete,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, August 18, 1945, 5–9.

58. For further discussion, see Naoko Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 77–80.

59. Quoted in Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade against the New Deal* (New York, 2009), 46.

Sisters (“phony African accents and all”) went to No. 1 on *Your Hit Parade*; and the song was covered by many others, including Bing Crosby, Glenn Miller, and Woody Herman.⁶⁰

Bongo, bongo, bongo, I don't wanna leave the Congo
Oh no no no no no
No no no no no!
Bingo, bangle, bungle, I'm so happy in the jungle and I'll tell you
so you will know

Each morning, a missionary advertises neon sign
He tell the native population that civilization is fine
Every educated savage is hollerin' from a bamboo tree
That civilization is a thing for me to see

Whoa, bongo, bongo, bongo, I don't wanna leave the Congo
Oh no no no no no
Bingo, bangle, bungle, I'm so happy in the jungle, I refuse to go
Don't want no bright lights, false teeth, doorbells, landlords
I make it clear
That no matter how they coax me, I'll stay right here

Now, I looked through a magazine the missionary's wife concealed
I see the people who are civilized bang you with automobile
At the movies they have got to pay many coconuts to see
Uncivilized pictures that the newsreel takes of me
So, bongo, bongo, bongo, I don't wanna leave the Congo,
Oh no no no no no-

They hurry like savages to get aboard an iron train
And though it's smoky and it's crowded, they're too civilized to complain
When they've got two weeks vacation, they hurry to vacation ground
They swim and they fish, ha, that's what I do all year round
So bongo, bongo, bongo, I don't wanna leave the Congo
Oh no no no no no
No no no no no!
Bingo, bangle, bungle, I'm so happy in the jungle, I refuse to go
Don't want no bright lights, false teeth, doorbells, landlords . . . streetcars,
taxis-
We make it clear!
They have things like the atom bomb
so I think I'll stay where I “ahm”
Civilization, no no no no no! I stay right here!

60. Michael Sigman, “‘Civilization’ and its Disc Contents,” *Huffington Post*, June 22, 2009. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-sigman/civilization-and-its-disc_b_218587.html (accessed November 16, 2009).

The point, of course, is the concept of civilization was everywhere: from popular publishers to elite intellectuals to kids singing “Bongo, bongo, bongo.” All understood the binary of the civilized to the uncivilized, even if the Sigman-Hilliard song cheerfully blurred the separation of the two. The song provided an upbeat critique of the regimentation and frenetic pace of modern, urban life in which Americans “hurried like savages” to catch crowded, smoke-filled trains. In fact, the lyrics allude to Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), with their acknowledgment of the embedded “primitivity” of modern-day Americans. But, of course, the song rejected Freud’s pessimism and critical insight; its refrain encouraged Americans to imagine the Congolese as the truly primitive ones. Thus, it was not truly meant to critique the missionaries’ attempts to uplift and modernize. Americans may have had the bomb, but they did not really want to live in the “jungle” year round.

The concept of “civilization” rationalized to Americans why their nation was fit to direct fates of other peoples, but just as importantly, it served as a metric to measure one’s own society. The “torch of Western civilization” had been handed to the Americans, but some of them wondered were they “mature” enough to handle the responsibility? “Is the U.S. Fit to Lead the World?” asked a *Reader’s Digest* article in March 1946.⁶¹ Were they suited to the task—how would they go about with the task? We can see that House representatives wrestled with these questions in the debate about the Foreign Assistance Act of 1950 (which eventually passed). The fundamental belief in the rise and fall of civilizations explains why Acheson would use the pejorative “primitives” to describe his political enemies who seemed to be obstructing the projects of modernity that he and other internationalists advocated. For Acheson to call McCarthyites “primitives” meant he believed that they did not understand America’s historic civilizational responsibility. To Morgenthau, the McCarthyites were shortsighted and insular, but through “a stroke of primitive and probably instinctive political genius,” they cast themselves as true, faithful Americans against those who would betray America.⁶² Morgenthau worried that Americans, including the provincial McCarthyites, did not recognize the magnitude of their responsibility now that “America has become the Rome and Athens of the Western world, the foundation of lawful order and the fountainhead of its culture.”⁶³ Yet from their perspective, McCarthy, Sutton, Miller, and others saw Acheson, Morgenthau, and their ilk as overcivilized, effete, and therefore suspect.

