



H\Y'@yc': fUb_`7UgY'F WtbgjXYfYX.; YbXYf'UbX'GYI i U'Dc']h]Vg']b'h\Y'A U_]b['cZ'FYUW]cbUf m
Dcdi`]ga
5i h\cf fjt: B UbVth'A UW@Yub
Gci fW. H\Y'>ci fbU'cZ'5a Yf]Vub'<]ghcfmž'J c`"+, ž'B c`"' ž'fBYWž'%'-%ž'dd'"-%+!-(,
Di V`]g\YX'Vm'Cf[Ub]nUh]cb'cZ'5a Yf]Vub'<]ghcf]Ubg
GhU'Y'I F@: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078796>
5 VVggYX. `&?#\$(#&\$\$, `&%%

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=oah>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We enable the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism

Nancy MacLean

The trial and lynching of Leo Frank have long fascinated historians and popular audiences alike. A Jewish, northern-bred factory supervisor, Frank was accused in 1913 of the murder of Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year-old local white worker in his employ in Atlanta. The killing was grisly; the morning after, Phagan's corpse was found in the factory's basement mangled and caked with blood and grime. Within days, police had arrested Frank, and the lead prosecutor, Hugh Manson Dorsey, soon affirmed his belief in Frank's guilt. Dorsey's certainty persisted throughout the subsequent two years of the case, despite other evidence pointing to the factory's janitor, Jim Conley. A black man with a prior record of arrests for theft and disorderly conduct, Conley might seem the logical target in a society committed to white supremacy and willing to lynch African Americans on the slimmest pretext. Yet, for reasons that will become clearer in the course of this article, a curious reversal of standard southern practice occurred. The prosecutor, the jury, and much of the public not only absolved a black suspect but in fact relied on his testimony to condemn a wealthy white man. As Phagan's minister, who at first believed Frank guilty but changed his mind after the verdict, mused in hindsight, it was as if the death of a black man "would be poor atonement for the life of this innocent little girl." But in Frank, "a Yankee Jew . . . here would be a victim worthy to pay for the crime."¹

Fostered by sensational press accounts, the case engaged popular interest from the outset. Some ten thousand people turned out to pay homage to Phagan as her body lay in state. Frank's trial, which consumed four months and culminated in a conviction and death sentence, absorbed more attention than any other in the state's history. Over the next year and a half, his attorneys appealed the case all the way

Nancy MacLean is assistant professor of history at Northwestern University.

Many people have offered helpful comments on various versions of this article. Without implicating them in the result, I would like to thank Edward Ayers, Leonard Dinnerstein, Maureen Fitzgerald, Joyce Follett, Jacquelyn Hall, Wally Hettle, Jackson Lears, Gerda Lerner, Alan Maass, Leisa Meyer, and David Thelen. I owe special gratitude to Linda Gordon for her careful readings, astute advice, and unflagging encouragement.

¹ L. O. Bricker, "A Great American Tragedy," *Shane Quarterly*, 4 (April 1943), 90. In this rare instance, racist beliefs helped persuade whites that the black suspect was innocent. Convinced that an illiterate African American could neither construct such elaborate accounts, nor adhere to them in the face of grueling cross-examination, nor employ the linguistic forms used in the murder notes found by Mary Phagan's body, many whites accepted his testimony as to Frank's guilt. See Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York, 1968), 45-46, 53.

through the United States Supreme Court, to no avail. When the last rejection was handed down in April of 1915, they shifted to a new strategy: a campaign for executive clemency. This effort inaugurated an impassioned battle—involving hundreds of thousands of people from the state and the nation—over whether the Georgia Prison Commission or the governor, John Marshall Slaton, should commute Frank's death sentence. Ultimately, his supporters won. Citing evidence unavailable to the jurors, Slaton commuted the sentence to life imprisonment shortly before Frank was to hang. This act won the governor accolades from some quarters but produced in others a fury so intense that—as armed masses of people surrounded his home pledging revenge—he became the first state executive in United States history to declare martial law for his own protection. Two months later, on August 16, 1915, an assembly of prominent male citizens from Mary Phagan's hometown kidnapped Frank from the state prison farm, drove him across the state to the county of her birth, and there carried out the jury's sentence. Their act drew widespread popular acclaim.²

That the Frank case aroused such interest among both contemporaries and later scholars is understandable, for in it the central conflicts of early twentieth-century southern history erupted. Some historians, for example, have pointed out that the system of white supremacy and the prevalence of lynching in the New South encouraged the mobs who threatened the governor and murdered Frank. Others have emphasized the anti-Semitism directed against Frank, which made this “an American Dreyfus case.” They have argued that this break in the general pattern of lynching—the murder not of a rural African American, but of a prominent, metropolitan white—can be explained only in light of the social tensions unleashed by the growth of industry and cities in the turn-of-the-century South. These circumstances made a Jewish employer a more fitting scapegoat for disgruntled whites than the other leading suspect in the case, a black worker. Moreover, in pitting the old Populist leader Tom Watson against the rising urban Progressives who rallied to Frank's defense, the case provided dramatic personae for deep-rooted political conflicts.³

Yet one aspect of the Frank case has never received sustained attention: gender. Deepening the conflicts other historians have described, gender and sexual themes saturated the outcry against Frank. Although he stood trial on the charge of murder alone, the allegation that he had raped Mary Phagan became the centerpiece of the case against him. As we will see, however, the facts were ambiguous. Clear evidence of rape never emerged—but there were indications that Phagan may have been sexually active. Whatever the facts of her death, the striking point for our purposes was

² For details of the case, see Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*; and Clement Charlton Moseley, “The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913–1915,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 51 (March 1967), 42–62.

³ On the episode's anti-Semitic content, against the backdrop of the industrialization of the South, see Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*; and Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 202–15. On its connection to the defeated Populist movement of the 1890s, see C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York, 1938). On the response of blacks, see Eugene Levy, “‘Is the Jew a White Man?’: Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913–1915,” *Phylon*, 35 (June 1974), 212–22. For popular treatments, see Harry Lewis Golden, *A Little Girl Is Dead* (New York, 1965); and Charles Samuels and Louise Samuels, *Night Fell on Georgia* (New York, 1956).



LEO FRANK. STUDY THE MOUTH, NOSE, AND AVERTED EYES

Photograph of Leo Frank, possibly retouched, that appeared in *Watson's Magazine* (March 1915). Courtesy Tom Watson Brown, great-grandson of Thomas E. Watson.

the determined refusal of wide sections of the state's non-elite adult white population to countenance the latter possibility. Their staunch insistence that Phagan died to preserve her chastity evinced profound concern about changing relations between the sexes and generations and about shifting sexual mores among wage-earning women.⁴ The outcry against commutation for Frank can only be understood in light of these contested relations. But these, too, must be viewed in a wider context, for

⁴ I describe Phagan and her peers as "women" in defiance of their contemporaries' habit of depicting such female wage earners as "working girls" and referring to them by their given names. These diminutive labels resisted acknowledging the social adulthood thrust upon such young women, even as they remained dependent on their parents. However much the labelers may have wished that Phagan and her peers enjoyed the sheltered naïveté evoked by the term *girl*, their employment and consequent exposure to a working-class sexual culture suggested otherwise. I hope the language employed here will foster respectful, rather than sentimental, approaches to historical understanding of Phagan and her peers.

the furor over gender relations and sexuality fueled class hostilities and anti-Semitism.

Indeed, the patterns revealed here have a larger significance. The case constitutes a spectacular instance of a pattern of political mobilization best described as reactionary populism. At first sight, the term appears an oxymoron. Most American historians, after all, associate populism with grass-roots democratic mobilizations, reaction with the elite opponents of such initiatives. In most instances, such associations work—but not in all. My purpose is to draw attention to such exceptions: to moments and movements in which the anti-elitism characteristic of populism coexists with, actually garners mass support for, a political agenda that enforces the subordination of whole groups of people. The mobilization against Leo Frank illustrated this dynamic, but it was hardly alone in American history. The Frank case directly stimulated the establishment of the second Ku Klux Klan, perhaps the quintessential example of this phenomenon. Shortly after Frank's lynching, Watson advised that "another Ku Klux Klan may be organized to restore HOME RULE." It was. William J. Simmons unveiled the new order two months later at a ceremony that purportedly involved many lynchers of Leo Frank. From its base in Atlanta, the second Klan soon spread to all sections of the nation, with Watson's blessing. The reactionary populism promoted by the leaders of the second Klan, as by their predecessors in the Frank case, included hostility toward *both* big capital *and* working-class radicalism; extreme racism, nationalism, and religion as alternatives to class explanations and strategies; and, the primary focus of this article, militant sexual conservatism. My contention is that since changing gender and generational relations contributed so much to the appeal of reactionary populism, sexual conservatism, like class grievances and racial antipathies, should be seen as one of its defining elements.⁵

The concept of reactionary populism also helps make sense of the particular features of the Leo Frank case. First, it highlights the distinction between the elite following of conventional conservatism and the popular basis of the opposition to Frank, which included farmers, small-town merchants and professionals, urban workers, and others who harbored well-founded resentments against large capital and its political representatives, whether liberal or conservative. Second, the depiction evokes both the self-representation of Frank's opponents—who resisted class politics and gathered instead under the mantle of "the people"—and the defensive, restorationist character of their protest. In the end, they sought solutions not in rad-

⁵ Tom Watson's *Jeffersonian*, Sept. 2, 1915, quoted in Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 446. See also Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 149–50. On the second Klan's ideology and practice, see Nancy MacLean, "Behind the Mask of Chivalry: Gender, Race, and Class in the Making of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s in Georgia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1989). On the Boston antibusing movement as a case of "reactionary populism," see Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, 1991), esp. 172–202. Formisano notes that among the opponents of busing, "the alienated right most complained of was . . . the right of parental control over their own children;" a pattern consistent with the argument advanced here. *Ibid.*, 171. Such an analysis might prove fruitful for some of the paradoxical movements of the intervening years. See Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (New York, 1983); and Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia, 1983).

ical change nor even substantive reform, but rather in anti-Semitism and murder. After describing the context of Mary Phagan's murder, this article briefly delineates the responses of different groups to the trial and to the subsequent struggle over commutation. It then examines the gender themes of the opposition to Frank and how these contributed to the dynamic of reactionary populism, which would shape Georgia politics for years after the murders of Mary Phagan and Leo Frank.

Gender analysis thus opens a new window on the Frank case and the social order that produced it. Through this window, we see more clearly how change and contestation, not stasis and consensus, constituted the very essence of early twentieth-century southern history. Economic development acted as a solvent on older relations of power and authority—between men and women and between parents and children as well as between workers and employers and blacks and whites. The dissolution of the older sexual order produced losses as well as gains. The popular anxieties and resentments thereby created proved multivalent; they made class hostilities at once more volatile and more amenable to reactionary resolution. To observe these operations in the Frank case is to gain insight into the processes by which protean concerns about the family and sexuality may help tame and redirect popular opposition to a dominant social order. The inclusion of gender as a category of analysis is thus not an optional flourish, but a vital tool to uncover elements upon which both mobilization and outcome hinged.

