

Notes from the Underground

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The Historical Underground

Fashionable History

One of fashion’s most influential and recognizable designers, Christian Dior, was born on January 21, 1905 along the coast of Normandy, France. People around the world are familiar with his name and his fashion house, but many may not be familiar with how he became a world-renowned designer. Dior began designing clothing as a child and teenager and later sold his design sketches at the Paris art gallery where he worked. Dior joined the French Army when World War II began, but he quickly left the army following France’s surrender to Nazi Germany in June 1940. In 1941, he began working for the design house of Lucien Lelong, which was commissioned to create clothing for the wives of Nazi officers occupying France. While Dior himself was forced to dress the Nazis, his sister Catherine was an active member of the French Resistance before being arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned

in the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp; she was among the prisoners liberated in May 1945.

Following the war, Dior decided to leave Lelong and create his own fashion house. His first collection premiered in 1947 and received heavy criticism due to the amount of fabric used in each dress. Dior, however, was undaunted, arguing that he wanted to remind women, especially French women, of the luxury and style they were accustomed to before the stark economic realities of the Great Depression and World War II forced frugality and rationing.

In the 1950s, Christian Dior based his fashion house around collections of luxurious clothes with soft shoulders, wispy waists, and full flowing skirts intended for what he called “flower women.” This image worked perfectly

with the concept of the “perfect housewife,” which became popular throughout the U.S. and Europe during the 1950s. Dior died in October 1957, but his legacy of creating beautiful and luxurious clothing continues today.

~Kristy Birch, Faculty



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Imprisoned: A Poem

Jackson Kelley, Student

By

Imprisoned
 Confined. Secluded. Trapped.
 Prison is the place where lawbreakers go.
 Confined. Secluded. Trapped.
 It is our Destiny to control this land!
 Confined. Secluded. Trapped.
 Your land will provide for us a wealth fit
 for kings!
 Confined. Secluded. Trapped.
 You must believe in our god to live in this
 land!
 Confined. Secluded. Trapped.
 Your people are only savages!
 Confined. Secluded. Trapped.
 If you won't leave then we'll remove you!

Isolated. Removed. Imprisoned.
 We have lived.
 We have died.
 We are immortal.
 We are free.



Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*

Joan Jacobs Brumberg's book, *The Body Project* (1997), examines how women have experienced their transition into womanhood from the 1830s to the present. Investigating girls' and women's diaries, Brumberg attempts to reconstruct the way women experienced menarche (their first menstruation) and how they thought about their own bodies.

In her chapter on menarche, Brumberg argues that doctors, schools, and all-female organizations have replaced mothers in educating young girls about their transition into womanhood. Furthermore, she notes that menarche has become a hygienic and economic ritual, rather than a social and spiritual one. Thus, menarche is now associated with buying products such as tampons, pads, and training bras, rather than it being a symbolic entrance into their child-bearing years.

Another crucial chapter covers the transformation of how women have patrolled their own bodies. While the corset caged and molded women's bodies to fit a societal ideal in the nineteenth century, Brumberg asserts that moral character (i.e. – selflessness

and doing good deeds) was still more important than beauty. In the twentieth century, weight became a more central concern and, in order to control it, women resorted to dieting and psychological methods. Even those women who do not develop eating disorders today are still subjected to such self-scrutiny that most develop a "normative obsession."

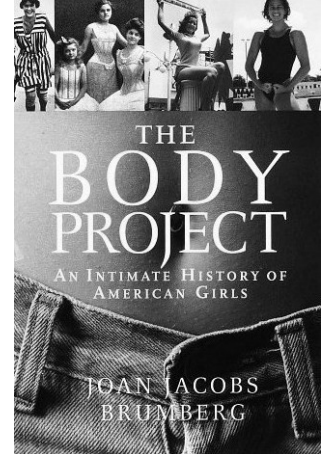
Brumberg concludes the body of her book with a chapter on changing views of virginity. Over the course of the twentieth century, sexuality evolved to be promoted by the media and popular culture as "the ultimate form of self-expression." Yet Brumberg cautions that these changing views coincide with a society that is increasingly sexualizing young girls and is obsessed with violence, all of which lead to problems such as emotional unpreparedness, pregnancy, STDs, increased risk of ovarian cancer, and rape. As a result, Brumberg advocates setting boundaries for developing girls. In short, she wants parents to have an open dialog with their children and establish a set of "sexual ethics," which will allow "young women [to] develop a sense of what is a fair, pleasurable, and respon-

sible use of their bodies."