Although at cross-purposes, both sides spoke with reference to an ideology about civilizations and the progression of history. It is within this concept about the rise and fall of civilizations that we can better understand Cold War

61. Hutchinson, “Is the U.S. Fit to Lead the World?”

62. Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 5, 152.

63. *Ibid.*, 5.

homophobia. Civilization, on one hand, served as an epistemic metric on a sliding scale of lesser to more “advanced” civilizations, but, on the other, it rested on a binary of “us” versus “them.” But, as Edward Said has shown us, images of the “other” say very little about the actual lives, cultures, and histories of others. Instead, they tell us more about those doing the “othering.” Others are needed for self-identification, self-justification, and self-orientation. Said thus suggested,

[M]any of the most prominent characteristics of modernist culture, which we have tended to derive from purely internal dynamics in Western society and culture, include a response to the external pressure on culture from the imperium.⁶⁴

The pressure on the imperium at this time was indeed the Soviet challenge, but a large part of the struggle was the competition for the adherence of the decolonized or decolonizing nations of the third world. In other words, the lavender scare had a connection to empire that was ideological but not simply in the limited sense of competing political economies. It was ideological in that notions about sexuality were part and parcel of the narratives that have shaped worldviews, defined relationships, and guided action. Again, the claim here is not that domestic political struggles did not matter, but rather that visions of the larger world and America’s role in it also played into the heightened fear and loathing of gays during this period. The following section considers how concern about civilizational decline and American character inflected, and indeed provided, a narrative to justify the persecution of gays during the lavender scare.

DEGENERACY AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Why did the State Department decide to oust gays from its rolls even though at the time it found that no “breach in security” could be traced to a homosexual employee? The surviving documentation on how the State Department rationalized its policy of excluding gays is not voluminous, making it challenging to understand the decision. The richest vein on this topic at the National Archives is one slender folder, “Information on Homosexuals,” which is located in the reading files of Samuel D. Boykin, director of the State Department’s Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs.⁶⁵ (Indeed, R. G. Waldeck’s article on the “homintern” is preserved in that folder.) But like historians of earlier eras who must also work with slim documentation, we need to analyze more deeply the documents that we do have. Scholars of the lavender scare often cite the June 23, 1950, memo by Assistant Secretary of State Humelsine to his superior,

64. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), 188.

65. “Information on Homosexuals,” folder in Reading Files of Director Samuel D. Boykin, box 5, RG 59, NARA.

Undersecretary Webb, and I likewise have already quoted from this memo in this article.⁶⁶ The memo's subject heading was "Problem of Homosexuals and Sex Perverts in the Department of State." Its main objective was to explain how "homosexuals and sex perverts" came to be seen as a department "security risk" and what procedures were being followed to eliminate the "problem." This memo deserves a closer, sustained reading because it articulates what was seldom articulated in a coherent argument, especially in its first two paragraphs (see Figure 1, which is an image of the first page of this memo). We should remember that memos are not simply factual documents; they are also imaginative acts that draw from disparate sources to conjure up a plot that often have significant material outcomes for those affected. The plot driving this particular memo was what its author(s) believed was necessary to prevent the decline of the United States.

The first paragraph tries to historicize homosexuality; the memo does not treat "sex perverts" separately so one may assume that Humelsine (and/or the staffers who drafted this memo) saw homosexuality as a sexual perversion. It begins with broad general statements that establish it as "problem" that has always been present in human society to lesser and greater extent.

Homosexuality, which is the sexual attraction to a person of the same sex, is as old as the history of mankind. From time immemorial all races of man have had to deal with the subject. Some have condoned it and some have condemned it.

By focusing on homosexuality, the memo leaves unmentioned that all sexual practices have been regulated by taboos and norms, which have varied during certain eras and within certain societies and subsocieties.⁶⁷ It nonetheless recognizes sexuality as a historic, social, and political issue, particularly in its next lines:

Studies have been made which purport to relate the strong rise of homosexuality with the accompanying decline of the Egyptian, Greek and Roman Empires. Some experts hold that where the mores of a people have condoned homosexuality through apathy, the vigor and virility of that people have been emasculated.

These words, some of which I quoted in the introduction, should now make greater sense. They suggest that societies that condoned homosexuality were the ones in decline. As the memo provides no citations, we cannot know with certainty what specific scholarship, if any, Humelsine and his staffers used to relate homosexuality with civilizational decline. But we do know that this notion of civilizational declension derives from an Enlightenment view that sees all

66. See footnote 14. All quotes from the memo refer to this source cited there.

67. Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), xiii–xv.

