

Notes from the Underground

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The Historical Underground

Hashish, Orientalism, Medicine and Intoxication

By: Bradley J Borougerdi, Faculty

The hemp plant has a unique place in American history. Before the female flower was used for intoxication in the west, people thought of the plant as an important source of fiber. This changed when an Irish doctor working in India for the British Empire decided to experiment with a preparation called ganja that he witnessed Indians using to alter their state of consciousness. Before long, he transformed the smokeable substance in a liquid medicine known then as a tincture, which transferred across the Atlantic to become part of American medicine by the 1840s. Although many doctors praised its usefulness in curing a variety of ailments, others complained that

the medicine was inconsistent and dangerous.

One of the most frequently cited comments against using the hemp plant for medicine was the fact that people associated it with the so-called Orient. For 19th century Americans, the Orient was an imaginary landscape that both attracted and repulsed people who read about it or heard rumors of what went on there. Bayard Taylor, who gained a rather popular reputation in the 1850s for his vivid descriptions of traveling through eastern countries, wrote an article that he published in *Putnam Magazine* titled, "Visions of Hash-eesh." In it, he described experiencing a lurid sense of intoxication while under the influence of the drug in Damascus. A few friends joined him in the experiment, and all three reportedly reveled in the euphoric feelings the drug purportedly induced.

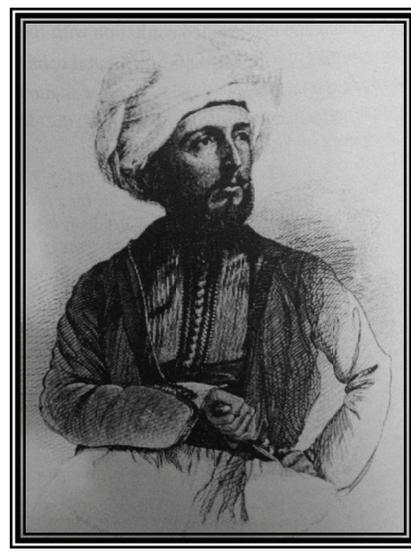
However, the experiment quickly turned into a nightmare, for visions of horror and dread replaced the bliss. The sensation was so bad that Taylor reported feeling that "a demon had entire possession of me." These two opposing experiences, which he described as both the "paradise" and "hell" of hashish, reflect the duality at work in Orientalism that many people after him perpetuated in regards to their experiences with the hemp plant in general. For example, those who wrote about the plant's fibrous qualities associated it with productivity, resourcefulness and western ingenuity. Even the medicine had become a source of occidental pride, for it demonstrated that westerners could in fact take exotic substances from the "Orient" and transform them into productive, useful commodities.

The problem, though, was trying to divorce the association of hemp medicines from oriental degeneracy. This problem became a big issue after a writer named Fitzhugh Ludlow published his book, *The Hashish Eater*. Ludlow had been inspired by Taylor's work, which enticed him to dedicate his entire book

to describing the effects of the drug. However, it is worth noting that Ludlow was not consuming hashish at all but rather the tincture of cannabis described earlier, which was in fact a medicine that Americans could obtain from their physician. Indeed, this is where Ludlow got the medicine from (a doctor, not a modern day drug dealer!), but after finding out that the tincture he consumed turned out to be made from the same plant that hashish was made from, he decided to sensationalize his experience in the same Oriental fashion that Taylor did. As a result, Americans increasingly began associating hemp medicines with hemp intoxicants, which people heard fantastical stories about in travelogues and Oriental tales such as *The Arabian Nights*. Since these stories portrayed easterners as exotic, indulgent people who used intoxicants in detrimental ways, it stood to reason that hemp could be dangerous, which over time helped contribute to the perception that it was a deadly substance that needed to be regulated.

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Bayard Taylor
in Eastern
Costume

Voices from the Past: A Brave Native

By: Leah Tampkins, Student

The Mohawk Indian Joseph Brant was known as the “man of two worlds.” He grew up a Mohawk Indian in upstate New York, but was educated in a Christian school and became an important diplomat and soldier for his people. After fighting for the British in the American Revolution, he spent the rest of his life as a Christian missionary amongst Indians in Canada. When asked which society, Indian or White, he preferred, Brant delivered a lengthy response that pointed to the hypocrisies and inhumane practices of so-called “Christian” nations.