The setting for the case was, appropriately enough, Atlanta, the showcase city of the New South. Virtually destroyed during Gen. William T. Sherman's march to the sea in 1864, by the turn of the century Atlanta had resurged as a modern metropolis. From 1880 to 1910, the number of the city's residents more than quadrupled to almost 155,000. Atlanta's booming and relatively diversified economy fueled this growth. The value of its manufacturing grew by almost ninefold over these years, while the city's position as a major rail center linking the Southeast with the North enhanced its leading role in trade, distribution, insurance, and banking. By 1910, approximately 28 percent of Atlanta's labor force was engaged in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits, 26 percent in commercial activity.⁶

Young women such as Mary Phagan played an important role in this expanding economy, which led the region in the extent and variety of women's labor force participation. The number of female workers aged sixteen and over in the city's manufacturing industries doubled between 1900 and 1919 to more than four thousand, while thousands of others staffed its burgeoning white-collar and service sectors. Atlanta offered only the most accelerated example of developments taking place as legions of young women entered the region's work force. More than seven in ten of the South's female industrial workers were under the age of nineteen, ac-

⁶ Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 28, 98; Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920–1930* (Baton Rouge, 1975), 5, 11–17; Kenneth Coleman, ed., *A History of Georgia* (Athens, 1977), 233; Thomas M. Deaton, "Atlanta during the Progressive Era" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1969), 1–2, 15–18.

ording to a 1907 United States Senate study of working women. Of the southern families included in the study, 94.5 percent of those with daughters aged sixteen or older had at least one in the labor force. That the earnings of daughters made up from one-quarter to two-fifths of total household income indicates the extent of their families' reliance on their contributions. The spread of youthful female wage earning broadened the ranks of those who might find personal meaning in Phagan's fate.⁷

The release of daughters from the confining household economy of the rural South signified a wider transformation. The relative decline of the agrarian economy threw older relations of power open to question and stimulated organizing by diverse groups with rival visions for the state's future. In the years after its establishment in 1891, for example, the Atlanta Federation of Trades assumed an active role in city and state politics, backing labor candidates for office and proposing legislation to limit exploitation, promote the health and welfare of working people, and enhance popular control over public institutions.⁸ Such efforts unnerved Atlanta's rising urban business elite, who after 1901 sought to centralize power and to impose their own concepts of order on the tumultuous, expanding city. Their efforts to supplant elective municipal offices with appointive boards in 1911 and again in 1913 met with stiff opposition from trade unionists and working-class voters, forcing compromises that satisfied no one. Such conflicts influenced both groups' perceptions of the Frank case: workers viewed the mobilization to overthrow his conviction as yet more evidence of the ruling class's contempt for democracy; elites read the clamor for his execution as confirmation of the unruliness of the lower classes and of the need to control them with a firm hand.⁹

In addition to class divisions inside Atlanta, tensions between its elite and the agrarian forces that had once dominated the state also shaped responses to the case. Although three-quarters of Georgia's population was still rural in 1910, that margin slipped rapidly as the state's urban population grew by 400 percent from 1880 to 1920. Atlanta's numerical growth augmented the power of its business and civic elite, whose Progressive vision of an active, development-promoting central state was anathema to the landed classes. Indeed, in the years preceding Phagan's death, Georgia's town and country interests had clashed repeatedly over such issues as the

⁷ Julia Kirk Blackwelder, "Mop and Typewriter: Women's Work in Early Twentieth-Century Atlanta," *Atlanta Historical Journal*, 27 (Fall 1983), 21; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, vol IX: *Manufactures, 1919: Reports for States* (Washington, 1923), 268-69; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 175, *Summary of Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage Earners in the United States* (Washington, 1916), 16-17, 19-20.

⁸ For an outstanding perception of the transformation of the region, see William J. Robertson, *The Changing South* (New York, 1927). For such perceptions in Georgia, see Steven Wayne Wrigley, "The Triumph of Provincialism: Public Life in Georgia, 1898-1917" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1986), esp. 30-40. On labor response to the change, see Mercer Griffin Evans, "The History of Organized Labor in Georgia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1929).

⁹ Deaton, "Atlanta during the Progressive Era," 386, 399; Franklin M. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of its People and Events* (3 vols., New York, 1954), II, 602, 611; Eugene J. Watts, *The Social Bases of City Politics: Atlanta, 1865-1903* (Westport, 1978), 21; Evans, "History of Organized Labor in Georgia," 276. On the coming of age of Atlanta's "commercial-civic elite" and their efforts to tame the disruptive forces of metropolitan life, see Brownell, *Urban Ethos in the South*.

regional apportionment of taxes and legislative representation. In 1908, for example, farm representatives Tom Watson and Joseph Mackey Brown attacked the Progressive governor Hoke Smith for his efforts to overturn an archaic county-unit voting system that favored rural areas. The two later vilified Governor Slaton for his role in the enactment in 1913 of a rural-urban tax equalization measure perceived as a "deliberate attack on landowners." These prior disputes fed into the Frank case, as Watson and Brown assumed leadership of the anti-Frank forces while Smith and Slaton came to advocate commutation.¹⁰

In this highly contentious milieu, Mary Phagan became a symbol capable of unifying groups with a wide variety of grievances. In many ways she was perfect for the role in which Frank's opponents cast her. Just approaching her fourteenth birthday when she was murdered, Phagan was described by her mother as "very pretty" with "dimples in her cheeks."¹¹ And indeed, her widely publicized picture depicted an attractive, engaging young woman, whose appearance contrasted so starkly with her brutal fate that people were moved to outrage. "The killing of Mary Phagan was *horrible*," one Athens, Georgia, woman declared to her brother. "I hope the right man will be found and *not* hung or killed but *tortured to death*."¹²

While Phagan's death produced almost universal horror, different details of her short life appealed to different audiences. The descendant of an established Piedmont farm family that had lost its land and been reduced first to tenancy and then to wage labor, she emblemized the plight of rural Georgians.¹³ Having started factory work at a very young age to help support her widowed mother and five siblings, Phagan also personified the bitter dilemma of the region's emerging industrial proletariat, forced to rely on children's wages to make ends meet. Her reported membership in the First Christian Bible School and her destination the day of the murder, the annual Confederate Memorial Day parade, endeared her as well to rural conservatives usually unsympathetic to landless farmers or organized labor. Indeed, farm owners vexed over the flight of their tenants might find in Phagan's fate ammunition for efforts to dissuade would-be migrants to the city.¹⁴ Yet, not everyone rallied around Phagan. Blacks, Jews, and the urban, white, gentile elite reacted to

¹⁰ Wrigley, "Triumph of Provincialism," 31, 40 (on population), 230. See also *ibid.*, 107, 122, 178, 212-17, 232-35, 250.

¹¹ Brief of Evidence at 1, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*, Fulton County Superior Court at the July Term, 1913, Atlanta Miscellany (Special Collections Department, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.). The original trial transcript has not survived, but both the prosecution and the defense accepted the Brief of Evidence as a correct account and relied on it in subsequent appeals, beginning with the Supreme Court of Georgia, Fall Term, 1913. See Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 222-23.

¹² Helen Newton to Edwin D. Newton, May 2, 1913, folder 2, box 5, Carlton-Newton-Mell Collection (Special Collections Department, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens).

¹³ Mary Phagan's family's roots in Cobb County were emphasized in a petition against commutation from a mass meeting there to the governor. See "Hearing before Gov. John M. Slaton re: Commutation of the Death Sentence of Leo Frank, Atlanta, Ga., June 12-16, 1915," p. 41, Atlanta Miscellany. See also Moultrie M. Sessions to J. H. Hurford, May 17, 1915, folder 22, box 35, John Marshall Slaton Collection (Manuscripts Section, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta). In 1910, rural Georgians' per capita wealth of \$195 was less than half that of urban Georgians. Wrigley, "Triumph of Provincialism," 39-40.

¹⁴ Thomas E. Watson, "The Official Record in the Case of Leo Frank, a Jew Pervert," *Watson's Magazine*, 21 (Sept. 1915), 256. For farmers' complaints about the rural labor shortage, see Wrigley, "Triumph of Provincialism," 128-30, 249-51.

GIRL SLAIN IN STRANGLING MYSTERY



Mary Phagan, rendered as a Gibson girl in one of the first likenesses the public saw after her death. A contrast with the photo from which this picture was made makes the deliberate stylization clear (see facing page).

From *Atlanta Georgian*, April 28, 1913, p. 1.

other aspects of the case of more direct concern to them. For blacks that aspect was racism, for Jews anti-Semitism, and for the urban white elite potential threats to their class power.

The position of African Americans in relation to the case was difficult. Although the black press later condemned Frank's lynching as they did all lynching, the evolution of the case led many in the black community to the side of Frank's accusers. Several black observers voiced resentment at the outpouring of sympathy for him, in sharp contrast with ongoing white indifference to the outrages suffered routinely by African Americans. What proved most decisive in shaping blacks' attitudes toward the case was the strategy of Frank's defense: a virulent racist offense against the only other suspect, the janitor Jim Conley. Many elite supporters of commuta-



Unembellished family photo of Mary Phagan, as it appeared in *Watson's Magazine* (March 1915). Courtesy Tom Watson Brown, great-grandson of Thomas E. Watson.

tion for Frank expressed outrage that a white employer was indicted, rather than a black worker with a criminal record, and shock that their appeals to white supremacy failed to rally the jury or the public. When Frank's attorneys based their case on the most vicious antiblack stereotypes of the day and on outspoken appeals to white solidarity, blacks rallied around Conley for the same reasons that Jews rallied around Frank. Thus, whereas gentile whites split on class lines in the case, blacks and Jews responded in a cross-class manner to perceived cross-class threats.¹⁵

¹⁵ On blacks and the Frank case, see Eugene Levy, "Is the Jew a White Man?" See also Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 207–8. For examples of the racism of Frank's defense, see Reuben Arnold, *The Trial of Leo Frank: Reuben Arnold's Address to the Court on His Behalf*, ed. Alvin V. Sellers (Baxley, 1915), 51–52, 64, 67; "Hearing before Gov. John M. Slaton," 141–43; C. P. Connolly, *The Truth about the Frank Case* (New York, 1915),

It was not only Jews who supported Leo Frank, however. Both in Georgia and nationwide, the gentile urban elite in general and its Progressive wing in particular espoused clemency for Frank. The support he garnered from leading Georgia Progressives is the more notable since some had earlier campaigned against child labor. That they came to the aid of one of its beneficiaries reflects in part the elitist, social-control impulse some historians have described as characteristic of southern Progressivism.¹⁶ In fact, the concern of elites about the Frank case reflected profound fears about the stability of the social order over which they presided. Time and again, they complained about the spread of "anarchy" and "mob rule" as revealed in the case. "Class hatred was played on" by the prosecutors, Frank's attorney complained in court. "They played on the enmity the poor feel against the wealthy" and encouraged "discontent." A prominent Progressive supporter of Frank, the Reverend C. B. Wilmer, observed that "class prejudice" "was perfectly obvious" at every stage in the case and warned of the dangers of pandering to it.¹⁷

Wilmer's fear reflected his constituency's own class prejudice, which became more candid as the case progressed. In true patrician style, Franks' supporters repeatedly asserted that "the best people" were on his side. Often their elitism was less subtle. Frank's attorney Reuben Arnold, for example, described those who believed his client guilty as "ignorant people," referred to the courtroom audience as "that gang of wolves" and "a vicious mob," and characterized a white worker who had testified against Frank as "the ugliest, dirtiest reptile . . . [whose] habitat was in the filth." So oblivious were Frank's backers to the sentiments of those beneath them in the social order that they hired William J. Burns, the most notorious union-busting pri-

88, 93; *The Frank Case: Inside Story of Georgia's Greatest Murder Mystery* (Atlanta, 1913), 132. Frank's opponents also exhibited racism against blacks, but it played a role subordinate to the other issues they raised. The response of Jews to the anti-Semitism directed against Frank has been analyzed well by others, including Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*; Golden, *A Little Girl Is Dead*; and Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*.

¹⁶ Gentile urban support was evidenced by public statements and editorials in the leading dailies and periodicals of Georgia and the nation and by myriad letters and petitions from prominent citizens in support of commutation. For a list of Frank supporters in Georgia, see "Georgia Letters and Petitions for Commutation of Sentence for Leo M. Frank to Life Imprisonment," folder 6, box 5, Slaton Collection. On the conservatism, racism, and elitism of southern Progressivism, see J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven, 1974); and John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era* (Urbana, 1977). The hallmarks of this ambivalent tradition often appeared in the Frank case, as when *Augusta Chronicle* editor Thomas Loyless, praised by liberals for denouncing the lynching of Frank, used race-baiting to browbeat Frank's opponents. See, for example, *Augusta Chronicle*, Sept. 27, 1915, 4. For a more sympathetic appraisal, see Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville, 1983).