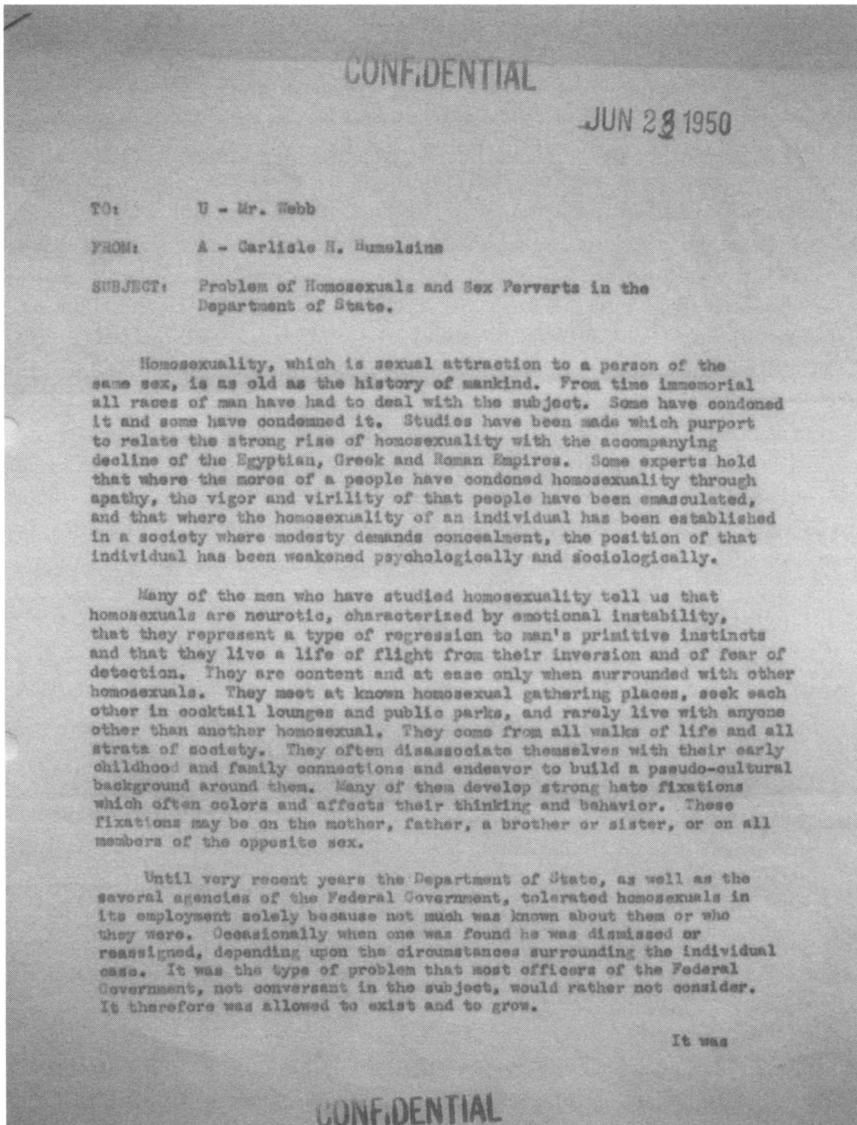


Figure 1: Internal State Department Memo, June 1950.

societies progressing through “stages” of history toward an apex of achievement. This stadial framework lent itself easily to metaphors of biological stages of human development: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. To see societies as organic entities thus meant understanding that all societies would inevitably “age” or decline and eventually “fall” or even die. This

convenient metaphor helped explain as natural the “fall” of great, ancient, “dead” civilizations such as the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman Empires.⁶⁸

We established in the previous section that Americans now believed they had become torchbearers for Western civilization and were anxious about this responsibility. Now we need to examine how they understood what made civilizations decline; for all civilizations eventually declined, they believed. Americans, moreover, had been convinced of this decline as an inevitable fact since the Enlightenment era, as mentioned just above. They thought that the narrative of a successful advance toward progress and modernity always ended badly, and so, since the days of the Early Republic, they looked for signs of “overcivilization.” To a large degree, then, mid-twentieth-century Americans still operated within a late-eighteenth-century republican ideology. This is to say that they too believed that internal weakness of a people, rather than a force of arms, led to the downfall of great states. This is why Cold War liberals saw the confrontation with the Soviet Union, the People’s Republic of China, and other adversaries as a test—not only of U.S. military strength, but also of American character. Note that the stadial framework was gendered as well as raced. At or toward the peak of development, a society or civilization is anthropomorphized as a vigorous, mature (and arguably straight) white male. In decline or senescence, this figurative society is often rendered female.⁶⁹