The Mohawk, who refer to their own people as the Kaniengehaga people, which means “People of the Flint,” had tumultuous military and religious relations with the French and their Native allies for more than a hundred years by the time Brant (Thayendanegea) was born in 1745. Eventually, his mother



married into a powerful Mohawk family that had deep connections with the Mohawk’s greatest ally, the British. With the help of these new connections, Brant joined the British army and met Dr. Eleazar Wheelock, who placed him in a Christian school in Lebanon, Connecticut. At the school he proved to be very helpful to the many scholars, taught them his native language, and became an interpreter for the British regarding Indian Affairs. All of this happened to Brant before the age of 15, after which he participated militarily in the Seven Years War between France and Britain. This massive conflict was one of the first truly global wars in world history, which took place on three different continents. For Brant, though, his involvement on the North American front gained him much respect in the eyes of the British. Then, after his people and the British were defeated in the American Revolution, Brant went to live in Canada on land given to him and his followers by the British government.

Since the British respected Brant, they asked him to write an article about the differences between the Native world and the White world. Those who asked him to write hoped that he would show how superior white civilization was, but he chose instead to provide a much different and more truthful perspective. Towards the end of the essay, he compared the different civilizations by depicting just how hypocritical White people were back then. In particular, he took exception with the practice of imprisoning people for debt. As he wrote, “Great Maker of the World! And do you call yourselves Christians? ... Does then the religion of him whom you call Savior, inspire this conduct, and to lead this

practice [of imprisoning people for debt]? Surely no.” He went on to chastise the Whites, demanding that they “cease to call other [tribal] nations savage, when you are tenfold more the children of cruelty, then they.” As a final blow, Brant stated, “And I seriously declare, that I had rather die by the most severe tortures ever inflicted by any savage nation on the continent, than languish in one of your prisons for a single year.” Moreover, Brant told historians just how cruel the settlers were to the natives, revealing how at least one native felt about how his people were being treated. In his article he made them see who they really were and to notice that the white civilization and native civilization were not as different as Whites thought. Perhaps, since Brant continued to work as a Christian missionary till the end of his life, he was trying to make British Christians live less hypocritically.



“The Mohawks have on all occasions shown their zeal and loyalty to the Great King; yet they have been very badly treated by his people.”

-Joseph Brant

The Mattachine Society

By: Isis Molina, Student

Being different in modern society remains nearly as unaccepted as it was a century ago; or even more so since the dawn of humanity (which is a story that varies depending on religious or scientific views). Evidently, society fears the unknown, and much of the time, the unknown is unknown because it is different. It is now 2013; the world is filled with unbelievable intelligence, and still a big part of society remains ignorant to the daily struggle of the homosexual population, and continues to frown upon their open declaration of being so-called *different*.

Of course, back in the good ol' days the world was much harsher to those admitting to having an "unusual" sexual orientation, otherwise known as homosexuals. A few decades ago, the occurrence of the widely spread AIDS—originally called GRID, short for Gay-related Immune Deficiency—reinforced the misunderstanding, and unfiltered hatred towards homosexuals for some people in society. Those who knew nothing about the deadly disease, and of homosexuality in general, pointed their fingers at the minority and brought them down, rather than being concerned for their neighbors or fellow citizens.

In 1948, Harry Hay gathered his openly-homosexual acquaintances in order to create an organization, in which they would assist each other, and would inform the larger public about homosexuality. This was ultimately for the purpose of showing heterosexuals that homosexuality was nothing to fear. Hay believed that after the Germans' cruel and vicious attack on the Jews (as well as other races and so-called "deviants") and America's infamous treatment of African-Americans, that homosexuals would be the next obvious political target. Hay risked his own skin, since he was both a Communist and a homosexual in a day and age when neither of those labels were taken lightly. After searching for sponsorship from open-minded, influential people, he received

help from Minister Stephen H. Fritchman, as well as other experts such as Sociologist Paul K. Rowan and Psychologist Evelyn Hooker.

It wasn't until 1950, though, that he was able to create the "The Mattachine Foundation." Hay's prospectus focused on assuring people that his organization would contribute to society, so they could be respected despite their differences with heterosexuals. Eventually, the organization was incorporated in 1953 and became "The Mattachine Society," a non-profit corporation. The corporation administered help to homosexuals in need of employment and housing, and offered psychological or legal aid in some cases, hoping to find non-violent measures against discrimination. Their ultimate goal was to conduct medical research related to homosexuality, and to make it available to the public.

The society created another organization named "One, Inc.," which operated a monthly publication known as "One." In this magazine, the readers were informed of the many problems facing the homosexual community, such as civil-rights violations, employment discrimination, and FBI harassment, which included severe and often brutal questioning about their sexual orientation. At the time, the FBI was led by director J. Edgar Hoover, who was highly rumored to be involved in homosexual activities with his friend and colleague Clyde Tolson. Despite his own actions, however, Hoover kept many tabs on homosexuals, including "The Mattachine Society," which he monitored excessively in hopes of obtaining information that would tarnish their reputation and increase pressure against them in society. "The Mattachine Society" was also being closely supervised for reasons ranging from suspicion of Communist activity to fear of their members inflicting harm on what the FBI considered good, wholesome Americanism.

