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## Time's Coronation

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The R.M.S. *Titanic's* story is a familiar one. The flagship of England's White Star Line, *Titanic* was the largest moving object in history when it set sail in 1912, only to strike an iceberg and sink on its maiden voyage, claiming the lives of more than two-thirds of those on board. The ship was as magnificent as its sinking was tragic. It was luxuriously furnished with a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a Turkish bath, a squash court, and numerous common rooms designed to evoke the Palace of Versailles. It was also a technological marvel, equipped with an electrical plant stronger than most cities employed and a remotely activated bulkhead system with watertight doors. The *Titanic's* passenger list complemented its extravagance, boasting famous names like Astor and Guggenheim.

Mark Twain satirically labeled this era "The Gilded Age," and the French remembered it as "La Belle Époque,"

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"the beautiful time." It was a time of boldness and decadence, innovation and pride, where relative peace following the Civil War in America and the Franco-Prussian War on the European continent enabled rapid industrialization and cultural development. Exponential improvement was the faith of this era, with men believing their creations could match, or even surpass, God's and allow resolute mastery of the world. Of course, these optimistic sentiments were often real only for the upper classes. While some reaped the benefits of this economic prosperity, most toiled for a pitiful wage and many demanded change to ameliorate their miserable conditions. On the *Titanic*, a few enjoyed lavish staterooms, while many impoverished immigrants packed into crowded and noisy steerage cabins, although they were still far ahead of most other offerings.

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explored. Ultimately, neither rich nor poor could predict the ship's sinking. Both wealthy and destitute passengers believed in some form of civilizational progress, the former enjoying a comfortable ocean crossing impossible a hundred years before, and the latter searching for better lives that only the New World could provide. Few believed this progress would stop; fewer predicted it would stop in such a spectacular fashion. Two pieces of fiction did imagine such a disaster, both emphasizing a lack of enough lifeboats to save passengers. One of the authors actually died on the *Titanic*.

And so, the tragedy was an unfathomable event in a world that crowned man master of all, limited only by his whim and wonder. The claim that the *Titanic* was an "unsinkable" ship, likely offhand bravado, ultimately cemented the disaster's legacy as a testament to mankind's hubris in this age of limitless possibilities. It was almost as if nature had intervened to humble mankind. The *Titanic's* sinking heralded an age of immense uncertainty and incredible loss, the resulting disbelief surpassed only by the First World War, which erupted little more than two years later. As *Titanic* survivor

*For the Titanic, which will eventually fade into a pile of rust, time has ultimately prevailed, recording the exception to progress that nature had forced.*

Jack Thayer wrote, the disaster "was the event that not only made the world rub its eyes and awake, but woke it with a start – keeping it moving at a rapidly accelerating pace ever since with less and less peace, satisfaction, and happiness."

Historians often wonder whether an event represents change or continuity. In many ways, *Titanic's* sinking signifies change. Its place in historical memory is worth considering. When the ship sank, more than 1,500 people went into the cold Atlantic, so frigid that Thayer purportedly compared it to a thousand knives stabbing you at once. Recovery teams found only about a fifth of the victims' bodies; most were lost to the sea forever. And few tangible records

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## European Perspectives on the EU: Part I

By PHILIP CHIVILY  
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The European Union is a controversial and confusing entity. During the past decade, it has increased its influence across its domain despite losing one of its largest member states, the United Kingdom. I am no seer, but I expect the European Union to further integrate its members more closely together, and to expand further into Eastern Europe and even to parts of the former Soviet Union in the next few decades. Regardless of your opinions on the European Union – whether you believe it has improved the lives of hundreds of millions of Europeans and made Europe a more progressive or welcoming place, or that it is a technocratic socialist forerunner of a dangerous New World Order – it has increased peace and stability on a continent known for nearly perpetual warfare since the Roman Empire. In a way, it is a more concrete 21st-century version of the "Concert of Europe," the international diplomatic system that maintained a general peace for a hundred years up to the First World War. I decided some time ago to interview two residents of the European Union, Chiara Bondi and Gabriele Fett, to get their honest opinions of it.