So Cold War liberals, like Jeffersonian republicans, believed that a strong society was marked by “frugality, industry, temperance, and simplicity” and “virile martial qualities—the scorn of ease, the contempt of danger, the love of valor.”⁷⁰ In contrast, degenerating societies were addicted to luxurious lifestyles or, to imagine in mid-century terms: a vapid, consumerist, television-watching way of life. Thus, development or the project of modernity carried within it the seeds of its own destruction: steady hard work and discipline promoted savings, advancement, and the acquisition of luxuries or “modern conveniences,” but, in turn, these benefits led to enervation and weakness.⁷¹ This internal contradiction was understood during the Early Republic, and according to the historian Gordon Wood, there existed an obsession about luxury, “both as a cause and a symptom of social sickness”:

68. As mentioned above, Arnold Toynbee subscribed to this belief. See Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York, 1947). This is the abridged version of his multivolume work.

69. Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 57. See also Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago, 1996); Kristin L Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT, 1998); Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*.

70. Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998 [1969]), 52.

71. Indeed, concerns about how “soft” American youth lost the “pioneering spirit” helped drive the founding of the Peace Corps. See Fritz Fischer, *Making Them Like Us: Peace Corps Volunteers in the 1960s* (Washington, DC, 1998).

This luxury, not mere wealth but that “dull . . . animal enjoyment” which left “minds stupified, and bodies enervated, by wallowing for ever in one continual puddle of voluptuousness,” was what corrupted a society: the love of refinement, the desire for distinction and elegance eventually weakened a people and left them soft and effeminate, dissipated cowards, unfit and desiring to serve the state.⁷²

Wood’s description of republican ideology is thus helpful to understand the thinking behind the lines in Humelsine’s memo about homosexuality as a sign of degeneration. The mid-century perspective also demonstrated a widespread acceptance of the belief that such “animal enjoyment” feminized a people, making them cowardly and sapping their strength to protect their nation.

Layered upon the memo’s republican ideology are popular derivations of Freudian theory it uses to imagine a connection between civilizational degeneracy and homosexuality. The second paragraph’s first sentence showed contemporary psychoanalytic ideas being combined with older Enlightenment notions:

Many of the men who have studied homosexuality tell us that homosexuals are neurotic, characterized by emotional instability, that they represent a type of regression to men’s primitive instincts and that they live a life of flight from their inversion and of their fear of detection.

That the ideas worked together almost seamlessly is not surprising since Freud was steeped also in Enlightenment-inflected visions of human history. Moreover, as Celia Brickman points out, “The beginnings of psychoanalysis coincided with the heyday of nineteenth-century European colonialism, and Freud borrowed liberally from the colonialist discourse of evolutionary anthropologists at the time.”⁷³ Freud therefore “saw cultures as evolving through the same stages from animistic to religious to scientific, which meant that the Western adult was at the mature end of a continuum that placed the primitive, the child, and the neurotic at its lower end.”⁷⁴ Even from a nonspecialist perspective, this lumping made sense since all three characters could be seen as irrational, superstitious, emotionally volatile, and lacking in self-control or discipline. But Freud was able to equate the primitive with the child and the neurotic by also relying on

72. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*.

73. Celia Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind: Race and Primitivity in Psychoanalysis* (New York, 2003), 4. Brickman also places Freud in the context of a member of a previously excluded ethnic group. Drawing on the works of Sander Gilman and Daniel Boyarin, she points out that as a Jew, Freud himself was categorized as a member of a primitive race. So rather than accepting the Aryan/Jew divide, he replaced it with the opposition of civilized/primitive, firmly placing himself among the civilized. Similar to the political objective of psychoanalysis was Zionism; both aimed at remaking “the feminized, primitivized, and queered Jew into a civilized manly subject . . . a member of the family of civilizing colonizing states rather than a member of a colonized population.” See *ibid.*, 167.