¹⁷ Arnold, *Trial of Leo Frank*, ed. Sellers, 35. Similarly, he charged the state with using as witnesses, "the discharged employee, the men and women who hated wealth and was willing to defeat it in the spirit of the anarchist." *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 26, 1913, reel 2822, Leo Frank Collection (American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio). There were also private warnings that Frank's execution "through mob demand" would create uncertainty in the popular mind about the judicial process. A. D. Lasker to Jacob Billikopf, Dec. 28, 1914, reel 1069, *ibid.* See also Louis Marshall to Herbert Haas, Dec. 24, 1914, *ibid.* For C. B. Wilmer's statement, see "Hearing before Gov. John Slaton," 75. The alarm of elites became most prominent after the near riots that followed Slaton's commutation of Frank's sentence and after the lynching, as hundreds of letters in the summer and fall of 1915 to the *Augusta Chronicle* commending its stand against "Watsonism" show. The pattern parallels that found by David L. Carlton: town elites' concerns about lynching "generally had less to do with a concern for social justice than with fears for social stability." David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge, 1982), 246.

vate detective in the country, to discredit the case against their client. Burns barely escaped alive from his inquiries in Phagan's hometown of Marietta.¹⁸

That debacle was but one indicator of how actions by representatives of the employing class in the case escalated working people's hostility.¹⁹ Among Georgia trade unionists, the murder had heightened the sense of urgency about ending child labor. They expressed revulsion at the way the city's mainstream press sensationalized the dead girl's miserable fate while ignoring the political economy that sent her, like thousands of other youths, out to work in the first place. "Mary Phagan," proclaimed the *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, was "a martyr to the greed for gain" in American society, "which sees in girls and children merely a source of exploitation in the shape of cheap labor that more money may be made or the product may be disposed at a cheaper price." The unionists' anger was understandable. For almost two decades, the Atlanta Federation of Trades and the Georgia Federation of Labor had made abolition of child labor their preeminent political demand. Yet, with the state's planters and industrialists solidly arrayed against them and with scarcely any support from other quarters, they could not secure even the miserable standards achieved in other southern textile states. Indeed, at the time of Mary Phagan's death, Georgia alone among the states allowed factory owners to hire ten-year-old children—and to work them eleven-hour days.²⁰

If other elements of the Frank case determined the reactions of African Americans and the urban elite, its gender themes appealed to an audience much wider than the ranks of wage earners, a class still in the process of formation and deeply tied to the countryside. Indeed, although most historians of the case have assumed that urban workers constituted most of the opposition to Frank, research on those who signed petitions against commutation reveals a diverse coalition. Opposition came from all areas of the state, rural black belt as well as industrial Piedmont. Of the 36 percent of signers whose occupations could be determined, the overwhelming majority were landholding farmers, followed by renting farmers, merchants, and lower-level white-collar workers. The data no doubt understate industrial workers and landless farmers, who were more likely to be mobile or uncounted in the census. Nevertheless, they show that the case had meaning not only, perhaps

¹⁸ For a reference to the "best people," see *Forsyth Advertiser*, July 9, 1915, reel 2824, Frank Collection. For a listing of Frank's supporters headed "Names That Count for Much," see *Augusta Chronicle*, Dec. 18, 1915, supplement, pp. 29–30. Arnold, *Trial of Leo Frank*, ed. Sellers, 12, 21, 30, 42–43. See also the slurs in Connolly, *Truth about the Frank Case*, 18, 22, 23, 30. The prosecutor had a field day with this elitism, which enabled him to pose as the defender of the witnesses' reputations, "though they may be working girls." *Argument of Hugh M. Dorsey, Solicitor-General, at the Trial of Leo M. Frank* (Macon, 1914), 21–22. On the episode of William J. Burns, see Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 100–101; Jacquelyn D. Hall, "Secrets: Reading the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill Spy Reports," 12, paper delivered at the Seminar on Race, Class, and Gender in Southern History, University of California, San Diego, June 22–24, 1989 (in Nancy MacLean's possession).

¹⁹ In July 1913 one of the most active union locals in Atlanta resolved that the coverage of the case in the Atlanta press had led its members to "look with suspicion . . . upon so-called journalism . . . wherever the lives, liberty, property or interests of industrial workers are involved." *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Aug. 1, 1913, p. 6. A northern correspondent later attributed Frank's lynching in part to the resentment against class bias in the court system that surfaced early in the case "among the working classes." *New York Times*, Aug. 20, 1915, p. 5.

²⁰ *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, May 2, 1913, p. 4; Evans, "History of Organized Labor in Georgia," 229; Elizabeth H. Davidson, *Child Labor Legislation in the Southern Textile States* (Chapel Hill, 1939), 69–88, 194–214; A. J. McKelway, "Child Labor in Georgia," *Child Labor Bulletin*, 2 (Aug. 1913), 54–55.

not even primarily, for the dispossessed but also, perhaps especially, for people of small property. And whether they were farmers, shopkeepers, clerks, or wage earners, those most concerned with the gender and sexual issues of the Frank case were genteel whites who had, or could anticipate having, family ties to female workers. Since relatively few immigrants had settled in the South, the families of such working women made up an unusually homogeneous group. Most were native southerners, and if they did not work the land, their parents or grandparents had. Through their letters about the Frank case to the governor, the Georgia Prison Commission, and the press, their testimony in court, and their collective public actions, these people left a record of their perceptions of gender, class, and state power. The concerns revealed therein were distinct from those of either blacks, Jews, or the white elite.²¹

First, there were the "working girls" themselves. We can sense the vulnerability they felt—and perhaps their anger, too—in the fear and nervousness over Phagan's murder that so disrupted the factory that it had to be shut down for the week. In the trial, a few female employees took the unpopular step of vouching for Frank's character from the stand. But a score of their peers used the trial as an opportunity to vent grievances and settle old scores by testifying against their former manager.²² Some women and children, presumably from the working and lower middle classes, participated in the demonstrations against commutation, which pitted them against the prominent women who came to Frank's defense. By and large, however, women's voices were few in the public chorus raised against Frank. Perhaps hesitant to make demands on the state in their own right, they wrote only a handful of the myriad letters against him and rarely signed the many petitions.²³

²¹ For a portrayal of Frank's opponents as ignorant and fanatical workers, see Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*; and Leonard Dinnerstein, "Atlanta in the Progressive Era: A Dreyfus Affair in Georgia," in *The Age of Industrialism in America*, ed. Frederic Cople Jaher (New York, 1968), 127–59. The generalization in the text is based on information in the 1910 manuscript census population schedules about signers of petitions against commutation (now in the Slaton Collection) from the following Georgia counties: Cherokee, Emanuel, Franklin, Paulding, Polk, Worth. Manuscript Census Records, Georgia, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Records of the Bureau of the Census, RG29, microfilm T624, reels 179, 186, 189, 206–7, 207–8, 219. Of the 206 of 566 signers whose occupations could be determined, the breakdown was: landowning farmers or laborers on family-owned farms (74); merchants (38); tenant farmers (30); lower-level white-collar workers (20); skilled workers (14); unskilled workers (12); professionals (8); high white-collar workers (2). Incomplete samples produced roughly similar profiles in De Kalb, Douglas, Lincoln, Oglethorpe, and Tift counties. *Ibid.*, reels 184, 183, 199, 206, 216. By 1910 only 2% of the population in the eleven former Confederate states was foreign-born, a smaller proportion than in 1865. Rowland T. Berthoff, "Southern Attitudes toward Immigration, 1865–1914," *Journal of Southern History*, 17 (Feb. 1951), 342.

²² "Everybody was excited that morning after Mary Phagan was killed," one of the factory's managers testified. "Looked like everybody was worried. . . . The whole factory was wrought up. I couldn't hardly keep anybody at work . . . for I couldn't get any work out of them." Brief of Evidence at 39, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*. Frank's attorney maintained that the "little girls" who testified that Frank had gone into the dressing room with a female supervisor, presumably for immoral purposes, had done so out of spite because the woman had fired them. Arnold, *Trial of Leo Frank*, ed. Sellers, 35.

²³ For glimpses of women's participation on both sides, see *Augusta Chronicle*, June 23, 1915, p. 1; *American Israelite*, March 26, 1914, reel 2822, Frank collection; Nathaniel E. Harris, *Autobiography* (Macon, 1925), 361. Almost all the women who wrote letters against commutation did so as mothers of female workers. See Mrs. Henry L. Ozburn to John M. Slaton, June 22, [1915], reel 2, Leo Frank Correspondence (Special Collections, Brandeis University Library, Waltham, Mass.); "A Mother" to Mr. Davidson, n.d., folder 2, box 35, Slaton Collection; "A Mother" to Slaton, Nov. 23, 1914, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.* Likewise, Esther Gerald implored Slaton to judge Frank "as if it was one of your own Daughters." Esther Gerald to Slaton, May 26, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.* A rare

The relative silence of women, particularly the young women presumably most directly touched by Phagan's murder, provides a clue to the nature of the uproar over the case. The compelling issues at stake involved not simply female victimization in a static sense, but *shifts* in the power different groups of men wielded over young women in the new circumstances created by their employment. Among older male opponents of Frank, there was, mingled with evident love and concern for their daughters' welfare, real anger at having lost control of them. In his agitation against Frank, Tom Watson spoke of female employees as being in the "possession" of their bosses, implicitly equating access to women's labor with ownership of their persons. Some male peers of working women were likewise inclined to view them as property, albeit of a different kind. This sense of proprietorship was apparent in the common ritual among young men in southern factory neighborhoods of "rocking" or beating up wealthier outsiders who came to poach "their" women. Antipathy toward Frank thus fed on earlier rivalries among men of different classes over access to working-class women.²⁴

Indeed, paternalistic outlooks dominated the campaign against Frank. The circular for a mass meeting to oppose commutation billed the event as "a citizen's meeting in the interest of our mothers, sisters, and daughters," presuming an audience of outraged men. One man who warned the governor not to commute the sentence invoked "the citizens of Ga. who have girls" as a distinct political constituency, announcing that "the parents of girls are provoked."²⁵ These people identified with the victim's family. They implored Slaton, as one forty-nine-year-old farm father put it, to "think of Mary Phagan and her people." "Suppose you had a little girl murdered by such a fiend," another man demanded. He urged the governor to prove himself "a friend and protector to the Little girls of Georgia" by refusing to "let money or anything offered defeat Justice." These men begged the governor to let the sentence stand, since, according to one, "our wives and daughter[s] are at stake."²⁶

exception to the public silence of young female workers described herself as "a poor working girl" when she wrote to condemn the commutation. "A Friend of the Just," to Slaton, June 22, 1915, reel 2, Frank Correspondence.

²⁴ Watson, "Official Record," 284. See Dolores Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community* (Philadelphia, 1985), 128; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 223–24. On class rivalries among southern men over women, see also Victoria Byerly, *Hard Times Cotton Mill Girls: Personal Histories of Womanhood and Poverty in the South* (Ithaca, 1986), 114; and the richly evocative short story "The Old Forest," in Peter Taylor, *The Old Forest and Other Stories* (Garden City, 1985).

²⁵ On the circular, see *Augusta Chronicle*, June 11, 1915, p. 1. A. J. Cash to Slaton, June 14, 1915, folder 4, box 45, Slaton Collection. For explicit appeals to readers' concerns for their daughters' sexual vulnerability, see also Thomas E. Watson, "The Celebrated Case of the State of Georgia vs. Leo Frank," *Watson's Magazine*, 21 (Aug. 1915), 196, 230. One of the original jurors in the case maintained that Slaton's decision to commute had imperiled the "daughters, wives, sisters and mothers" of Georgia. *New York Times*, June 25, 1915, reel 2822, Frank Collection.