Overall, it is clear Brumberg is repulsed by what American culture has done to young women by stripping them of meaningful pursuits and replacing them with trivial body projects. Although I share this revulsion, Brumberg goes too far in certain areas. For example, Brumberg is unable to produce any evidence that conclusively suggests there were meaningful rituals associated with this transition into womanhood in the colonial era. It is tempting to always look back in history and read culture and meaning into situations where there may not have been any because it then becomes much easier to criticize the present and our "lack of culture."

All that said, Brumberg's larger thesis regarding the increasing importance of women's bodies to their identity is persuasive. Additionally, just because Western culture may have failed to create a meaningful conversation about menarche in the past does not excuse us from trying to remedy the situation today by educating young women about the meaning of menarche and about the responsible use of contraception.

~ Gregory Kosc, Faculty



The Body Project
and other fascinating
books are available at
our library

Conversations with History Kristy Birch

What courses do you teach at TCC?

I currently teach History 1301 and 1302 survey courses of U.S. History at TCC Southeast, North Lake College, and Texas Woman's University.

How and why did you decide to become an historian?

When I was a student at TCC's Southeast campus, I took a U.S. History class and my instructor was John Perkins. He was really engaging and his ability to make the material relevant sparked my interest in the profession. I've always been interested in history but now I wanted to spend the rest of my life experiencing it.

What is your academic interest/ and field of expertise?

While at Texas Woman's University I was able to narrow my study of U.S. History to that of the twentieth century with a specialization in the History of Sport. My interest in Sport's History can be traced back to my childhood. My dad

served in the Army and while the family was stationed in Germany, we would watch baseball games together and it was during these times we felt like we were back home.

What is your favorite team now and of all-time?

Well, since I'm a hometown girl, I root for the Rangers. In regards to my favorite team of all-time, I have to side with The Murderers' Row, the 1920s Yankees!

Why are they called The Murderers' Row?

Because they murdered it!

Fair enough ... Shifting gears...

What do you see is the greatest concern to the modern Feminist movement?

I think that the greatest concern to the modern Feminist movement is the same concern that has plagued the movement from the beginning, which is that not all women are willing to look beyond what

they have and help others. Complacency is the biggest problem with any movement, and the fact that many women in America feel they don't experience any overt discrimination or deprivation, sets the work that women have been doing since the 1840s back one slow step at a time. All women are responsible for the government's treatment of the gender; if we as individual women make the choice to allow the government to take away fundamental rights and necessities, as well as equalities, we are stripping every woman in America of those same rights, necessities, and equalities.

If you could lunch with any historical figure, where would you go and what would you order? What do you think you two would talk about?

I would have lunch with Jane Addams, a progressive women's rights advocate who founded the Hull House. We would go to Gino's Pizza in Chicago and order a thin crust cheese pizza. We would definitely talk about her work with settlement houses (Hull House) and

why she championed women's suffrage.

If you could fight any historical figure, who would it be and why?

Easy. Thomas Jefferson. A solid right hook to the chin because I feel like he thought of himself as too important to understand his own hypocrisy.



Behind the Mask of Anarchy

What comes to mind when the word anarchy is mentioned is chaos, violence, and social disorder. Despite these images, however, the primary goal of anarchism, as a philosophical viewpoint, is to do away with all of these negative phenomena by abolishing the state and replacing it with a cooperative community predicated on voluntary human relations and communal solidarity.

Although the concept of a stateless society goes as far back as ancient China, the ideas of modern anarchism sprang from the French Enlightenment. English journalist and political philosopher, William Godwin, is considered by many to be the first proponent of modern anarchism. In his 1793 book, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Modern Morals and Manners*, Godwin states that both monarchies, and the newly created parliamentary democracy of the French Revolution, were corrupt means of dominance over the people. This, according to Godwin, stalled rational individual thought, and

the only solution was to completely abolish the state and concepts such as law, private property, and marriage.

Godwin's anti-statist views were often accompanied by ideas about individualism that came into conflict with the more communally-oriented ideas of Anarcho-Communism, which tended to stress cooperation between individuals by placing more emphasis on the concept of mutual aid. In his book, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, the nineteenth-century Russian philosopher Peter Kropotkin revises Darwin's theory of evolution by suggesting that cooperation promotes the survival of a species more so than competition. As a result, his version of anarchism stressed more voluntary cooperation among people to achieve basic needs.

This is not to say that violent anarchists do not exist; but the actions of a minority faction within the movement throughout history do not justify

painting the entire philosophy with such a broad brush. In fact, a more critical look into the leading philosophers of the various forms of anarchism demonstrates a widespread commitment to peace, cooperation, and anti-statist values.