74. Richard W. Noland, *Sigmund Freud Revisited* (New York, 1999), 74.

late-nineteenth-century recapitulation theory. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913), he maintained that contemporary “savages” could give “a well-preserved picture of an early stage of our own development” and could therefore help reconstruct the mental histories of modern Europeans. He furthermore held that there existed “numerous points of agreement” between primitive peoples and neurotics.⁷⁵ This meant that he believed anthropological data on primitives and psychoanalytical data from children and neurotics could mutually help inform solutions to problems posed by the other. So while Freud was clearly a product of his times, his theories were and continue to be read, with significant impact, as timeless and objective science.⁷⁶

The mention of “regression to men’s primitive instinct” is what gives away, of course, the memo’s reliance on Freudian theory. This concept of “regression” is also worth discussing briefly because it, too, is based upon raced, civilizational discourse. Because Freud mapped psychoanalysis onto anthropological theories of evolutionary development, “regression” to primitivity meant a reversal of development, and he saw it as a major root of psychological abnormalities. He cast “[d]eviations from social norms . . . as relics of the past, of insufficiently mastered developmental stages.”⁷⁷ That is to say, the more a subject deviated from those norms, the greater that person’s “primitivity.” This is why Freud described homosexuality not as an illness, but instead “produced by a certain arrest of sexual development.”⁷⁸ Although he parted with his contemporaries in their belief that reproductive heterosexuality was the fundamental purpose of human sexuality in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), he nonetheless categorized homosexuality negatively: as evidence of insufficient or abnormal development.⁷⁹ In this scheme, homosexuals—just as primitives, neurotics, and children (or women for that matter)—were cast as the opposite of stoic, rational, civilized, straight men. This is why the memo characterizes homosexuals as suffering from an instinctual urge to flee.⁸⁰

75. Quoted in Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind*, 67.

76. See *ibid.* A practicing psychotherapist, Brickman earned her degree from the University of Chicago Divinity School. Her book critiques the notion of the nonwhite “primitive” still embedded in psychotherapeutic practice today.

77. *Ibid.*, 86.

78. This oft-quoted line from Freud’s 1935 letter to an American mother was originally published as: Sigmund Freud, “Letter to an American Mother,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 107 (1951): 787.

79. Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind*, 86. The late literary scholar Richard W. Noland, who was also a physician by training, suggested that sexuality became central to Freud’s analysis because it offered him an organic, physical base to his psychological analysis. In 1896, Freud wrote that he longed to find the “solid ground on which I can cease to give psychological explanations and begin to find a physiological foundation.” Quoted in Noland, *Sigmund Freud Revisited*, 33.

80. The “fight-or-flight” response was coined by physiologist Walter B. Cannon in 1915; he characterized it as a basic animal response to stress, and his work shows he also thought within a civilizational model, with frequent use of the word “primitive.” The imagined weakness of homosexuals perhaps led to the memo’s omission of the “fight” part of the response. Walter B. Cannon, *Bodily Changes in Pain Hunger Fear and Rage* (New York, 1915).

We can also see in the memo how experts in the decade after Freud's death in 1939 were rejecting his insistence that homosexuality was a common variation in sexual desire and not an illness.⁸¹ The belief that homosexuality not only indicated unhealthy sexual desire outside the heterosexual "norm," but also a medically treatable illness took hold among many, although not all, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists in the United States during World War II. So the oft-cited 1947 *Newsweek* article, "Homosexuals in Uniform," which reported general information and statistics about homosexuals discharged from the U.S. Army during the war, appeared in the magazine's "Medicine" section.⁸² And two years after the Humelsine memo was written, the American Psychiatric Association formally classified homosexuality as an illness.⁸³ Thus, although the earlier Freudians, especially those in Europe before World War II, were willing "to entertain alternative social arrangements and sexual orientations," American analysts on the whole were much less willing to see as "normal" any deviation from the heterosexual nuclear family.⁸⁴

This deviance from the "normal" family life also weighed heavily in the memo's narrative about homosexuals. Drawing, perhaps, from the "culture-and-personality school" with its focus upon the formative role of childrearing in cultural differences among societies, the memo twice repeats in separate paragraphs that homosexuals have detached themselves from their origins and their families to try to attempt to create "a pseudo-cultural background around them." The "pseudo-cultural," could refer to the image of gays as embracing cosmopolitan, highbrow culture, as well as meaning that homosexuals constructed an alternative world or culture outside the mainstream—"in a world all to themselves," as the memo's fifth paragraph explains. But it denigrates this constructed world not only as ersatz, but also as vile because homosexuals

81. This trend was not across the board, as there still remained sexual liberals. As Joanne Meyerowitz notes, in the late 1930s and 1940s criticism about "what we now called homophobia" could be seen in comparisons, such as those drawn by some members of the Frankfurt School who linked "deep hostility to homosexuals" with racists, anti-Semites, and even fascists. Meyerowitz, "How Common Cultures Shapes the Separate Lives," 1067.