The society was dismantled and went bankrupt in the 1970s partly due to its lack of funding, which relied solely on donations. The public also grew tired of their passivity, especially since more people

started moving towards a more aggressive agenda (i.e. the Gay Activists Alliance). Additionally, some of the society's leaders either disagreed with each other, or became weary of a fight. "The Mattachine Society" was short-lived, as seen in a larger scale; but it was the first organization created to provide support for homosexuals, especially by people who could easily have been prosecuted for their political stance and sexual orientation. "The Mattachine Society" offered a helping hand to homosexuals, and they were able to achieve a union that promoted confidence and strength in a community of people who were persecuted for their own humanity. The society acted peacefully and carefully in their attempts to prove to heterosexuals that homosexuals were also important members of society and not predators or delinquents. In other words, they tried to make the majority of the judgmental population accept homosexuals simply as human beings, which we are still struggling to accomplish in our society today.



Members of the Mattachine Society in a rare group photograph. Pictured are Harry Hay (upper left), then (l-r) Konrad Stevens, Dale Jennings, Rudi Gernreich, Stan Witt, Bob Hull, Chuck Rowland (in glasses), Paul Bernard. Photo by James Gruber.



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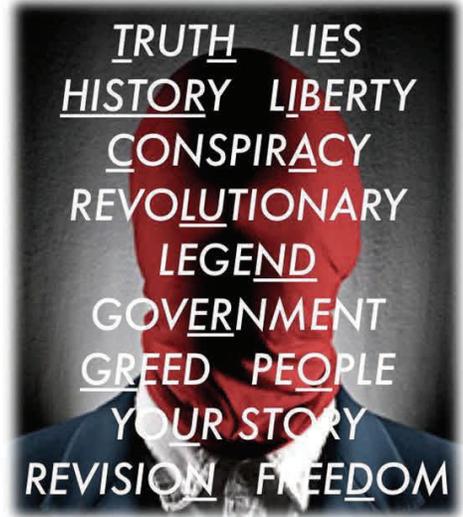
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“HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE”



Join Us: Fridays/2 p.m./ESEE 1222

Contact: Bradley.borougerdi@tccd.edu



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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Greetings brothers and sisters. The Historical Underground welcomes you back to campus with another volume of *Notes from the Underground (NFTU)*. We would like to start this academic year off right by acknowledging our new officers which include President Serena Deleon, Vice-President Matthew Shaw, Secretary Leah Tampkins, Treasurer Fahd Aziz, and Minister of Propaganda Mahyar Taskindoust. Their leadership will guide our weekly meetings held every Friday at 2 p.m. in room ESEE 1222. Much thanks is due to our outgoing officer as well, Caleb Hinojos, who is still a member and contributor to *Notes* but is taking a much deserved break from the work involved in being an officer.

This is the first issue of the new volume, and it features two students' articles! One of them teaches us about a man who learned to navigate between two worlds, ultimately concluding that one of these worlds was more savage than the other, despite common perceptions to the contrary. The other article schools us on the creation of an organization that is powerfully relevant to our society today. Taken together, they both reflect the value that tolerance brings to society, which we should all respect. The other article introduces how the lines between medicine and intoxication were blurred in American society, which helped transform the hemp plant into something deviant, noxious and unusable by westerners. Each of these articles were written by people who have an interest that they felt needed a platform to be represented on, and we urge our readers to stand up and do the same. Let your voice be heard. Knowledge is power, and *Notes* is one of the conduits through which your power can flow.

As some of you may know, September is Hispanic Heritage Month, which means it's a time to reflect on the value that this important minority group has contributed to American society (yes, despite the paranoia expressed by a few, Hispanics are still a minority!) Having these months helps us see America for what it really is: a mosaic of cultures rather than a monolithic unit. All immigrant groups in America have contributed to Americanism, and emphasizing this helps provide agency to groups of people who have been marginalized in the past.

Lastly, we at the Historical Underground want to remind every member of this campus to get involved, take action, and be heard. The Historical Underground is our vehicle for action ... *Notes from the Underground* our mouthpiece ... History our weapon of choice. **WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!** If you are interested in writing for this publication then contact us at bradley.borougerdi@tccd.edu, gregory.kosc@tccd.edu, or eric.salas@tccd.edu and we will guide you through the process. Thank you for reading *NFTU*. Peace be with you all.

~ Brad Borougerdi, Eric Salas, Greg Kosc, and Guest Editor Kallie Kosc