²⁶ See, for example, W. S. Lancaster to Slaton, Dec. 29, 1914, folder 10, box 45, Slaton Collection; T. B. Hogan to Slaton, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; R. J. Smith to "Prison commissioners," April 29, 1915, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; W. L. Dubberly to Slaton, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; Cash to Slaton, June 14, 1915, folder 4, box 45, *ibid.*; J. G. Scoggins to Slaton, June 5, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.*; J. D. Long to Slaton, May 31, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.*; J. D. Chason to Slaton, May 31, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.*; J. E. Stembridge to Slaton, June 21, 1915, folder 4, box 45, *ibid.*; Thomas N. Smoke to Slaton, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; Donald Clark to Slaton, May 25, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.*; Good Hope Local Union 593 to Slaton, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; J. H. Baxer to Slaton,

Some spoke as parents who had entrusted their children to employers' custody in exchange for the wages that their labor could bring. They now felt furious at Frank's alleged betrayal of that trust. "A little girl of tender years," fumed Churchill P. Goree, "attacked and murdered by the man to whom she had a perfect right to look for protection." Whereas these fathers saw their own paternalism as benevolent and protective, they saw that of their daughters' employers as exploitative and deeply resented it. Indeed, their inability to protect their daughters signaled their own loss of power, authority, and status in the New South, since dominion over one's dependents was the most basic prerequisite of male independence and honor in the yeoman world from which their culture derived.²⁷

Frank's alleged use of his class power to gain sexual access to women in his employ further infuriated them. It added humiliation and guilt to their loss of power. Fathers familiar with factories must have known that male supervisory employees could use their control of job assignments to pressure female subordinates into dates and sexual favors. "The factory was a great place for a man with lust and without conscience," one of the prosecuting attorneys reminded the jury. Few needed to be told. One female petitioner for Frank, however, who had taught among mill workers for eighteen years, turned this common sense to unorthodox ends. She urged the governor to commute Frank's sentence—reasoning that if he *had* assaulted Mary, "the mill boys would have known it to a man, and lynched him before he reached jail." "They have strong class feeling," she explained, "and I know the bitter resentment they feel towards the 'super' who abuses his position in regard to the mill woman." Indeed, in the view of one enraged writer, Frank was a "low skunk white livered hell hound defiler and murderer of infants."²⁸

Such anxieties about the sexual prerogatives of class power were rife, in the courtroom and out. Mary Phagan "died," the lead prosecutor told the jury, "because she wouldn't yield her virtue to the demands of her superintendent." Another man later drew out the logic of this allegation. Commutation of Frank's sentence, he maintained, would send the "brutes . . . who commit rape on poor girls" the message "that money can do anything." Sexual control of men over women and of parents over daughters thus became the object of class conflict in the case, as non-elite white

May 18, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.*; Petition from Omega, Georgia, to Slaton, n.d., folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; Petition from Garfield, Georgia, to Slaton, May 28, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.* See also Jno. H. Wellington to Slaton, June 24, 1915, reel 2, Frank Correspondence; W. T. Parrott to Slaton, n.d., reel 2, *ibid.*; "A Georgian" to Slaton, June 23, 1915, reel 2, *ibid.*

²⁷ Churchill P. Goree to Slaton, June 1, 1915, folder 10, box 45, Slaton Collection. See also "A mother" to Mr. Davidson, n.d., folder 2, box 35, *ibid.*; Mrs. H. Bolton to Prison Commissioners, May 31, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.* For a pathbreaking study of the gender inequality at the heart of the household economy and political culture of the antebellum yeomanry, see Stephanie McCurry, "Defense of Their World: Gender, Class, and the Yeomanry of the South Carolina Low Country, 1820–1860" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, Binghamton, 1988). Other suggestive accounts include Steven Hahn, "Honor and Patriarchy in the Old South," *American Quarterly*, 36 (Spring 1984), 145–53; and Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* (New York, 1984), 10–29, 274–75.

²⁸ Frank A. Hooper, quoted in *Frank Case*, 109. On sexual harassment in the mills, see Byerly, *Hard Times Cotton Mill Girls*, 121; and Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 253, 314–15. Louise A. Lane to Slaton, May 15, 1915, folder 8, box 35, Slaton Collection. This teacher was one of the few procommutation writers who empathized with the workers. "A Georgian" to Slaton, June 23, 1915, reel 2, Frank Correspondence.

men acted out their anger at their inability to safeguard the women of their families and class from the predations of the richer and more powerful.²⁹

The extraordinary depth of that anger may reflect the fact that the Frank case came on the heels of a massive evangelical campaign against “white slavery.” Conducted by the Men and Religion Forward movement, the campaign aimed to abolish the city’s protected vice district. One of the leaders of the crusade was Mary Phagan’s own minister, the Reverend L. O. Bricker. In mass meetings, public visits to the brothel district by ministers and their parishioners, and a dramatic series of more than two hundred newspaper advertisements that ran regularly between 1912 and 1915, the campaign drove home the message that Atlanta’s widespread child prostitution industry was the awful fruit of the low wages paid working girls. Promoting an image of prostitutes as naïve victims of cunning men, the reformers implored adults to act on behalf of “the fallen girls in their virtual slavery.”³⁰

The trial itself aggravated concerns about female industrial employment. Testimony about working conditions in the National Pencil Factory—the workplace of Frank and Phagan and the site of the crime—revealed pitifully low pay and precarious employment. More striking, though, were the casual but repeated references to the factory’s excruciating filth. Witness after witness described floors that had gone unwashed for years, now steeped not only in oil and dirt but also in blood from the accidents that took place “almost every two weeks,” as when the “girls . . . mash their fingers on the machines” or when a machinist “had his head bursted open.”³¹ Few could remain dispassionate while imagining their own children in this environment.

Other testimony revealed working conditions that degraded women specifically. Operatives described other, numerous blood stains near the dressing rooms from “girls whose sickness was upon them.” Management assertions that such stains were common “in establishments where a large number of ladies work” no doubt inflamed the anger they sought to allay. Witnesses also reported that only a makeshift divider separated the women’s dressing room from the men’s. Such conditions outraged those schooled in the myth that southern gender conventions applied to all white women. Even more appalling to them was supervisors’ practice of

²⁹ *Argument of Hugh M. Dorsey*, 145. See also Minnie Weldon to editor, *Watson’s Magazine*, 21 (Dec. 1915), 108–9. W. R. Pearson to Slaton, May 27, 1915, folder 10, box 45, Slaton Collection.

³⁰ “An Advertising Campaign against Segregated Vice,” *American City*, 9 (July 1913), 4; “How Atlanta Cleaned Up,” *Literary Digest*, May 3, 1913, pp. 1012–13. On the role of L. O. Bricker and the campaign, see Harry G. Lefever, “Prostitution, Politics, and Religion: The Crusade against Vice in Atlanta in 1912,” *Atlanta Historical Journal*, 24 (Spring 1980), 7–29. Bricker’s relationship to Phagan appears in Bricker, “Great American Tragedy.” The Atlanta campaign coincided with the peak of nationwide agitation over “white slavery.” On the wider panic’s roots in concerns about changing gender roles among female wage earners, see Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage-Earners in Chicago, 1880–1930* (Chicago, 1988), esp. 61, 64. See also Egal Feldman, “Prostitution, the Alien Woman, and the Progressive Imagination, 1900–1915,” *American Quarterly*, 19 (Summer 1967), 192–206.

³¹ Brief of Evidence at 16, 30, 77, 80, 105–7, 119, 131, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*. Of southern working women over the age of sixteen, 68% earned under six dollars a week in 1907, 92.5% under eight dollars. Younger workers, such as Phagan, earned considerably less. U.S. Dept. of Labor, *Summary of the Report*, 22; Deaton, “Atlanta during the Progressive Era,” 154.

peeking into the women's dressing room to see if any of the women were shirking work.³²

Frank's alleged involvement in such snooping contributed materially to his downfall. It gave force to the charge of "perversion" that ensured his conviction. It was a key piece of circumstantial evidence buttressing the prosecution's case that the murder was an attempt to cover up a premeditated attempted rape.³³ Other such evidence included operatives' testimony that Leo Frank had a "lascivious" character, as well as innuendos about other sexual improprieties: clandestine trysts with prostitutes, homosexual liaisons, and even the bizarre anti-Semitic fantasy that Frank engaged in sexual acts with his nose. The prosecution and press discussed these accusations in titillating detail, producing a "folk pornography" that aggravated the popular outrage the testimony itself elicited.³⁴ In a society in which such "unnatural acts" as sodomy and cunnilingus were capital crimes, those who gave credence to the charges saw Frank as a moral pariah.³⁵

The allegations of perversion carried weight because the concerns they evoked were so tangible and the symbols they deployed so potent among those with ties to female workers. The language of sexuality also offered compelling metaphors for nonsexual aspects of the case, for it best expressed the speakers' feelings of loss of control and impending chaos in their world. References to "the rape of justice" and the "prostitution of the courts" abounded, signifying the sense of intimate, personal violation that changing power relations in society aroused among the losers.³⁶

The charge of perversion did not resonate with Frank's opponents as simply a metaphor for social disorder. It also encapsulated class and gender conflicts over the very definition of propriety in the new circumstances of female employment. These conflicts surfaced in the testimony of women workers about perceived sexual harass-

³² Brief of Evidence at 15-16, 30, 35, 119, 172-73, 222, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*. Other female industrial workers in the South shared the grievance of violated privacy. "Most galling of all" the management practices applied to women workers involved in a strike in Elizabethton, Tennessee, "was company surveillance of the wash-room." See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *Journal of American History*, 73 (Sept. 1986), 364.

³³ See *Argument of Hugh M. Dorsey*, 25-27, 139; and "Hearing before Gov. John M. Slaton," 87-89. Watson also put great emphasis on this testimony and on Frank's failure to cross-examine these female employees. See Thomas E. Watson, "A Full Review of the Leo Frank Case," *Watson's Magazine*, 21 (March 1915), 238-40; Watson, "Celebrated Case," 184-85. For the consensus that the perversion charge lay behind Frank's conviction, see, for example, Lucian Lamar Knight, *A Standard History of Georgia and Georgians* (2 vols., Chicago, 1917), II, 1121-22; Harris, *Autobiography*, 350; and Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 19. Frank asked rhetorically in a public statement: "Is there a man in Atlanta who would deny that the charge of perversion was the chief cause of my conviction, or deny that the case, without that charge, would be an entirely different question?" *Ibid.*, 102. For a similar suggestion from one of Frank's lawyers, see "Hearing before Gov. John M. Slaton," 185-86, 189-90.

³⁴ The charges can be found in Brief of Evidence at 50-51, 55-62, 165, 222-23, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*; "Hearing before Gov. John M. Slaton," 146, 148, 187-91; W. E. Thompson, *A Short Review of the Frank Case* (Atlanta, 1914), 24-25. Some employees testified to Frank's good conduct and character, but they apparently were not as persuasive as those who impugned him. See Brief of Evidence at 120-21, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*. On reports of rapes and lynchings serving as "folk pornography," see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign against Lynching* (New York, 1979), 150-51. For the indulgence of Frank's leading opponent in such "folk pornography," see, for example, Watson, "Official Record," 271-73. Watson was later tried for obscenity for his writings on Catholics, which a grand jury found "obscene, lewd, lascivious, and filthy." *Augusta Chronicle*, Nov. 30, 1915, pp. 1, 4.

³⁵ Golden, *A Little Girl Is Dead*, 133.

³⁶ See, for example, Watson, "Official Record," 267, 268, 293.

ment by Frank. Their reports that he touched them, called them by first names, spied on them, and met with them behind closed doors constituted ample proof of his dishonorable character in the view of ordinary working people. Frank's defenders, on the other hand, who shared his notions of employers' prerogatives and who did not have to endure the unwanted familiarity that communicated inferior status and powerlessness, seemed unable to comprehend the girls' interpretation, much less to counter it convincingly. The closing speech to the jury by Frank's attorney, Reuben Arnold, was a model of this insensitivity. He expressed astonishment at the charges of sexual misconduct made by the prosecution and annoyance at their "prudish" failure to catch up with the times and be more "broad-minded" about practices like an employer putting his hand on a female employee's shoulder. He also made a rhetorical effort to belittle the complaints that Frank violated the privacy of the women's dressing room: "Surely a woman isn't so absolutely sacred that you can't ask her to perform her contract . . . and if she isn't doing it, ask her why, and find out why."³⁷ Arnold's incredulity was the measure of the vast social distance separating him from Leo Frank's opponents.

Yet the gender meanings of the case involved far more than a conflict among men over control of women. In addition to stirring up resentment about the potential sexual power of employers, the case also dramatized common adult concerns about the implications of employment for young women's *own* behavior and sexual activity. Among Frank's opponents, the intense, nearly universal insistence that Mary Phagan died "in defense of her virtue" barely camouflaged their anxiety about young women's—perhaps increasingly—active sexual agency. Then as now, it was frequently difficult to separate agency from victimization since women often experienced men's disproportionate social power most painfully and intimately in sexual relations.³⁸ This was particularly the case for dependent adolescents such as Mary Phagan, not yet fourteen at the time of her death. Their vulnerability notwithstanding, there was nevertheless a liberating potential for these young women in paid labor outside the home, and the sparse evidence available indicates that they themselves perceived and acted upon it, much as their parents feared it.