82. "Homosexuals in Uniform," *Newsweek*, June 9, 1947, 54. The article stated that gay soldiers were largely white, better educated than average, law abiding, and able soldiers, but often from "broken homes."

83. Henry Abelove, "Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans," *Dissent* 33 (Winter 1986): 59–69; Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, CA, 1995), 39.

By 1958, it was reported that at the meeting of the American Psychological Association in Washington, DC, Dr. Albert Ellis claimed that homosexuality could be "cured by 'rational psychotherapy.'" This therapy entailed convincing the patient that he held "irrational beliefs"—the "irrational fear of approaching girls" in one case study. Said to be so successful that after nineteen sessions a man of thirty-five was so improved and three years later was "happily married [and] teaching zoology in a Midwestern university." According to Dr. Ellis, the man became a "virtually 100% heterosexually oriented individual." "Rational Psychotherapy Cures One Homosexual," *Science News Letter*, October 11, 1958, 230.

84. Kenneth Lewes, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality* (New York, 1988), 231–32.

allegedly “indulge in acts of perversion which are legion and which are abhorrent [sic] and repugnant to the folkways and mores of our American society.” Furthermore, as the memo depicts rather melodramatically,

They are immoral in their sexual behavior seeking sexual gratification from one person one night and from another person the next in a paltry and endless gesture at a happiness they never realize.

Happiness, of course, was to come from creating a heterosexual nuclear family, which was deemed consistent with the “folkways and mores of our American society.” In opposition to and outside the bounds of “real” or “normal” society, homosexuals were perceived as desperate, pathetic creatures. But to the dismay of State Department leadership, the very marginality of homosexuals appeared to attract them to the diplomatic corps. The department’s cosmopolitan orientation and opportunities for overseas service would allow an escape from the domestic mainstream and lower their “chances of detection.”

But this perception that gays sought to go abroad to escape detection—or, simply to live more freely—was not completely false. William Burroughs, writing in the 1950s, explained that the special attraction of Tangiers to gay writers and intellectuals like himself was “exemption” from interference, legal or social. “Your private life is your own, to act exactly as you please.”⁸⁵ That places like Tangiers gained a reputation for sexual permissiveness and became a haven for gays was rooted, moreover, in a history of colonialism. As the literary scholar Joseph A. Boone points out, gay men sought out North Africa since colonized by the French in the early nineteenth century “to discover what they already suspected was there: a colonized Third World in which the availability of casual sex is based on the economics of boys.”⁸⁶ By the late nineteenth century, they included such men as André Gide, Oscar Wilde, Alfred Douglas, and others. Indeed, certain colonies “gained fame as sites of homosexual license,” to the extent that the French slang, *faire passer son brevet colonial* (literally to test someone for his colonial diploma) meant “to initiate him to sodomy.”⁸⁷ But we should keep in mind that individuals from colonizing countries went abroad not only for sexual freedom, but also for adventure, career advancement, and a host of other reasons. It is also important to note that sexuality overall, not merely homosexuality, was a fundamental element of colonial rule. Writing about the British, the historian Ronald Hyam insists, “it is quite impossible to understand the nature of the British empire, or the dynamics of British expansion overseas, without taking account of the sexual attitudes and expectations of men who were in charge.”⁸⁸ And other scholars of European colonialism cited above would also

85. Quoted in Joseph A. Boone, “Vacation Cruises; Or, the Homoerotics of Orientalism,” *PMLA* 110, no. 1 (January 1, 1995): 99.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 1.

88. Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*.

implicate the women.⁸⁹ Westerners imposed their own sexual mores, tried to stop prostitution and concubinage, and practiced eugenics in the colonies and other non-Western nations such as Japan.⁹⁰

At this point, it may be helpful to address the question as to whether the United States exported its homophobia during the lavender scare in a way that transformed other societies. To be sure, the lavender scare's impact on the U.S. military abroad could have influenced how locals perceived or treated homosexuals. But we should keep in mind that most societies were already homophobic, including their main Cold War adversaries, largely because of an earlier Christian European influence.⁹¹ Interdiction against same-sex relations came with biblical law, especially with Christianity, which Europeans then spread overseas.⁹² For example, Spanish, French, and English colonists in the Americas tried to end the practice of cross-dressing and same-sex relations in many Native American cultures.⁹³ Spanish colonists in the sixteenth century reported being horrified to discover same-sex practices, and most infamously, Vasco Núñez de Balboa set dogs upon a number of "sodomites" to eat them alive.⁹⁴ And to repeat, the scholarship on sexuality and empire connects colonialism, the "civilizing mission," and the policing of sexual practices. They demonstrate how Euro/American overseas imperialism gave new definitions to what sexual behaviors and practices could be deemed acceptable or "civilized."⁹⁵ So successful were such attempts to link proper sexual behavior with civilized modernity that same-sex practices once deemed normal began to be seen as an unwholesome Western import by those who had been colonized or invaded by Westerners.⁹⁶

