

# ***CLIO* VOLUME IX**

**La revue d'histoire de premier cycle  
de l'Université d'Ottawa**

**The University of Ottawa  
Undergraduate History Journal**

2021-2022

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**CLIO**



**Cover Photo:** This cover illustration, titled “Showcase,” was made by Mona Khabbazi (she/they) exclusively for *Clio* Vol. IX. The intention of this piece was to embody our theme of “History from Home” and represent the tumultuous past year we have all experienced as stay-at-home academics. We invite our readers to check out Mona’s other fantastic artwork, available on her Instagram, @mona\_the\_epic.

**Photo de Couverture:** Cette illustration de couverture, intitulée «Showcase,» a été réalisée par Mona Khabbazi (elle/iel) exclusivement pour *Clio* Vol. IX. L'intention de cette œuvre était d'incarner notre thème de « l'histoire de la maison » et de représenter la dernière année tumultueuse que nous avons tous vécue en tant qu'universitaires au foyer. Nous invitons nos lecteurs à découvrir les autres œuvres fantastiques de Mona, disponibles sur son Instagram, @mona\_the\_epic.

*Clio* Vol. IX (2021-2022)

*Clio*

La revue d'histoire de premier cycle  
de l'Université d'Ottawa

*Clio* est une revue universitaire évaluée par les pairs et créée afin de démontrer la plus haute qualité de travail rédigée par les étudiant.e.s de premier cycle en histoire à l'Université d'Ottawa. Ce journal est une entité semi-autonome de l'Association des étudiants en histoire de l'Université d'Ottawa (AÉHSA). Il a été conçu lors d'un concours au printemps 2013 dans le but d'améliorer l'expérience universitaire des étudiants de premier cycle en histoire. Nous sommes publiés en ligne, ainsi que sur papier.

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*Clio*

The University of Ottawa  
Undergraduate History Journal

*Clio* is a peer-reviewed undergraduate academic journal created to showcase the highest caliber of research completed by Undergraduate History students at the University of Ottawa. This journal is a semiautonomous entity of the University of Ottawa History Students' Association (AÉHSA). It was conceived in the spring of 2013 as part of a competition to improve the academic experience of Undergraduate History students. *Clio* is published online, as well as in print form.

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Nous reconnaissons que la production et la publication de Clio ont lieu sur un territoire non cédé de la nation algonquine. Vous trouverez ci-dessous l'affirmation autochtone de l'Université d'Ottawa, <https://www2.uottawa.ca/notre-universite/autochtone/affirmation-autochtone>.

We recognize that the production and publication of Clio takes place on the unceded territory of the Algonquin nation. Please find below the University of Ottawa's Indigenous Affirmation, from <https://www2.uottawa.ca/about-us/indigenous/indigenous-affirmation>.

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*Ni manàdjiyànànìg Màmìwininì Anishinàbeg, ogoḡ kà nàḡadawàbandadjig iyò akì eko weshkad. Ako nongom ega wìkàd kì mìḡiwewàdj.*

*Ni manàdjiyànànìg kakina Anishinàbeg ondaje kaye ogoḡ kakina eniyagizidjig enigokamigàḡ Kanadàng eji ondàpinangig endàwàdjìn Odàwàng.*

*Ninisidawinawànànìg kenawendamòdjig kije kikenindamàwin; weshkinìgidjig kaye kejejàdizidjig.*

*Nigijeweninmànànìg ogoḡ kà nìḡànì sòngideyedjig; weshkad, nongom; kaye àyànìkàdj.*

*Nous rendons hommage au peuple algonquin, gardien traditionnel de cette terre. Nous reconnaissons le lien sacré de longue date l'unissant à ce territoire qui demeure non cédé.*

*Nous rendons également hommage à tous les peuples autochtones qui habitent Ottawa, qu'ils soient de la région ou d'ailleurs au Canada.*

*Nous reconnaissons les gardiens des savoirs traditionnels, jeunes et âgés.*

*Nous honorons aussi leurs courageux dirigeants d'hier, d'aujourd'hui et de demain.*

*We pay respect to the Algonquin people, who are the traditional guardians of this land. We acknowledge their longstanding relationship with this territory, which remains unceded.*

*We pay respect to all Indigenous people in this region, from all nations across Canada, who call Ottawa home.*

*We acknowledge the traditional knowledge keepers, both young and old.*

*And we honour their courageous leaders: past, present, and future.*

### **Remerciements**

Avec la publication du volume IX de *Clio*, nous estimons que la revue présente onze articles fascinants et variés qui représentent la créativité, le dévouement et les divers intérêts des étudiants du programme d'histoire de premier cycle de l'Université d'Ottawa.