Unfortunately, historians have been slow to recognize that potential in the South; as a result, our knowledge of its manifestations is limited. The northern bias of women's history and labor history and the male, agrarian bias of southern history have produced—through neglect—the impression of static gender and generational relations in the South. An impressive body of literature now documents the ways young working women transformed gender roles and claimed once-taboo pleasures for themselves in the North and Midwest in the early twentieth century. "But these

³⁷ *Atlanta Journal*, Aug. 21, 1913, pp. 1, 7, 9, 11, reel 2822, Frank Collection. See also Arnold, *Trial of Leo Frank*, ed. Sellers, 36.

³⁸ On the ambiguity and the reality of female sexual agency in the period covered by this essay, see Ellen Carol DuBois and Linda Gordon, "Seeking Ecstasy on the Battlefield: Danger and Pleasure in Nineteenth-Century Feminist Thought," *Feminist Studies*, 9 (Spring 1983), 7–25.

'modern' workers, pioneers of a new heterosocial subculture," as Jacquelyn Hall has astutely observed, "disappear when historians take up the subject of the 20th-century South. Below the Mason-Dixon line, historians find no Sister Carries, no 'charity girls,' no 'women adrift,' only the timeless figures of the promiscuous black woman and the passionless white." Hall's pioneering studies show, however, that relations between women and men in southern cities and small towns were indeed changing in those years, due in good part to the spread of female wage earning. This background can help account for the conflicts within and between classes over gender roles and female sexual behavior that surged into view when women workers went out on strike.³⁹

Indeed, while the *form* of women's labor force participation and responses to it may have been different in the South, there seems no reason to doubt that the basic processes were analogous to those in the North. Certainly contemporary southern observers recognized that a transformation was afoot. "The business girl," wrote William J. Robertson in his 1927 survey of the changes that had swept the South since 1900, "is almost as prevalent in the South as she is in the North." Robertson's remark was as much a lament as an observation, for he attributed to "the women themselves," no longer sheltered by "their fathers and brothers," a veritable revolution in relations between the sexes among the younger generation. Female modesty and male chivalry were giving way to a new "frankness and lack of convention," Victorian morality to widely practiced casual sex. Whether or not they sympathized with the developments they witnessed, informed commentators at the time believed that young working women throughout the country were claiming new independence and employing it in pursuit of male companionship and sexual adventure. Evangelist Billy Sunday delivered the same sermons on the sexual transgressions of "working girls" to audiences north and south in the 1910s, confident that Atlantans committed the same sins as Yankees.⁴⁰

So the issue of young women's labor was not specific to the Frank controversy. On the contrary, the responses of participants echoed earlier reactions toward female

³⁹ Hall, "Secrets," 28. For developments in the North and Midwest, see Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia, 1986); and Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (New York, 1985). On the interlacing of gender and class conflicts during a strike in Atlanta while Frank's case was on appeal, see Hall, "Secrets." See also Hall, "Disorderly Women"; and Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 184-236. The only overview of southern women's history in this period remains the classic by Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1970). It highlights postbellum changes in women's roles but focuses on middle-class women.

⁴⁰ Robertson, *Changing South*, 126-29. A study of youthful female workers in the South in the 1920s found "a desire for financial freedom" and "a general desire for independence" among their motives. Further attesting to their agency, most of those surveyed felt confident that they *had* improved their lives and achieved their goals by getting work in cities. Orie Latham Hatcher, *Rural Girls in the City for Work* (Richmond, 1930), 41, 83-84. On the nationwide similarity of young working women, see, for example, Robert A. Woods and Albert J. Kennedy, eds., *Young Working Girls: A Summary of Evidence from Two Thousand Social Workers* (Boston, 1913), esp. 1, 7-8; and Ben B. Lindsey and Wainwright Evans, *The Revolt of Modern Youth* (New York, 1925). The Frank case occurred on the cusp of a shift that Joanne J. Meyerowitz notes in the 1910s—from a sentimental, Victorian view of working women as passive victims to a more modern recognition of them as agents and sexual actors. See Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, esp. 119. Mark K. Bauman, "Hitting the Sawdust Trail: Billy Sunday's Atlanta Campaign of 1917," *Southern Studies*, 19 (Winter 1980), 385-99; William G. McLoughlin, "Billy Sunday and the Working Girl of 1915," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 54 (Fall 1976).

labor voiced by middle-class reformers and male craft unionists. As early as 1891, in a sensational and widely debated article, the journalist Clare de Graffenried portrayed southern mill communities as places that turned the natural order upside down: idle fathers lost their manhood, as wives and daughters, their modesty and chastity gone, toiled in the mills. It was not until the turn of the century, however, as the campaign against child labor gained momentum, that contention over gender roles began in earnest. Fear that an enforced early adulthood, freedom from parental supervision, and close association with the opposite sex were leading young women astray pervaded the discourse over youthful female labor in North and South, particularly after the massive 1907 Senate investigation of female wage earning reported that it did indeed contribute to "immorality" among young working women. In 1910 the Georgia Federation of Labor urged women to stay out of industry; their proper place was in the home and not competing with male breadwinners. At the same time, however, the federation endorsed woman suffrage and equal pay and the *Atlanta Journal of Labor* published regular columns by Ola D. Smith, a labor organizer and working-class feminist who insisted on women's right to labor and to participate in public life.⁴¹

These varied, often ambivalent, reactions suggest that female employment acutely tested earlier patterns of paternal authority. Even if she continued to live with her family, a daughter going out to work had opportunities to assert her own autonomy and to make choices about her relations with men that would have been difficult for her grandmother to imagine. By keeping all or part of her wages, by courting or marrying against her parents' wishes, she might not only defy her father's sense of his own prerogatives but also endanger his strategy for family survival. In the classes from which Frank's opponents came, paternal authority was integral to organizing a household's subsistence. Farmers, tenants, wage earners, and small-business people alike had a material stake in control of their children's behavior. Youths made vital contributions to their households' maintenance, whether plowing the family's land, tending its store or garden, supervising younger children while parents worked, or bringing in cash from mill or factory work. Moreover, in the absence of elementary social security provisions from the state, parents had to look to their children for support in old age. Wage-earning daughters threatened not only to affront the cultural values of their parents but also to disrupt patterns of household economy. Such practical concerns informed fathers' desires to regulate

⁴¹ Clare de Graffenried, "The Georgia Cracker in the Cotton Mills," *Century Magazine*, 51 (Feb. 1891), 483–98. On the ensuing debate, see LeeAnn Whites, "The De Graffenried Controversy: Class, Race, and Gender in the New South," *Journal of Southern History*, 54 (Aug. 1983), 454n. For contemporary perceptions of young working women's immorality, see U.S. Dept. of Labor, *Summary of the Report*, 273–74, 380–82; Fred S. Hall, "Child Labor and Delinquency," *Child Labor Bulletin*, 3 (Nov. 1914), 37–51; and Felix Adler, "Child Labor in the United States and Its Great Attendant Evils," in National Child Labor Committee, *Child Labor* (New York, 1905), 15. See also Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, esp. 48. For an example of how such concerns infused discussion of the Frank case, see, "The Mary Phagan Side of It," *Columbia [South Carolina] Record*, undated clipping, [c. April 1915], reel 2824, Frank Collection. Evans, "History of Organized Labor in Georgia," 253, 212, 249; Hall, "Secrets," 35–38. On southern craft unionists' uneasiness with unskilled women workers' failure to conform to their notions of sexual respectability, see *ibid.*; and Hall, "Disorderly Women." For the Atlanta labor movement's positions on issues involving working women, see *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, July 5, 1912, p. 1; *ibid.*, Feb. 7, 1913, p. 4; and *ibid.*, Aug. 15, 1913, p. 4.

their children's behavior.⁴² In these new circumstances, the boundaries of male dominance and the methods of its enforcement became open to renegotiation. The Leo Frank case was an episode in that process.

The testimony of women workers during the trial gave cause for parental alarm in this regard. Several witnesses, for example, told of "girls" in the factory "flirting" with male passersby out the dressing room window. Despite orders from management to stop and efforts by disapproving older female employees to prevent the practice, the girls persisted. Reports of the flirtations led at least one father to make his daughter quit the job against her will. Other testimony showed that by bringing young women and men together in daily interaction, the National Pencil Factory, like other factories in the South, became a site of courtship as well as production. Indeed, reports indicated that a few of Mary Phagan's male co-workers had taken a shine to her themselves and that their antipathy to Frank flowed in part from jealousy. Evidence of unwed motherhood and prostitution among some former employees of the National Pencil Factory also came to light. Some young women workers evidently engaged in forms of self-assertion and interaction with men that threatened prevailing gender codes. Revelations of their activities during the trial confirmed common adult fears about the implications of wage labor for the sexual purity of Atlanta's "working girls."⁴³

This context helps make sense of an otherwise mysterious aspect of the case: Although the sexual accusations leveled against Frank were widely accepted by those who believed him guilty, they lacked foundation. Medical examiners, for example, never found clear evidence of rape. The case initially made by Frank's defense — that Conley had killed Phagan in an attempt to rob her — was as plausible as the prosecution's case; indeed, her handbag was never found. By the time of Frank's commutation, moreover, some of the testimony against him had been discredited, while new evidence pointed toward Conley. Nevertheless, the popular desire to believe the rape charge was so great that even Frank's own attorneys ultimately altered their strategy and argued as if a rape had accompanied the robbery they initially alleged as the motive for the crime. For the historian, the question is *why* the charge of rape won so much credence.⁴⁴

⁴² On southerners' reliance on the labor and services of family members, see, for example, Margaret Jarman Hagood, *Mothers of the South: Portraiture of the White Tenant Farm Woman* (1939; reprint, New York, 1977); Allison Davis, Burleigh Gardner, and Mary B. Gardner, *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (Chicago, 1941), esp. 327–28, 409–10, 413; Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York, 1976); John Kenneth Morland, *Millways of Kent* (Chapel Hill, 1958), esp. 84, 95; Lois MacDonald, *Southern Mill Hills: A Study of Social and Economic Forces in Certain Mill Villages* (New York, 1928), esp. 131; and Jennings J. Rhyne, *Some Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages* (Chapel Hill, 1930). On the way gender and generational hierarchy undergirded the household economy of antebellum yeomen, see McCurry, "Defense of Their World."

⁴³ Brief of Evidence at 20, 23, 135, 173–74, 223–24, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*; Watson, "Celebrated Case," 200; "Hearing before Gov. John M. Slaton," 94. One workplace-based courting elsewhere in the South, see Byerly, *Hard Times Cotton Mill Girls*, 131, 156; Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied*, 98; and Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 86, 140–41. Concerns about the effects of wage labor on working women's sexual behavior appeared dramatically in the responses of middle-class reformers, labor spies, and craft unionists to the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills strike in Atlanta during the years of the Frank case. See Hall, "Secrets."

⁴⁴ Brief of Evidence at 45–50, 159, 161–64, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*; "Hearing before Gov. John M. Slaton," 11–12. For the change in the case made by Frank's lawyers, see "Hearing before Gov. John M. Slaton," 10–13.

The answer reflects the central role of sexual conservatism in this instance of reactionary populism. The belief that Mary Phagan was raped by Leo Frank rather than robbed by Jim Conley can be read in part as a massive exercise in denial on the part of people unwilling to acknowledge youthful female sexual agency. For although there was no compelling evidence of recent or forcible intercourse, there were physical signs that Phagan may not have been a virgin.⁴⁵ Once her body had been found and examined, there were two choices: to believe that she had been murdered to cover up a perverse sexual assault that failed to leave the normal evidence or to admit that perhaps she had been sexually active before the day she was murdered and come to terms with the new social reality this scenario represented. Frank's opponents refused to do the latter; their gender code did not allow for such ambiguities. Either a woman was chaste and worthy of protection or she shamed herself and her people, thereby relinquishing her claim to protection.

