

occasions when they rise up in anger against those who dominate them. In these moments, we suddenly see something like a subaltern voice, although one that is poorly expressed and almost silent itself. The episodic appearance and disappearance of such moments of voice reveal silences that are undetectable in their own time but whose existence can be triangulated from brief moments when that silence was breached.

In sum, the problem of silence is crucial to our understanding of subaltern subordination. The paradoxes that surround it do not go away, however; they remain stubborn epistemic and interpretive challenges. The best we can do is approach the archives with creative ingenuity, using traces of what *is* there to discern that which has been erased, effaced, excluded, and silenced.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research. ■

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"DOES IT MATTER...?" POLITICAL THEORY IN THE ARCHIVES OF WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR.

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When I began the research for what would become *The Fire Is Upon Us: James Baldwin, William F. Buckley Jr., and the Debate over*

This article focuses on a question that remains urgent in our politics: How does the self-proclaimed "respectable," "non-racist" Right use the political energy of the "unrespectable," "racist" Right while denying that it is doing so?

Race in America, my sense of the scope of the book was modest (Buccola 2019). I proposed to write a short book that focused on the evening in February 1965 when James Baldwin, who Malcolm X (1968) aptly called "the poet" of the civil rights revolution, went toe-to-toe with William F. Buckley, Jr., who might have been justly called "the poet" of the conservative counterrevolution. The setting for the clash was the Cambridge Union, the world's oldest debating society, and the motion before the house that evening—"The American Dream Is at the Expense of the American Negro"—was the perfect one for Baldwin and Buckley to debate. Baldwin—son of Harlem turned revolutionary prophet—versus Buckley—son of privilege turned guardian of hierarchy—would face off to debate race and the American Dream in front of an international audience. The stage seemed to be set for a concise, dramatic book in which the debate would be the centerpiece of the action and the driving force of the narrative.

But then I entered the archives, and everything changed. The first archive I visited was the William F. Buckley, Jr., Papers at Yale University (Buckley Papers), a vast collection to which I would return many times. About midway through writing my first draft of the book, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture opened the James Baldwin Papers (Baldwin Papers) to researchers and off I went for the first of many trips to research that collection. Then there were the archives of the supporting characters in my story. It was in the archives that I got a true sense of the story I needed to tell, the heart of which was the backstory of each man—and I could not get to that heart without the archives.

To defend this claim here, I limit this article to a particular strand in the Buckley side of the story. Given the theme of the debate, one of my primary aims was to uncover, understand, and reconstruct how Buckley and the writers he surrounded himself with at his *National Review* magazine reacted to the Black liberation struggle of the 1950s and 1960s. As I did this research, the published record was rich with evidence. Buckley used the pages of *National Review* as a platform from which he and his colleagues sought in the area of "race relations," as he put it in 1965, to be "extremely articulate, non-racist while not attempting a dogmatic racial egalitarianism either."¹ A good history of this aspect of the American Right could be written using only the published writings of these figures. We could, for example, use only the published writings of Buckley and his circle at *National Review* to provide a sound sense of how one group of right-wing intellectuals justified their resistance to *Brown v. Board of Education*, the sit-in protests, the Freedom Rides, the March on Washington, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, this would be an incomplete history. This history provides a sense of how these men justified their positions, but it would not provide a sense of what they did when out of the public eye to thwart Black liberation. To understand how conservative power adapts to forces rising to displace it, we must delve into these shadowy spaces. We need, among other things, to look in the archives.

This article focuses on a question that remains urgent in our politics: How does the self-proclaimed "respectable," "non-racist" Right use the political energy of the "unrespectable," "racist" Right while denying that it is doing so?² The archives of Buckley and his circle offer many examples to ponder. Consider first the 1958 correspondence among Buckley, segregationist polemicist James Jackson Kilpatrick, and Citizens' Council leader William J. Simmons. Recall that Buckley was seeking to fashion a "non-racist" justification for resistance to civil rights. According to Buckley's understanding of "non-racism," cozying up publicly with Kilpatrick was acceptable but cozying up publicly with Simmons was problematic. Kilpatrick was an ardent defender of segregation, but he could be counted on—most of the time—to dress his segregationist arguments in the garments of constitutional theory. Simmons was a leader of a group that was aptly called The Uptown, or Rotary Club, Ku Klux Klan. "Same values as

the Klan,” I sometimes say, “different outfits.” The Council set out to destroy the lives of anyone they deemed to be too friendly to civil rights, but their preferred means usually differed from the Klan.³

One can see why Buckley may have been reticent to appear too close to someone like Simmons in public. What happens in private, however, is another matter. Buckley’s magazine was desperate for subscribers, and Kilpatrick—who was a frequent contributor and a friend of both men—was eager to help. When he had dinner with his friend Simmons in 1958, the two men hatched a plan. What if Simmons were to share his 65,000-name mailing list with Buckley, who then could use it to recruit subscribers? Buckley consented to the plan.⁴ The Kilpatrick Papers at the University of Virginia and the Buckley Papers contain the back-and-forth among the three men executing the plan, revealing how the “respectable” Right could tap into the energy of the “unrespectable” Right while pretending they had space between them. The archive allows us to better understand the ways in which men like Simmons, Kilpatrick, and Buckley were collaborating behind the scenes. Moreover, it allows us to see the spaces between them and ponder an important question: Do those spaces really matter? In other words, were Simmons and Buckley truly all that different and, if not, what does that teach us about performativity in politics?