~ Joseph Huber, Student



Peter Kropotkin

Atlantic Connections: The English Civil War

Transatlantic history is a field of study that explores the exchange between countries or regions tangent to the Atlantic Ocean. It suggests that history in this region develops cross-culturally. Many examples of this phenomenon transpire throughout history. One example of this can be seen in the English Civil War, when many ideas from England spread to the American colonies and shaped colonial societies in the Atlantic world.

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1642, great discontent flourished throughout the kingdom as activist groups began questioning the traditional social and political order. Led by Gerrard Winstanley, the Diggers were like agrarian communists who believed land should be distributed equally and available for cultivation to anyone, especially the poor who were starved due to the continued increase in food prices. The Diggers supported a more egalitarian government over the country's absolute monarchy, which they believed was depriving Englishmen of their rights.

Another radical group, the Ranters, embraced Antinomianism. They considered themselves free from all law and even went to the extreme of public nudity. They questioned everything in society and were considered a threat to the common social order.

And finally, there were the Levellers, who attempted to level all differences between men throughout society, for they believed rights should not be controlled by the government but rather by each individual. The ideas of the leader, John Lilburne, were about religious tolerance, popular sovereignty, and equal rights by law.

Collectively, these groups called into question the government's authority and structure, and these ideas would later spread to the colonies and eventually influence the ideas of the American Revolution, showing the transatlantic exchange of ideas from the core to the periphery. For example, prior to the Civil War, an absolute monarchy ruled through celestial power over a subordinate Parliament, which had two houses: the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

Members of the House of Lords were selected by birthright, whereas the House of Commons was composed of "commoners." Since the House of Commons had far more people but less power, conflict emerged. Before long, members of the more radical groups started claiming that they were all Englishmen and therefore should have equal rights. Though not everyone took the radicals seriously, Parliamentarians even began using the phrase "Rights as Englishmen" to accuse King Charles I of corruption

and oppression against his people. The population and Parliament disapproved of the way the king was ruling, and for the first time in English history overthrew the absolute monarchy! Oliver Cromwell was appointed Protectorate to execute Parliament's decisions, but he died in 1658 and England reinstated the monarchy by appointing Charles II king. The new monarch's power, however, was severely limited by a constitution, effectively turning England into a constitutional monarchy.

As far as the Americas were concerned, the English colonies were deeply connected to events across the ocean. Although most of the colonists sought to stay out of the battle between Parliament and the King, Parliamentary rule brought more centralized power over the colonies than ever before. In order to ensure domination over the colonial world, Parliament passed laws such as the Navigation Act to clamp down on colonial activity, which provoked the colonists to call for the same "Rights as Englishmen" that radicals in England were calling for. This same language was used to justify breaking away from the monarch over a century later! Essentially, the idea that all Englishmen deserved equal rights spread across the Atlantic and came to define the people living there for decades to come.

"True freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and preservation, and that is in the use of the earth"

~

**Gerrard
Winstanley**

~ Kelsey Hale, Dual Credit Student



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"HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE"



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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are proud to present to you our fifth edition of *Notes From the Underground* with an emphasis on Women's History Month. Once again, we are proud to tout the diversification of our authors. We have several female contributors in this issue, and this month's Faculty Spotlight features a female instructor, who also happens to be a former TCC-Southeast student!

The Historical Underground would like to keep you informed of some upcoming events such as the Women's History Month talk led by TCC-Southeast instructors Kallie Kosc and Greg Kosc entitled, "Feminism: Then & Now," which will be held in the North Ballroom on Tuesday, March 27th at 3:30pm. The Underground also plans to visit the JFK Museum in Dallas and ultimately create a mini-documentary on what the museum has to offer and the impact this tragic event had on our society.

As always, our meetings are every Friday at 12:50pm in ESEE 1224. If you are interested in joining the club please attend these weekly meetings and stay abreast of our activities online via CampusCruiser. To register as a member, simply go to the "Campus Life" tab in CampusCruiser and scroll down to "Southeast Campus Clubs" until you find The Historical Underground. We are currently working on a top ten historical figures of all-time list, which we plan to unveil in our April issue of *Notes*. We also want to encourage all students to contribute to the newsletter. If you are interested, but don't have a clue where or how to start writing an historically-themed article or book review—don't panic! We have put together guides that will help you through the process of researching and writing an historically-themed article or book review. It is our goal to make sure that this newsletter becomes a positive *teaching and learning* tool; so, we want to assure you that we will not only help you through the process of narrowing down a topic, but we are also going to be giving you feedback on your writing. In short, we'll guide you through the entire process of choosing a topic, researching it, and editing your work.

~ Bradley J Borougerdi, Greg Kosc, & Eric Salas