89. See footnote 13.

90. This encouragement of eugenics and birth control continued into the postwar period. See Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); Aiko Takeuchi-Demirici, "Conceiving National Bodies: The Trans-Pacific Politics of Birth Control, 1920–1950s" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2012).

91. Moreover, it would also be difficult to distinguish the American from the European influence on views regarding homosexuality in places where both Americans and Europeans have had a presence (i.e., most of the decolonized world).

92. See Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*.

93. Michael A. Lutes, "Berdache," in *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, ed. George E. Haggerty (New York, 2000), 114.

94. James Neill, *The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies* (Jefferson, NC, 2009), 26–27.

95. For example, in *Cartographies of Desire*, Gregory Pflugfelder explains that the process of modernization for the Meiji state meant not only industrializing and building a strong military, but also proving to the Western nations that Japan was civilized. This meant regulating sexuality, that is, eliminating concubinage as well as same-sex practices. Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600–1950* (Berkeley, CA, 2000).

96. The narrowing of acceptable sexual behavior has been so powerful that many Africans, Zimbabweans as well as South Africans, see AIDS as an imported "white man's disease." Oliver Philips, "Zimbabwean Law and the Production a White Man's Disease," in *Sexualities and Society: A Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Weeks, Janet Holland, and Matthew Waites (Cambridge, 2003), 162–73.

Thus, when China and Cuba recriminalized homosexuality, they identified homosexuality as a sign of “bourgeois decadence.” Similar to the earlier Bolsheviks, who also legalized homosexuality, the early Chinese Communists also promoted sexual liberation—in opposition to greater strictures against homosexuality that came with Western contact during the Qing.⁹⁷ But when Mao Zedong came to power in 1949, he recriminalized homosexuality, as Joseph Stalin had done fifteen years earlier. Fidel Castro, also arguing that homosexuality among Cubans was a result of bourgeois decadence, asserted that revolutionary Cuba “needed strong men to fight wars, sportsmen, men who had no psychological weaknesses.”⁹⁸

The State Department memo also stated that it had no need for men with “psychological weaknesses.” It reveals that the department’s alarm about gays supposedly flocking to the department for the opportunities to go abroad and create a “pseudo-cultural” world was an image problem. This, however, was not so much about American image abroad—what non-Americans thought about the United States—since this matter was not raised to the undersecretary, who oversaw the department’s operations. There may have been worry about potentially negative impressions overseas, but this appears not to have been important enough to emphasize within an image-conscious department. Yet the image problem the State Department was having—the one that began this bureaucratic problem—was a domestic one, albeit a domestic one that was also anxious about America’s place in the world. Overall, then, the issue was about internal weakness and vulnerability. The last lines of the memo indicate this:

We believe that most homosexuals are weak, unstable and fickle people who fear detection and who are therefore susceptible to the wanton designs of others.

We have no evidence, however, that these designs of others have caused a breach of the security of the Department. Yet the tendency toward character weaknesses has led us to the conclusion that the known homosexual is unsuited for employment in the Department.

What has been striking to most scholars of the lavender scare is the stated presumption that homosexuals were “susceptible to the wanton designs of others.” This referred to their imagined exposure to blackmail—even though, as the final sentence says, there was no evidence of a security breach. If our analysis were limited to these last two lines, then we might be justified in believing that

97. Bret Hinsch, “China,” in *Gay Histories and Cultures*, 187.

98. Quoted in Ian Lumsden, *Machos Maricones & Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia, 1996), 61.

Lumsden points out that as Castro moved closer to the Soviets, he took cues from Stalinist recriminalization of homosexuality. This had “fertile ground in Cuba, given its own traditional prejudices and the universal belief of Cuban doctors, psychiatrists, and lawyers that homosexuality entailed crime and social delinquency as much as gender inversion and medical disease.” *Ibid.*, 64–65.

this revealed the totality of the motivations behind the lavender scare. But a close reading of the entire document has shown that the department saw the lavender scare through the lens of its concern about the place of the United States in the history of the world's civilization.