*To begin with, please tell us where you're from and how you found Hamilton.*

*Chiara Bondi:* I am a senior here at Hamilton and a math major. I am an Italian citizen, a resident of Spain, born in France. Quite a variety. I grew up in an Italian academic system. Part of my family is American, from New York, and I always admired how their educational system worked. I've always wanted to go and try it, trying the same experiences in the same environment, both academically and socially. I never had the chance in high school, but realized I might as well do it through college. I knew I wanted to go to the East Coast and a small college. Out of all the possible colleges in the Northeast, that were small and liberal-arts, where I could play golf, I knew Hamilton was where I wanted to be when I toured the school, had info sessions here, and

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of the *Titanic's* fateful voyage survived. Notably, a vacationing Catholic priest, Father Francis Browne, took numerous photographs of life on the ship before he departed at its penultimate stop, his superior having ordered him back. The photos are endlessly fascinating. Father Browne took one of the last known pictures of the ship, and likely the last one of its captain, Edward J. Smith, ominously peering down from a higher deck, the photograph itself taken at such a jarringly sharp angle that it looks like the *Titanic* is already sinking.

The wreck lay undisturbed for more than 70 years, until a 1985 expedition led by Robert Ballard finally located the watery grave, more than two miles below the ocean's surface and remarkably preserved. Humans had gone where no

man should go, piercing the void and granting the majestic ship an audience once again. Ballard's team knew they were on the right track when they entered a debris field, first spotting a boiler on the ocean floor on their grainy video feed. The next day, the *Titanic's* bow emerged from the darkness. Later expeditions extensively photographed the area. The debris field looks like a battleground, with anything the depths' primordial creatures could not devour strewn about as if a bomb had gone off. Yet it is strangely peaceful. A bottle of champagne remains unopened, a stack of dishes unbroken, and a lifeboat davit still attached to the ship. Most poignantly, matching boots sit next to each other in the sediment, where their owner came to rest more than one hundred years ago.

But the Grand Staircase's ornate carving, "Honour and Glory Crowning Time," is lost forever, having either immediately splintered during the ship's plummet or gradually disintegrated over time. Judging from its supposedly identical companion on the *Titanic's* sister ship *Olympic*, the carving was beautiful, and its allegorical value rich. Even if its practical purpose was to hold a clock, what does it mean for time to be "crowned," especially in an age of limitless possibility when mankind's progress seemed inevitable? Maybe the carving meant that despite this progress, man and his creations are ultimately temporary, subject to forces greater than ourselves. For the *Titanic*, which will eventually fade into a pile of rust, time has ultimately prevailed, recording the exception to progress that nature had forced.

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talked to students and faculty. I loved it. Now I'm here and I'm very happy.

*Gabriele Fett:* I'm a junior at Hamilton, from Rome, Italy. I wanted to go to a liberal arts school. I toured all of them and this was the nicest one, in my opinion.

Europe after World War II and then develop a system for trade and dialogue between countries that would work, for countries to avoid war and defend each other. But now, there doesn't seem to be much political benefit.

the same way you interact with people from your own country. For example, in Italy when meeting people you give them a handshake; in Spain, it is two kisses on the cheek; in France, it can be as much as five kisses on the cheek. If you are an Italian and you go to France and don't know this,

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*What are the benefits of living in the European Union?*

*Chiara:* One of the benefits, especially as a young person, is culture. Because of all these international agreements, you only need one form of ID. Typically you just need either your personal ID or your passport. With no restrictions, it is really easy to travel within countries, making it really easy to learn. It is really enjoyable to just travel around and visit a city you never thought about visiting, visiting its museums and learning about its history and culture. A lot of people see the EU and Europe as just one entity, and to some extent you can see it as just one country politically, but demographically and culturally every country is different. You are able to easily learn and educate yourself about it. From a political standpoint, it was very important to rebuild

*Gabriele:* I'm not a business owner, but if I were, it would be free trade and no tariffs. And personally, as an individual, it's being able to go to other countries without much document checking. I have been able to go to other countries such as Holland and Sweden. You show them your EU passport and they just let you go by. There are no other steps you need to take.

*What is your opinion on the Schengen Area, the region in Europe with very easy border crossings thanks to the EU?*

*Chiara:* The Schengen Area really promotes culture. I know a lot of people don't value culture as they should, but it is very valuable. Learning how to adapt to different cultures, since you can't just go into a different country and expect to interact with locals in

and just shake their hand, they are going to see this as extremely rude. Traveling through Europe taught me how to quickly read the environment around me and adapt. I think the Schengen Area is good for this reason, especially for young people, making it easier to learn and explore. You are not just visiting old places, but learning about a place's history, heritage, and culture, becoming a more worldly person.

*Gabriele:* It seems fine. Open borders are a weird thing. When people think of them, they are imagining you can just walk across them without any checks. That's not what it is. You have to go through checkpoints, you have to show them your ID, it has to match you. It's more that you don't have to get a visa or any other documentation. It's more like going from California to Texas.

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## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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