The mere innuendo that Phagan was unchaste drew howls from Frank's opponents. "Shame upon those white men who desecrate the murdered child's grave, *and who add to the torture of the mother who lost her,*" bellowed Tom Watson, "by saying Mary was an unclean little wanton." Another man condemned Frank's supporters for what he described as their efforts "to portray her character as a strumpet." For all the speakers' sympathy for Mary Phagan as a young virgin struggling against an employer's lust, they would have nothing but contempt for a sexually active Mary Phagan, even as the victim of brutal robbery and murder. Like the scores of young women workers who became unwed mothers or prostitutes, without the halo of innocence and purity Phagan could not have served their purposes.⁴⁶

Frank's accusers' response to the case reflected a longing to ward off the change in sexual behavior that a nonvirgin Mary would have represented. They actively promoted a mythology of Phagan as a sexual innocent who died in a noble effort to defend her "virtue."⁴⁷ This mythology registered grievances about contemporary class relations while it harkened back to an ideology of gender relations developed in an agrarian household economy. As a graphic morality play, it offered a way of coping with social change that avoided the complex reality of women's sexual initiative. And in so doing, it helped old gender and class ideology survive in a new age.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Brief of Evidence at 15–16, 46–50, *Leo M. Frank v. State of Georgia*.

⁴⁶ Watson, "Full Review," 266. See also Watson, "Official Record," 190. J. D. Chason, M.D., to Slaton, May 31, 1915, folder 10, box 45, Slaton Collection. A former Augusta resident pointed out that the red-light districts there were "filled with mill girls"; prostitution was "organized and wide open" with "not the smallest protest on the part of anybody there." "The trouble with Georgia," he concluded, "is that she thinks too little of Mary Phagan alive and too much of Mary Phagan dead." Edwin W. Walker to editor, *New York Sun*, Sept. 10, 1915, reel 221, Lynching File, 1899–1919, Tuskegee Institute News Clippings File (Hollis Burke Frissell Library, Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Ala.).

⁴⁷ This is not to deny that Phagan may have been a virgin, but to underscore the intensity of the will to *believe* that she was among Frank's opponents and their agency in constructing the meaning of her death. Nor am I using the word "mythology" loosely: as icon, Mary became an important part of the folk culture of the South and of mill workers in particular. Her ordeal was recounted in the "Ballad of Mary Phagan," which in several versions circulated through the mill regions of the South in ensuing decades. See Gene Wiggins, "The Socio-Political Works of Fiddlin' John and Moonshine Kate," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 41 (1977), esp. 100–104; Stephen R. Wiley, "Songs of the Gastonia Textile Strike of 1929: Models of and for Southern Working-Class Women's Militancy," *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, 30 (Fall-Winter 1982), 94–95.

For in death, Phagan became a role model for her peers in a moral tale of epic proportions. She became, in the words of a resolution by an Atlanta union, an example of the girl who, despite her poverty, "yet holds pure the priceless jewel of virtue and surrenders her life rather than yield to the demands of lustful force." The editor of the city's labor paper applauded the union's call for a "shrine of a martyr to virtue's protection." A local minister made even more explicit the instructive power her example was to have. He solicited contributions for a monument depicting "the little factory girl who recently laid down her life for her honor" shown "in the agonies of death." He wanted the statue to stand "on the State Capitol grounds . . . as a lesson to the working womanhood of Georgia who are having to battle their way alone." It was left to the United Confederate Veterans of her hometown, however, with the support of the United Daughters of the Confederacy to build such a monument as "a symbol of the purity of the little virgin." They hoped that in rewarding Phagan, "who surrendered her sweet young life to save her honor," they would teach others high esteem for chastity, "that Christian attribute—the crown, glory and honor of true womanhood."⁴⁸

That two organizations devoted to the glorification of the Old South, with its roots in slavery and racist, patrician values, should rally against a white employer rather than a black worker indicates the complexity of the conflicts in the case. And, in fact, although the case raised issues concerning the susceptibility of working-class women to economic and sexual exploitation that a radical labor or women's movement might address, these issues were resolved in a thoroughly reactionary way. Not only did the leaders of the agitation against Frank make a fetish of virginity and deny women's sexual agency; they also demanded "protection" of women by men rather than measures that might enable young women to protect themselves, thus reinforcing the paternalism of male supremacy.⁴⁹

The most graphic illustration of this was the lynching of Frank by twenty-five men calling themselves "the Knights of Mary Phagan." The name was an obvious appeal to the chivalric tradition that the lynching acted out, a tradition in which, as Jacquelyn Hall put it, "the right of the Southern lady to protection presupposed her obligation to obey." The mob that killed Frank included leading citizens of Phagan's hometown, who had pledged themselves at the time of the commutation to avenge her family's honor. Their act evoked plaudits from many quarters; "no finer piece of Ku-Kluxing was ever known in Georgia," the official state historian later exulted.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Atlanta Journal of Labor*, Sept. 12, 1913, p. 4; J. C. Parrott to editor, *ibid.*, Sept. 15, 1913, p. 4. For other homilies on Mary in the same vein, see Watson, "Official Record," 275, 279, 280; Watson, "Full Review," 257, 266; and *Argument of Hugh M. Dorsey*, 76. *Marietta Journal and Courier*, July 16, 1915, pp. 1, 6.

⁴⁹ Dr. Anna Howard Shaw made this point nicely, retorting to the incoming governor's claim that Georgians believed the commutation of Frank's sentence had allowed money to triumph over women's "honor." "Perhaps if Georgia were more ready to protect by law the honor of young girls," she stated, "and to better the working conditions that menace it, lynch law might not so often be invoked to mend morals by murder." *De Kalb* [Illinois] *Chronicle*, Aug. 26, 1915, reel 2822, Frank Collection.

⁵⁰ Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*, 151; Knight, *Standard History of Georgia and Georgians*, II, 1182–96. On popular support for the lynching, see Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 139–46; Harris, *Autobiography*, 368, 371; and L. Z. Rosser to Slaton, Sept. 1, 1915, folder 3, box 49, Slaton Collection. Although the identity of the lynchers was said to be known to many, they were never indicted, much less prosecuted or convicted.



Marietta men milling around Leo Frank's suspended body to admire the handiwork of the Knights of Mary Phagan. *Courtesy Georgia Department of Archives and History.*

Most telling was the behavior of the crowd that gathered around Frank's suspended body. One reporter described the scene as being "like some religious rite"; the participants exhibited a "curiously reverent manner" and an air of "grave satisfaction." Phagan's family also endorsed the paternalistic settlement. Indeed, her mother's first public statement after the lynching was that "she was satisfied with the manner of ending the case." Popular sanction for the lynching was further evident in the way it became enshrined in the folk culture of the South. The "Ballad of Mary Phagan," composed during the trial and performed for anticommutation crowds by the popular musician Fiddlin' John Carson, was later updated to glorify her avengers. It was sung for decades afterward in mill communities throughout the region. Frank's lynching thus scored a symbolic triumph for Old South gender ideology, as represented by the Knights of Mary Phagan, over the emerging power of industrial capitalism, as represented by Frank, while the way of life associated with that earlier culture was rapidly losing ground.⁵¹

In the end, this "chivalrous" resolution of the gender concerns not only expressed the popular malaise that the case revealed. It also helped submerge the radical potential in the popular mood. The paternalistic reaction to the gender issues constituted an integral element of a more general reactionary populist response. The conservative dynamics of this populism were most obvious in the way class antagonisms ultimately were channeled into anti-Semitism, and in the way the lynching assuaged popular hostility to the state. But in each case, the power of gender issues contributed to the outcome.

That the Frank case served as a forum for the expression of class enmity has already been demonstrated. Yet as the commutation struggle unfolded, the hostilities of the popular classes toward large capital and its representatives more and more took on an anti-Semitic cast. "Our country has been bartered to the shylocks of high finance," declared one pro-Watson editor, for example, while other Frank opponents denounced "Dirty Jews with thir Dirty Dollars" and "big Hebrew money."⁵² If not

⁵¹ *Atlanta Georgian*, Aug. 17, 1915, reel 2824, Frank Collection; *Newman [Georgia] Herald*, Aug. 20, 1915, p. 2. "Mary Phagan's folks," said the owner of the tree from which Frank was hanged, "hugged and patted that old tree and then they stood still and looked upward for a long time. I think they must have been praying." *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 21, 1915, p. 2. Wiggins, "Socio-Political Works of Fiddlin' John"; Wiley, "Songs of the Gastonia Textile Strike of 1929," 94-95; Olive W. Burt, ed., *American Murder Ballads and Their Stories* (New York, 1958), 61-64.

⁵² *La Grange [Georgia] Graphic*, Feb. 14, 1916, folder 12, box 45, Slaton Collection; J. M. Gassaway to Slaton, June 6, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.*; H. O. Durham to R. E. Davison, June 1, 1915, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.* For other examples of economic and class grievances expressed in anti-Semitic form, see J. R. and T. Bunn to Prison Commissioners, May 24, 1915, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; R. W. Daniel to Prison Commissioners, May 22, 1915, folder 2, box 35, *ibid.*; E. F. Dumas to Slaton, May 27, 1915, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; C. A. Jackson to Slaton, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; H. J. Sandlin to Prison Commissioners, June 2, 1915, folder 14, box 35, *ibid.*; J. P. Berrong to Slaton, May 15, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.* Virtually all of the crowd actions (boycotts, warnings out of town, arson, etc.) after Frank's commutation not aimed at the governor were aimed at Jewish merchants or employers. See the leaflet *Carry Me in Your Purse* ([Marietta], c. late June 1915) and accompanying letter "To the Citizens of Marietta," reel 2825, Frank Collection; *New Orleans American*, June 23, 1915, pp. 1, 9, reel 2825, *ibid.*; *Augusta Chronicle*, Aug. 29, 1915, p. 7; *Athens [Georgia] Daily Herald*, Oct. 20, 1915, p. 1; Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 213; and B. H. Meadows to Nathaniel E. Harris, July 1, 1915, July 7, 1915, folder 1, box 228, Nathaniel E. Harris Papers, Executive Department Correspondence (Georgia Department of Archives and History).



AS THE NEW YORK WORLD—JEW OWNED—SEES US.

Watson's Magazine reprint (Oct. 1915) of a *New York World* cartoon showing Georgia as a wild woman. The *Watson's Magazine* caption illustrates Populist anti-Semitism.