CONCLUSION

Today, the lavender scare is remembered and studied, as it should be, as a case of Cold War injustice. There was no material cause for the dismissals and persecution of homosexuals in the government or other places of authority. Just as no Japanese American was ever found guilty of stateside sabotage during World War II, no homosexual was found guilty of betraying the nation during the Cold War. In both instances, government officials understood that they lacked material evidence, but they forged ahead with discriminatory policies that had grave consequences for those who were scapegoated and targeted. The purpose of this article was to demonstrate the importance of a neglected element that rationalized the lavender scare.

Partisan politics, no doubt, laid a basis for the lavender scare, but what also mattered was how Americans saw themselves and their "civilization" at this juncture in world history, as their nation appeared to have "ascended" to hegemony. With worldviews that presumed a stadial vision of civilizations, Americans contextualized their Cold War struggle in world historic terms that they understood to be true prior to the Cold War. Internationalists like Acheson and Morgenthau took seriously their role as torchbearers for Western civilization, but they, and other Cold War liberal pundits, also feared that the American people might not be up to the task. The ever-present specter of civilizational decline looming over them, they looked anxiously for the telltale signs, as previous generations of Americans did before them. Their political opponents also worried about decline, but believed that self-preservation of the nation meant separating and fortifying American "character" and resources away from the teeming masses of the world. Thus, Miller's homophobic insertion came during congressional deliberations about extending economic aid to the brown people who had been colonized by Western powers. Colonialism was intrinsic to notions about civilization and Enlightenment stadialism. Sexuality was also an elemental way in which hierarchies of power were rationalized in an imperialist framework: who was civilized/uncivilized or worthy/unworthy. By the mid-twentieth century, these rationalizations were deeply informed by a Freudian theory that was ideological but taken and implemented as if it were purely objective science.

Sexuality, then, fundamentally informs America's relationship to the world. This statement would not come as a surprise to those who have studied the role of sexuality in European colonialism. Postcolonial scholars, moreover, understand the mutually constitutive relationship between the Enlightenment and colonialism, and that modernity was created through the establishment of

colonies and the efforts to keep a grip on them.⁹⁹ Americanists, in this respect, seem to be slower to recognize this factor. It parallels, perhaps, the continuing reluctance among many Americans to see theirs, too, as an empire. But we should acknowledge the belief that homosexuality and civilizational decline were connected because it was not episodic to the lavender scare of the early Cold War years.

On May 13, 1971, Richard Nixon, reacting to the popular sitcom *All in the Family*, speculated that Rob Reiner's role of "Meathead" was bisexual. Nixon was "outraged" about the growing acceptance of homosexuality in American culture and society. Ranting to his aides, he said, "you know what happened to the Greeks. Homosexuality destroyed them. Sure, Aristotle was a homo, we all know that, so was Socrates." John Ehrlichman then chimed in with the observation that Socrates "never had the influence TV had." Nixon went on: "Do you know what happened to the Romans? The last six emperors were fags."¹⁰⁰ Nixon could have been echoing what he remembered from when he served in Congress. He was a House member at the time of Miller's statement and of the internal State Department memo. But it is unlikely that he could remember one or had access to the other. Instead, Nixon had probably retained these homophobic notions about the fall of great empires, which indicates that they had circulated widely among policymakers during the lavender scare. Twenty years later during a period of great social and political upheaval, Nixon still linked homosexuality, degeneracy, and national security.

You see, homosexuality, dope, uh, immorality in general: These are the enemies of strong societies. That's why the Communists and the left-wingers are pushing it. They're trying to destroy us.¹⁰¹

Nixon rose to national prominence as a red-baiting Republican. Most of his Democratic adversaries were dead or discredited; the old Cold Warrior even at the peak of his power continued to worry that homosexuality was a sign of a society's internal weakness and decay.

99. For further discussion, see Naoko Shibusawa, "Culture and Ideology," in *The Oxford Reader on Cold War History*, ed. Richard Immerman and Petra Goedde (Oxford, 2012). For an example of scholarship emphasizing how the colonies affected the metropole, see Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, CA, 2000).

Not all Europeanists, however, have recognized this connection between colonialism and modernity. Lynn Hunt, for example, neglects the fact that while Europeans came to see torture as a violation of human rights, they nonetheless continued to rationalize and practice it on nonwhites, particularly slaves and the colonized. Lynn Avery Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York, 2007).

100. Quoted in Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture*, 5.

101. *Ibid.*, 6.