*Clio* est d'abord et avant tout une étude sur la collaboration. Nous tenons donc à remercier notre comité de rédaction, qui a sélectionné et édité les articles finaux, et qui a constamment encouragé les auteurs présentés dans la revue de cette année. À notre tour, nous souhaitons remercier et reconnaître ces onze auteurs qui ont consacré leur temps et leur énergie non seulement à la rédaction de leurs articles, mais aussi à leur révision en vue de leur publication et à leur présentation à la conférence bimodale Gaston Héon. Beaucoup d'entre nous ne se sont rencontrés que virtuellement, mais leur temps, leurs contributions et leur esprit de collaboration ont fait du processus de publication de cette année une joie à partager.

Cette année, le thème de la revue est « l'histoire de la maison ». Comme la pandémie de COVID-19 continue d'affecter le processus historique des étudiants, la plupart des recherches qui ont conduit à ces articles ont été menées en ligne depuis chez eux. Les étudiants et les professeurs qui vivent à l'ère du numérique et d'une pandémie mondiale ont été contraints de trouver de nouvelles façons de communiquer, de faire des recherches et d'apprendre tout au long de la pandémie. Malgré ces défis inhérents, les étudiants de l'Université d'Ottawa ont produit une sélection fantastique d'écrits académiques que nous avons tenté de mettre en valeur dans ce journal.

Dans cette optique, nous sommes d'autant plus fiers et reconnaissants de la contribution de notre équipe à chaque étape du processus *Clio*. La publication de ce journal année après

année ne serait pas possible sans l'aide des nombreuses personnes et organisations qui soutiennent continuellement cette entreprise.

Tout d'abord, nous tenons à remercier le Dr Damien-Claude Bélanger, en sa qualité de directeur du département d'histoire, pour nous avoir aidés à organiser la conférence Gaston Héon et à obtenir les ressources nécessaires. Serge Durlinger pour ses contributions au guide stylistique *Clio* et pour avoir accueilli un atelier de rédaction important pour notre équipe. Nous souhaitons également remercier les docteurs Pierre Anctil, Thomas Boogaart, Heather Murray et Hernan Tesler-Mabé pour leur aide dans la modération de la Conférence Gaston Héon 2022. L'encouragement et les contributions collectives des professeurs de l'Université garantissent que *Clio* continue de réussir dans son objectif de mettre en lumière les meilleurs jeunes universitaires que notre programme a à offrir.

Il convient également de souligner le soutien de Rytec Printing et de notre artiste de couverture Mona Khabbazi, qui ont contribué à la réalisation d'une revue à l'aspect fantastique qui s'ajoutera à toute étagère. Enfin, nous tenons à remercier l'Association des étudiants en histoire (AÉHSA) pour son soutien et ses encouragements tout au long de ce processus, en particulier les coprésidents, Ethan Coudenys et Louise Denault. Nous tenons également à souligner le travail des vice-présidents des communications, Kaitlin Gallant et Louise Denault, qui ont fait la promotion de *Clio* à chaque étape du processus.

Sur ce, nous sommes ravis de partager le volume de *Clio* de cette année avec nos lecteurs. Nous sommes convaincus que la revue contient quelque chose que tout le monde appréciera, et nous espérons qu'elle encouragera davantage d'étudiants à partager leurs travaux avec l'équipe *Clio* à l'avenir.

### **Acknowledgements**

With the publishing of Volume IX of *Clio*, we feel that the journal features eleven fascinating and varied articles that represent the creativity, dedication, and diverse interests of the students of the University of Ottawa's undergraduate History program.

*Clio* is first and foremost a study in collaboration. Therefore, we wish to thank our Editorial Board, who selected and edited the final articles, and who constantly encouraged the authors featured in this year's journal. In turn, we would like to thank and acknowledge those eleven authors who have poured their time and energy into not only writing their pieces, but editing them further for publication and presenting them at the bimodal Gaston Héon conference. Many of us have only ever met virtually, but their time, contributions, and collaborative spirit made this year's publication process a joy to be a part of.

This year, the journal's theme is "History from Home." As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the historical process for students, most of the research which led to these articles was conducted online from home. Students and professors living through the digital age and a global pandemic have been forced to find new ways to communicate, research, and learn throughout the pandemic. Despite these inherent challenges, the students of the University of Ottawa produced a fantastic selection of academic writing which we have attempted to highlight in this journal.

With this in mind, it makes us all the more proud of, and thankful for, the contributions that our team made at every step of the *Clio* process. Publishing the journal year after year would not be possible without the aid of the many individuals and organizations who continually support this endeavour.

Firstly, we would like to thank Dr. Damien-Claude Bélanger in his role as Chair of the History Department for helping us organize the Gaston Héon conference and securing the resources to do so. Additionally, we want to thank Dr. Serge Durflinger for his contributions to the *Clio* style guide and for hosting a key editing workshop for our team. We would also like to thank Dr. Pierre Anctil, Dr. Thomas Boogaart, Dr. Heather Murray, and Dr. Hernan Tesler-Mabé for their assistance in moderating the 2022 Gaston Héon Conference. The collective encouragement and contributions of the University's professors ensures that *Clio* continues to succeed in its goal to highlight the best young academics that our program has to offer.