Fast-forward a few years to mid-1963. In the wake of the success of the sit-in protests, the Freedom Rides, the Albany and Birmingham campaigns, and the first serious traction on meaningful federal civil rights legislation since Reconstruction, what was a “respectable” conservative to do? The public record makes it entirely clear that Buckley found association with racist demagogues such as Ross Barnett and George Wallace to be unsavory, but he recognized that they were tapping into an energy that the conservative movement desperately needed. The archive provides glimpses into how Buckley thought through this conundrum. In April 1961, he had signed a contract with Putnam to write a “big book” on conservatism. By 1963, he had assembled hundreds of pages of notes for the project with a working title: *The Revolt Against the Masses*.⁵ Buckley’s aim in *Revolt* would be to champion “the restoration of natural and compassionate hierarchy” in the face of what he took to be the excesses of democracy.⁶ In his archive, Buckley kept a massive file for the never-to-be-written book, including articles by others that seemed relevant to the topic, letters to and from his editor at Putnam, and—most revealing of all—notes that Buckley took on the project. I recognize that we must be careful with unpublished notes. Our claims about such evidence should be relatively modest and it should be placed alongside other evidence that we discover in the research process.

With these caveats in mind, I cannot adequately express the feeling of scholarly elation that I felt when I sat in the archive and held in my hands a document titled, “Notes Re Revolt Against the Masses (Discussion with JB).” The “JB” in this case was James Burnham, a senior editor at *National Review* and a Buckley confidante. It is a brief but wide-ranging document. In it, Buckley reflects on “the Negro question” in a way that is very revealing. “The Negro question,” he wrote, “may cause a revolt against the masses for the wrong reasons...do whites oppose them because Negroes in fact represent lower standards?...[D]oes it matter whether the Negro problem was the proximate cause for a revolt against the masses?”⁷ This is the “Does It Matter...” in my title for this article. Considered in context, this fragment is intriguing. Buckley was worrying about

something that was at the forefront of his mind in this period: Should conservatives attempt to use the energy of anti-Black racism to accomplish their political goals? For Buckley, those goals were unapologetically elitist; he wanted nothing less than to be an intellectual leader in a revolt against the masses. But he worried about associating himself with those who seemed motivated by racial animus. He believed his defense of racial hierarchy was—to borrow language from his “Notes”—“compassionate.” However, the bottom line is this: the archival evidence, alongside Buckley’s published writings and public actions, help us to see that his answer to the “Does it matter...” question was an emphatic “No!” He and other “respectable” conservatives were happy to accept the energy of the racist Right because they recognized that their own movement would likely die without it.

We might still wonder what the archive has given us that had not already been provided by the public record. It is not as if Buckley was shy about his racially reactionary politics. That is true enough, but the archive helps us to respond to a question that has arisen numerous times since I began working on this project: Shouldn’t he have known better? Questioner after questioner has asked this or phrased it as a declaration: “He was such an intelligent man,” many have said to me, “and he claimed to be so devout, and yet he treated Black people with such inhumanity.” This glimpse into the archive helps us to see that Buckley was grappling with that question and that he was cognizant of the devil’s bargain before him. He asked himself if making a deal with the devil of white supremacy was a price worth paying for power, and he answered in the affirmative.

My hope is that this brief tour through only a few of the striking archival moments I had when doing the research for *The Fire Is Upon Us* will contribute to the case that many treasures are to be found in the archives of the people and organizations that we study as political theorists. Nevertheless, I want to conclude on a note of caution. Long after I finished the book, I was having dinner with a historian friend, and we were discussing the wonders of archival research. At some point in that conversation he said, rather casually, “But, of course, we have to remember that the archive is a lie.” There is truth in that too.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research. ■

NOTES

1. William F. Buckley, Jr., to Jeffrey Hart; September 29, 1964. William F. Buckley, Jr., Papers (MS 576), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.
2. I emphasize that “non-racist” is the self-conception of Buckley and others on the historical and contemporary “respectable” Right. Readers may decide if this conception squares with reality.
3. For more about the Citizens’ Council, see McMillen (1994) and Rolph (2018).
4. For a general discussion of this plan, see Buccola (2019, 88–91).
5. The title was a play on José Ortega y Gasset’s 1929 book, *The Revolt of the Masses*, a defense of elitism against mass democracy that Buckley greatly admired.
6. *Revolt Against the Masses* File, William F. Buckley, Jr., Papers (MS 576), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
7. *Ibid.*

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MURDER IN THE ARCHIVE

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A confession: as someone who works with digitized texts, I have a romanticized view of physical archives. There is the sensory experience of an archive—that remarkable combination of decay and order. The worrying smell of decomposing paper and the reassuring sight of tidy gray boxes. There is the intellectual experience of confronting texts within an intentionally assembled collection.