Courtesy Tom Watson Brown, great-grandson of Thomas E. Watson.

all of Frank's opponents shared this approach, none condemned anti-Semitism in forthright terms. As a result, through the active efforts of some and the passive default of others, Jews became the foil for all capitalism's evils, while Georgia's and the nation's most powerful capitalists escaped notice or blame.⁵³

To view the anti-Semitic trajectory of the case as a conscious, cynical sleight of hand on the part of leading Frank opponents would be simplistic. Politicians such

⁵³ See Watson, "Full Review," 242; Watson, "Official Record," 262, 267, 292-97; Watson, "Celebrated Case," 222. One editor advised anyone who doubted that prejudice against Jews existed to "board an Atlanta street car filled with home-going working people." *Southern Ruralist*, March 15, 1914, reel 2822, Frank Collection. On anti-Semitism as a diversionary surrogate for anticapitalist sentiments, serving profoundly antiradical ends, see Carey McWilliams, *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America* (Boston, 1948); and the more theoretically inclined analysis of European anti-Semitism, Abram Leon, *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* (Mexico City, 1950).

as Tom Watson and Joseph Mackey Brown, themselves men of substantial property who stood to lose should a genuinely anticapitalist labor movement develop, *did* energetically promote anti-Semitic interpretations of class hostilities. Yet their inclination to view the case in this way came from the petty producer-based political culture they shared with their followers. Indeed, given the antipathy of Populism and producerist ideology more generally to "unproductive" finance capital, with which Jews were particularly associated in the minds of many contemporaries, the potential for anti-Semitic responses to the case existed without the machinations of men like Watson and Brown.⁵⁴

What is most interesting for our purposes here, however, is not the source of this potential but the role gender issues played in its realization. Just as sexual anxieties infused prejudices against African Americans in southern society, so fears about changing gender roles and sexual jealousies combined with class hostilities in the anti-Semitism of the Frank case. Popular associations of Jews with the vice trade and stereotypes about the alleged lust of Jewish men for gentile women made Frank vulnerable as a suspect in the first place.⁵⁵ One opponent of commutation for Frank informed the Georgia Prison Commission that "there is two things most of them [Jews] will do. One is they will steal or make or have money [and] the other is this[:] do every thing possible [*sic*] all through life to seduce our Gentile Girls and Women." Tom Watson, who had recently added anti-Catholicism to his arsenal, implied that Jewish employers had a penchant for taking sexual advantage of women akin to that he alleged against papal priests. He described the factory as "a Jewish convent as lascivious as a Catholic monastery," a belief some of his readers endorsed. Years later a Ku Klux Klan writer, complaining of supposed "outrages inflicted upon innocent girls by Hebrew libertines," referred back to the Frank case as evidence. Anti-Semitism thus provided simple answers for the complicated questions of changing patterns of class power and female sexuality. Capitalism was a good social system, unless manipulated and deformed by Jews; young women were pure, asexual beings, unless lured into depravity by treacherous racial others.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ In a political culture extolling the "producing classes," Jews often occupied unpopular positions as rural peddlers, country merchants, and urban merchants and businessmen. The economic interests of many Atlanta Jews, moreover, had led them in the 1890s to oppose the popular demand of Georgia Populists for free silver, creating lasting resentments; see Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 184, 152–53, 163. See also Thomas D. Clark, "The Post-Civil War Economy in the South," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge, 1973), 160–67. For a more general discussion, see John Higham, "American Anti-Semitism Historically Reconsidered," in *Jews in the Mind of America*, ed. Charles H. Stember et al. (New York, 1966), 237–58.

⁵⁵ In Atlanta, for example, in the decade before the Frank case, Prohibitionists had accused Jews of promoting vice and encouraging black men to take liberties with white women. Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 161–62, 186–87, 214. In the national campaign against "white slavery" that fed into the Frank case, foreign men, in particular Russian Jews, were blamed for the prostitution industry. Feldman, "Prostitution, the Alien Woman, and the Progressive Imagination," 192–206. Many writers have noted the importance of sexual themes and anxieties in the most extreme forms of racism, including Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (New York, 1948), 27–28, 83–84, 111, 121–22, 124; Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*, 145; Davis, Gardner, and Gardner, *Deep South*, 24–25; James Weldon Johnson, *Along this Way* (New York, 1968), 170, 311–13, 391; and Charles Herbert Stember, *Sexual Racism* (New York, 1976).

⁵⁶ M. M. Parker to Prison Commissioners, May 31, 1915, folder 2, box 35, Slaton Collection. See also G. M. Wilson to Prison Commissioners, n.d., folder 10, box 45, *ibid.*; Jno. H. Wellington to Slaton, June 24, 1915, reel 2, Frank Correspondence. For Watson's statement, see Golden, *A Little Girl Is Dead*, 23. For the backing of a former

While anti-Semitism deflected economic class hostilities, the lynching itself defused political class hostilities. Popular distrust of the state apparatus and suspicion that it was becoming a tool of the wealthy emerged early in the controversy over commutation. Over and over again, Frank's opponents decried the elite's control of political affairs and denounced class injustice in the court system. Governor Slaton's commutation of Frank's sentence confirmed these beliefs. "As usual," one writer put it, "the rich have triumphed over the poor, the strong over the weak, those who neither toil or spin over the working people. . . . God help the poor; the rich take care of themselves."⁵⁷ And Frank's opponents were right that immense amounts of money and power, resources to which Mary Phagan's people had no access, were marshaled on his behalf, and the governor did yield to this power and override the authority of a duly constituted jury. Georgians could readily interpret Slaton's disregard for the decisions of the jury and the appeals judges as reflecting a larger pattern in which the state in Georgia by the early twentieth century served capital, usually to the detriment of other classes. Not only did the government exclude all women, most blacks, and many poor whites from the electorate and deny them all but rudimentary education and welfare. It also bolstered the power of wealth through violent opposition to strikes, through class and race privilege in the court system, and through vagrancy, contract, and lien laws that limited workers and tenants' freedom of movement.⁵⁸

Yet rather than proposing substantive measures to redress class injustice, Frank's opponents instead sought solutions in a political ideology developed under conditions that no longer existed. They directed their hopes toward the restoration of a now-mythical republican state, in which "the people"—white, male heads of household in the producing classes—controlled a government of limited powers. The rationale for the lynching expressed this reactionary populist ideology. Frank's oppo-

Populist and later Klan supporter, see Robert L. Rodgers to Thomas E. Watson, Sept. 9, 1915, folder 41, box 5, Robert L. Rodgers Papers (Manuscripts Section, Georgia Department of Archives and History). Blaine Mast, *K.K.K., Friend or Foe: Which?* (n.p., 1924), 22, 19. For examples in later Ku Klux Klan literature of the claim that Jewish men sought to take advantage of Protestant girls in general, and female employees in particular, see *Imperial Night-Hawk*, April 30, 1924, p. 6; Alma White, *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy* (Zarepath, N.J., 1925), 53–54; and Alma White, *Heroes of the Fiery Cross* (Zarepath, N.J., 1928), 10, 34–36.

⁵⁷ [Name illegible] to Watson, June 25, 1915, reel 2, Frank Correspondence. See also "A Friend of the Just" to Slaton, June 22, 1915, *ibid.*; H. L. Williamson to Slaton, June 21, 1915, *ibid.*; H. G. Williams to Slaton, June 24, [1915], *ibid.*; B. H. Hatfield to Slaton, May 11, 1915, folder 10, box 45, Slaton Collection; Claud Mahaffey to Slaton, June 21, 1915, folder 4, box 45, *ibid.*; John Brack to Slaton, June 15, 1915, folder 4, box 45, *ibid.*; F. J. Bivirrs to Slaton, n.d., folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; W. S. Landrim to Slaton, June 14, 1915, folder 4, box 45, *ibid.*; William H. Crouse to Prison Commissioners, May 14, 1915, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*; "A Committee" to Slaton, n.d., folder 4, box 45, *ibid.*; W. W. Poole to Slaton, June 21, 1915, folder 7, box 50a, *ibid.*; A. J. Oiler to Slaton, June 21, 1915, folder 4, box 45, *ibid.*; L. F. Roberts to Prison Commissioners, May 28, 1915, folder 15, box 35, *ibid.*; A. Purvis to Harris, June 28, 1915, folder 2, box 229, Harris Papers.

⁵⁸ On the lobbying effort for Frank, see Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 117–35; and the more revealing correspondence between A. D. Lasker, Julius Rosenwald, and Jacob Billikopf, reel 1069, Frank Collection. Numerous people protested Slaton's usurpation of the jury's role in deciding Frank's guilt. See, for example, "General Public" to Slaton, June 22, 1915, reel 2, Frank Correspondence; W. L. Sikes to Slaton, June 24, 1915, *ibid.*; I. A. Christian to Slaton, n.d., *ibid.*; "The Life Takers" to Slaton, June 24, 1915, *ibid.*; petition from citizens of Franklin County to Slaton, June 23, 1915, *ibid.* Scores of other letters and petitions simply asked Slaton not to "interfere" with the courts' decisions, and to "let the law take its course." On the class role of the state in southern society before World War I, see Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*; and Jonathan M. Wiener, "Class Structure and Economic Development in the American South, 1865–1955," *American Historical Review*, 84 (Oct. 1979), 970–92.

nents viewed vigilante activity as a legitimate exercise of popular sovereignty when state policy no longer reflected the citizenry's will. They equated the killing of Frank with a tradition of popular mobilization against the powerful in the service of "justice." The Knights of Mary Phagan were but the latest in a line that included Christ driving the money changers from the temple, Martin Luther and the early Protestants, the *sans culottes* of the French Revolution, and the patriots of the Boston Tea Party. "All power is in the people," explained Watson in a paean to the "righteous wrath" of the "Vigilance Committee" that murdered Frank. "When the constituted authorities are unable, or unwilling to protect life, liberty, and property," he averred, "the People must assert their right to do so."⁵⁹ Many Frank opponents defended the lynching on the grounds that by "rob[bing] the law of part of its terror," as one petition put it, the commutation of his sentence encouraged disrespect for the law and promoted "anarchy" and "mob rule." In other words, the act of the mob, in administering the stern punishment prescribed by the courts, would achieve the *conservative* goal of preserving fear of the law. Taking Frank's life would ensure order, stability, and respect for property.⁶⁰

Here again, though, conceptions of gender contributed to the motives and the rationale. They influenced the sanction given to the lynching and to the model of state power it represented. Punishment for alleged rape served as the ultimate justification for lynchings in southern society. "Any man," explained one after the commutation, "who has very much family pride in their hearts, would be in favor of mob law, under the circumstances."⁶¹ Defending the Knights of Mary Phagan,

⁵⁹ Watson, "Official Record," 254, 290–91. For other defenses of the lynching couched in a restorationist, populist idiom, see A. Morgan to editor, *North American Review*, Sept. 1, 1915, reel 2824, Frank Collection; *Marietta Journal and Courier*, Aug. 20, 1915, p. 6; *Madisonian*, July 16, 1915, p. 4; *ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1915, p. 4. The *Newnan Herald* sympathetically quoted editorials approving of or apologizing for Frank's lynching from nine small-town Georgia papers. *Newnan Herald*, Aug. 27, 1915, p. 1. See also P. A. Blanchard to Slaton, n.d., folder 10, box 45, Slaton Collection: "delays and miscarriages of justice IS THE CAUSE of nearly every occurrence of mob violence. . . . Lawyers, technicalities of the law, Newspapers for hire, officers for sale: these are the withering curse of our land." Another anticommutation writer asserted: "The majority of the citizens of Georgia are worn threadbare over the way this case has been handled, and if . . . we are allowed to be run over[,] mistreated and trampled under foot by the moneyed Brutes of this country[,] then it is time to Shoulder Arms and demand [justice] at the muzzle of our Guns." Smoke to Slaton, May 29, 1915, folder 1, box 35, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Omega, Georgia, petition, n.d., folder 1, box 35, Slaton Collection. Other petitioners maintained that the commutation had "set a dangerous precedent which will tend to promote anarchy and increase mob law." "Citizens of Troup County" to Slaton, telegram, June 24, 1915, reel 2, Frank Correspondence. The clearest statement of the dangers of commutation argued that when juries could be overridden and class justice enthroned, "the bedrock principles of good government is destroyed and obedience to law and good morals can no longer be fostered. . . . the strong arm of the law . . . is our only protection and hope for society in the future." J. D. Chason to Slaton, May 31, 1915, folder 10, box 45, Slaton Collection. Another stated that commutation would "thwart the . . . Courts, to which alone we can look for protection." L. D. McGregor to R. E. Davison, June 1, 1915, folder 5, box 49, *ibid.* "I am fearful," wrote another, "that we are now bordering on anarchy." J. E. Stembridge to Slaton, June 21, 1915, folder 4, box 45, *ibid.* Another explained that having the courts "sustained . . . is our only hope in the future." A. B. Cooke to Mrs. John M. Slaton, June 3, 1915, folder 4, box 45, *ibid.* The frequent use of phrases such as "our only hope" to appeal for stern justice underscores the writers' perception that their society was undergoing a transition, whose outcome appeared as uncertain as it was ominous to those who felt they had something to lose. For defenses of the lynching in these terms, see Sessions to A. W. Knapp, Aug. 27, 1915, folder 22, box 35, *ibid.*; W. E. Millican to Slaton, Aug. 19, 1915, reel 2, Frank Correspondence.