Consider the Thomason Tracts. This collection of about 22,000 texts was assembled by the London bookseller, George Thomason, between 1640 and 1661. The texts include pamphlets, newspapers, books, plays, and other materials. It is the largest collection of texts from one of the most turbulent periods of English history (Mendle 2009).

The nineteenth-century historian, Thomas Carlyle, called the collection "the most valuable set of documents connected with English history." He believed that the Thomason Tracts held "the whole secret of the seventeenth century" (Great Britain 1850, 274). Uncovering this secret is essential for those scholars who are trying to understand political thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes in their English contexts.

The physical tracts are housed in the British Library. However, I use this collection in the way most contemporary scholars do:

Why assault the archive? The simple answer is that we can uncover patterns that otherwise might elude us.

through the Early English Books Online (EEBO) portal. There is something miraculous about this digital access. Yet it abandons the collection as a collection. What Thomason so patiently assembled and catalogued is now "just another incomplete pile of books" (Mendle 2009).

Encountering the texts in this way foregoes all the pleasures of the physical archive: no skirmishes with prickly but efficient librarians; no nods of recognition to other scholars working with the same collection; no walks through the very London streets on which the authors of these texts lived. Working with the EEBO is convenient and efficient, but it is not romantic.

When I start doing things with the texts, the exercise shifts from the mundane to the murderous. To get a sense of how English political discourse was changing during the time in which Hobbes was thinking about and writing *Leviathan* (1651), Jacqueline Basu and I used a computational approach called topic

modeling (Basu and McQueen forthcoming). At the most general level, this form of "macroanalysis" helps to surface themes in a corpus of texts by identifying recurring patterns of word clusters (Jockers 2013, 2014).

These approaches begin by mutilating the corpus. We set aside all of the images contained in the texts. This includes some of the most evocative visual products of the time, such as the topsy-turvy woodcut that graces the 1646 ballad, "The World Turned Upside Down" (T. J. 1647).

We then assaulted the texts themselves. We standardized their gloriously irregular early modern (or "earlie moderne" or "erly moderne") spelling. We eliminated punctuation; removed commonly used words (e.g., "the" and "and"); and stemmed the corpus, converting words with the same stem into a single word (e.g., "political" and "politics" became "politic"). The topic model then treated each document as a "bag of words," without regard for word order (Jockers 2014, 137). The result was something monstrous—and certainly illegible—to a human reader.

At this point, we were a long way from that glorious and fragile collection in the British Library. There were losses, to be sure—the loss of a physical encounter with the archive, the loss of the visual features of the texts, the loss of their peculiarities of spelling and punctuation, and eventually the loss of all linguistic coherence.

So, why do it? Why assault the archive? The simple answer is that we can uncover patterns that otherwise might elude us. We can capture the thematic content of thousands of texts and see which themes are especially salient over the 21-year life of the corpus. Not surprising, themes about the relationship between the King and Parliament and the course of the civil wars are particularly prominent. More surprising, comedies and comic themes also are pronounced. Perhaps amid so much bloodshed, laughter was precious.

We also can see how the prevalence of these themes changes over time. This offers suggestive contextual evidence that may answer thorny textual puzzles. For instance, Hobbes tells us that he wrote *Leviathan* in response to political and religious discourse in England (Hobbes 1839, xcii). He also wrote it in English, with

the hope that it would be read by his countrymen and taught in the universities (Hobbes 2012 [1651], 1140).

It seems reasonable to assume that some features of *Leviathan* speak to the English public discourse of the late 1640s—the period in which Hobbes was thinking about and writing the work. For example, in *Leviathan*, he adds an entirely new account of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (Hobbes 2012 [1651], 776–78). He had not addressed this question in his earlier political works, *Elements of Law* (1640) and *On the Citizen* (1642/1647).

His account of the Trinity is heterodox, to say the least. Hobbes manages to imply, for instance, that Moses is a member of the Trinity (Hobbes 2012 [1651], 776). The account exposed him to criticism. The Presbyterian critic, George Lawson (1657, 161), claimed that Hobbes's doctrine of the Trinity was "blasphemous" and "deserve[d] no answer but detestation." Furthermore, nothing in Hobbes's political theory required him to weigh in on the