⁶¹ T. B. Hogan to editor, *Augusta Chronicle*, July 28, 1915, p. 4. Another wrote that if Frank's sentence were commuted, "if there shall be left in Georgia, men who love their wives, their daughters, and their state, they will wipe out, with gun-powder and leaden bull, the stain on Georgia's name, that she didn't have men enough to

James G. Woodward, the labor-backed mayor of Atlanta, voiced the inaccurate but eminently useful white apologia for lynching: "when it comes to a woman's honor, there is no limit we will not go to avenge and protect it." This culture of "honor" had material roots in the historical role of patriarchal authority in the household economies of plantation slavery and yeoman farming in the preindustrial South. It drew its emotional power from the intersection of white supremacy and female subordination. It was a profoundly reactionary creed, in that it aimed to buttress both hierarchies against the leveling potential of social change. Through the lynching of Frank, it scored a symbolic triumph over the emerging culture of "Mammon" associated with industrial capitalism, by meting out honor's "ultimate punishment" (death) for honor's "ultimate offense" (rape).⁶²

The reactionary populist resolution of the case also had a more tangible impact on the state's public life, sparking turmoil reminiscent of the 1890s. Criticism of Frank's lynching led one country editor to explode that "the common people" were "tired of having orders dished out to them by a bunch of kid glove politicians and city editors." The editor denounced Frank's supporters as "the same gang that has practiced gag-rule for so long . . . that has ridden roughshod over the people . . . that stole the election from Watson" in 1894 and crushed the Populist movement for which he then campaigned. The scale of such rage, which involved not merely polemical attacks but also crowds threatening Jewish businesses and burning the governor in effigy, terrified elite Georgians. "You can have no conception of the situation [here]," Frank's attorney Luther Z. Rosser informed an associate after the lynching. "Public opinion has never been so wild, so unreasonable, and so savage"; "the hatred and bitterness here now is inconceivable." The unrest unleashed by the commutation and the lynching upset the state's economy and endangered its prospects for outside investment. It also delivered a severe blow to the ambitions of the urban political elite with which Rosser, like Slaton, was associated. This group had no doubt about the cause of their predicament. "The real cause of all the

protect her courts and her women." Donald Clark to Slaton, May 25, 1915, folder 10, box 45, Slaton Collection. The editor of one country paper, a reactionary populist, insisted that only fear of lynching kept would-be rapists at bay. *Madisonian*, Sept. 13, 1915, p. 4. Contemporary antilynching activists and historians have noted that despite evidence that only a fraction of lynchings involved allegations of rape, the apologia that lynching was in retribution for rape endured. See Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings* (New York, 1969), 87–88; Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (New York, 1929), 16–17, 54–55, 65–66, 82; Arthur F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Chapel Hill, 1933), 9, 20, 50; Johnson, *Along this Way*, 329–30, 365–66; Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*, 146–49; George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York, 1971), 274, 282; Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 237.

⁶² For James G. Woodward's remark, see *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 19, 1915, reel 2824, Frank Collection. Cf. the incoming governor of Georgia, Nathaniel Harris, on Frank's lynching: "there is something that unbalances men here in the South where women are concerned . . . that destroys men's ability and even willingness to do cold and exact justice." *New York Times*, Aug. 20, 1915, p. 4, reel 2825, *ibid.* Cf. D. M. Parker, of Baxley, Georgia, to editor, *New Republic*, Aug. 7, 1915, p. 23. See also Harris, *Autobiography*, 363. Several anti-Frank writers, notably Watson, posed the conflict over commutation in terms of "money" versus "manhood" or "honor." For other examples, see H. J. Sandlin to Prison Commissioners, June 2, 1915, folder 14, box 35, Slaton Collection; J. P. Ber-rong to Slaton, May 15, 1915, folder 10, box 45, *ibid.*; C. E. Parker to Slaton, June 21, 1915, folder 4, *ibid.* Perhaps the intense concern with the loss or "sale" of honor and the frequent use of the metaphor of prostitution among Frank opponents reflected anxiety over their loss of independence and control as a result of the increasing domination of the market over their lives.

present trouble is Tom Watson," as Rosser summed up the consensus. The conclusion appeared simple: "Georgia [has] to put her foot down on Watson. . . . [to] crush him as a political power for all time in this state."⁶³

The state's leaders failed utterly in this endeavor, their inability to reestablish hegemony a measure of the potency of the conflicts unleashed by the Frank case. Rather than destroying Watson, they themselves suffered stinging reverses. Slaton's commutation of Frank's sentence proved the end of a once-promising political career. Watson's candidate for governor, Leo Frank's prosecutor Hugh Manson Dorsey, swept the polls in the primaries after Frank was lynched, trouncing his establishment-backed rivals in one of the largest electoral victories in Georgia's history. Although the results stunned elite observers, no one had any doubt that the Frank case had made Dorsey governor. Rebuffed at the polls, Watson's opponents fell back on more circuitous strategies to undermine his influence, including having him prosecuted by the federal government on charges of obscenity for his political journalism and trying to expel him from the state Democratic party. These behind-the-scenes efforts, too, yielded only humiliating defeats for their orchestrators, as Watson tapped an undreamed-of reservoir of popular support that shielded him from their power and within a few years catapulted him to a seat in the United States Senate. From this august post, he would defend the second Ku Klux Klan from its critics. This organization, whose might by the mid-1920s surpassed that of any other right-wing movement in American history, gained direct impetus from Watson's agitation in the Frank case. In short, although the victory proved pyrrhic—in the long run quite tragic—for many of their supporters, the forces of reactionary populism had scored a significant triumph over their establishment adversaries, the consequences of which would resound for years.⁶⁴

There were many reasons why the potent conflicts involved in the Frank case took the direction they ultimately did. Cases of female sexual victimization, in part because of the reality of women's vulnerability in our society, may be particularly prone

⁶³ *La Grange* [Georgia] *Graphic*, Feb. 24, 1916, folder 14, box 45, Slaton Collection; Rosser to B. Z. Phillips, Aug. 21, Aug. 25, 1915, folder 3, box 49, *ibid.*; *Augusta Chronicle*, Sept. 30, 1915, p. 7; *ibid.*, June 22, 1915, p. 1; Harris, *Autobiography*, 356–61; Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 131–33; Rosser to Slaton, Sept. 1, 1915, folder 3, box 49, Slaton Collection; Rosser to Phillips, Sept. 15, 1915, *ibid.* See also Editor to Joseph M. Brown, Aug. 4, 1915, folder 11, box 35, *ibid.* Thomas Loyless, the editor of the *Augusta Chronicle*, drew the same conclusions and editorialized against Watson single-mindedly in ensuing months; the battle won him myriad letters of hearty support from elite Georgians—and of irate disdain from more ordinary residents.

⁶⁴ *Augusta Chronicle*, Oct. 3, 1915, sec. C, p. 6; *ibid.*, Sept. 14, 1916, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1916, p. 4. See also Phillips to Jacob Schiff, May 17, 1916, folder 3, box 49, Slaton Collection; E. F. Dumas to Brown, May 4, 1914, folder 2, box 3, Joseph Mackey Brown Papers (Atlanta Historical Society, Atlanta, Ga.); Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 159. For examples of the efforts against Tom Watson and his support, see *Augusta Chronicle*, Feb. 4, 1916, p. 5; *ibid.*, Feb. 6, 1916, sec. C, p. 4; *ibid.*, Feb. 13, 1916, p. 5; *ibid.*, Feb. 18, 1916, p. 1; *ibid.*, Feb. 21, 1916, p. 4; Rosser to Slaton, Sept. 1, 1915, folder 3, box 49, Slaton Collection; *La Grange* [Georgia] *Graphic*, Feb. 14, 1916, folder 12, box 45, *ibid.*; *Talbotten* [Georgia] *New Era*, folder 14, *ibid.* The obscenity prosecution is described in Fred D. Ragan, "Obscenity or Politics? Tom Watson, Anti-Catholicism, and the Department of Justice," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 70 (Spring 1986), 17–46. On Watson's campaign and conduct in the Senate, see Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 451–86. On the Klan's gains from the Frank case, see *ibid.*, 446; and Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 149–50.

to conservative manipulation and repressive panaceas. Then, too, other features of contemporary southern life made a reactionary outcome more likely: the region's repressive political economy, the racial divisions that undermined coherent class loyalties, the hold of petty-producer political and cultural traditions on the industrial labor force then in the process of formation, and not least, the sway of the demagogic politicians that the one-party South produced in abundance, who used populist rhetoric to gain support but opposed genuine working-class politics and political radicalism. The key point for this article, however, is that the Frank case could never have incited the passions it did without changes in female behavior and family relations as the context, and without the charged issues of sexuality and power between the sexes and generations as the trigger.⁶⁵

That being the case, the hypotheses confirmed here could be applied to other, analogous movements and episodes. Certainly the Frank case, like any significant historical event, was in some respects singular. Yet if the context and form were distinct, the prominence of gender and sexual themes was by no means unique. One of the most hotly contested issues in American politics north and south in these years was Prohibition, a movement suffused with such themes. Nor was Tom Watson the only politician to harness the emotions revealed in the Frank case toward racist, restorationist ends; many of his contemporaries proved equally adept. Similarly, the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s blended populist appeals, vitriolic racism, and militant sexual conservatism. For their part, the white Citizens' Councils later organized to combat the civil rights movement found the specter of "social equality" and racial "amalgamation" their most effective rallying cry. In our own time, the New Right has transformed the terms of debate in United States politics by using a populist, familial idiom to incite opposition to abortion rights, affirmative action, and the welfare state. Without discounting the important differences between these phenomena, one may yet note suggestive parallels with the pattern of reactionary populism here described. In each case, gender and sexual themes played a critical role in mobilizing a mass following for a reactionary political agenda put forward in the name of "the people."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ On the availability of cases of women's sexual victimization for conservative manipulation, see Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge, Eng., 1980); and Judith R. Walkowitz, "Jack the Ripper and the Myth of Male Violence," *Feminist Studies*, 8 (Fall 1982), 543-76. See also DuBois and Gordon, "Seeking Ecstasy on the Battlefield." On southern politicians' use of populist rhetoric, see Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*, 80, 233-37. For populist rhetoric used toward explicitly procapitalist, anti-radical ends, see Tom Watson, *Socialists and Socialism* (Thomson, Ga., 1910). For the antiradical, anti-working class positions of leading Watson allies in the Frank case, see the campaign brochure by Hugh M. Dorsey, *The Record: Upon Which Governor Hugh M. Dorsey Asks Your Support for U.S. Senator* (Atlanta, 1920), esp. 8-9, Hugh Manson Dorsey folder, File II, Names Section (General Library, Georgia Department of Archives and History); and the scores of diatribes against organized labor, couched in racist, populist terms, by Joseph Mackey Brown, Brown Papers.

⁶⁶ On the role of concerns about family life and gender in the agitation against liquor, see Norman H. Clark, *Deliver Us from Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York, 1976); and Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, 1981). V. O. Key, Jr., with Alexander Heard, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York, 1949); Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black/White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York, 1984). For the interplay of populism, racism, and sexual conservatism in the second Klan, see MacLean, "Behind the Mask of Chivalry"; and Charles Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* ([Lexington, Ky.], 1965).

Others have rightfully drawn attention to the class and race dynamics of such movements. The Frank case, however, shows that to fully comprehend them, we must also consider changing relations between men and women and parents and children as vital components of the perceived social crises to which those movements respond. And to explain their powerful appeal, we must examine the role of gender and sexuality in their ideologies. "The public and the private worlds are inseparably connected," Virginia Woolf long ago pointed out; "the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other." It is time to bridge the artificial barriers between women's history and labor history, between family history and political history, so that we may grasp the systematic links between them.⁶⁷ In the writing of history, as in politics, we ignore the connections at our peril.

"Whenever, wherever, race relations are discussed," as Lillian Smith put it, "sex moves arm in arm with the concept of segregation." Smith, *Killers of the Dream*, 124. On the councils, see Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Councils: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1944-64* (Urbana, 1971). For perceptive early interpretations of the New Right, see Linda Gordon and Allen Hunter, "Sex, Family and the New Right: Anti-Feminism as a Political Force," *Radical America*, 11-12 (Nov. 1977-Feb. 1978), 9-25; and Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Antiabortion, Antifeminism, and the Rise of the New Right," *Feminist Studies*, 7 (Summer 1981), 206-46.

⁶⁷ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (1938; reprint, New York, 1966). See also Joan Kelly, "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory: A Postscript to the 'Women and Power' Conference," *Feminist Studies*, 5 (Spring 1979), 222-23.