The support of Rytec Printing and our cover artist Mona Khabbazi must also be noted, as they have helped make a fantastic-looking journal that will make a great addition to any bookshelf. Lastly, we would like to thank the History Students' Association (AÉHSA) for their support and encouragement throughout this process, especially the Co-Presidents, Ethan Coudenys and Louise Denault. We would also like to acknowledge the work of the Vice Presidents of Communications, Kaitlin Gallant and Louise Denault, in promoting *Clio* at every stage of the process.

With that, we are excited to share this year's volume of *Clio* with our readers. We are confident that the journal contains something for everyone to enjoy, and we are hopeful that it encourages more students to share their work with the *Clio* team in future.

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## **Rethinking the Congo Crisis: Unclassified Records Reveal Hidden Network of European Neocolonial Financial Interests**

Anys Jean Dagher

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The Katanga Secession (1960-1963) was the longest lasting and most pressing issue of the Congo Crisis. It robbed the Congo of the bulk of its economic power and halted whatever hopes, dreams, and aspirations for development that the leaders of this promising newly-independent nation had. Conventional wisdom regarding the Congo Crisis maintains that Patrice Lumumba's assassination and Katanga's secession were consequences of the Cold War political climate in which a monolithic West, headed by the United States, tried to keep the Congo stable by installing a 'moderate' leader sympathetic to Western political and economic interests.<sup>1</sup> However, several sources such as declassified CIA and Foreign Relations of the United States ('FRUS') documents, a conference on the oral history of the Congo Crisis, and the conclusions of a Belgian parliamentary inquiry, paint a much more complex picture, prompting a reinterpretation of who the driving forces were behind the secession and challenging the orthodox Cold War narrative. Interpreted together, it becomes increasingly clear that a select group of Anglo-Belgian capitalists and politicians planned and executed the Katanga secession. They exploited their home countries' privileged position as influential members of NATO and the UN to stonewall reintegration attempts, and lend diplomatic support to the secessionists in order to maintain the economic status quo as it

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Schmidt, "Africa" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, edited by Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 271.

existed before Congo's independence. In other words, an exclusive club of European businessmen lies at the heart of the Congo Crisis, and of the Katanga secession in particular.

The orthodox narrative calls attention to the larger Cold War geopolitical struggle as the primary entity behind the maintenance of the secession and the Congo Crisis. This narrative highlights the overt and proxy political, social, economic, and military strategies, actions, and reactions of the United States and the Soviet Union. In the context of the Congo Crisis, this conventional interpretation maintains that Lumumba was seen as a wild card as far as Western interests were concerned.<sup>2</sup> He was the driving force behind the Leopoldville Riots and dominated the Belgo-Congolese Roundtable Conferences.<sup>3</sup> To complicate matters for the West, Lumumba gave an impromptu speech on Congo's day of independence in which he highlighted the glaring omissions of Belgian King Baudoin's earlier speech regarding the atrocities of his grandfather, King Leopold II. Lumumba's polarizing rhetoric ensured that he was all but written off as unreliable and a potential threat to the western interests. Consequently, when Lumumba came knocking on the doors of the United States for aid to end the secession, Eisenhower refused to see him, and he was denied support due his 'radical' and left-leaning political posture.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the US guaranteed that the UN peacekeeping missions did not assist Lumumba. The US was apprehensive of an alliance between the Congo and the Soviet Union as it increased the likelihood of

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<sup>2</sup> Schmidt, "Africa," 271.

<sup>3</sup> Leo Zeilig, *Lumumba: Africa's Lost Leader* (London: Haus Publishing, 2015), 93  
Note: The Léopoldville Riots were a civil revolt that occurred after Belgian authorities tried to suppress a demonstration organized by the ABAKO political party. The Belgo-Congolese Roundtables were conferences that were set to determine the political future of the Congo following extensive civil unrest.

<sup>4</sup> Zeilig, *Lumumba*, 111.

Congolese uranium finding its way into communist hands.<sup>5</sup> It was under these circumstances that Katanga was preferably kept in secession and under the influence of the West. In a desperate bid to reunite his ethnically and economically fracturing country, Lumumba petitioned the Soviet Union for help, and Khrushchev was all too happy to oblige.<sup>6</sup> In response, the US and Belgium devised separate plans to assassinate Lumumba.<sup>7</sup>

While the orthodox interpretation is based on reasonable deductions, this approach is too simplistic and superficial to serve as the canon explanation for the events that transpired in the Congo post independence. Firstly, the US government apparatus was itself not a monolithic political body, with its different departments and agencies assessing the Congo Crisis in various ways. Attitudes within the US military brass and at the CIA were the most in-line with how US foreign policy in Africa was traditionally appraised. That is to say, the US military and the CIA were looking at events in the Congo mainly from the angle of the communist containment strategy as set out by George Kennan's 'long telegram' and the Truman Doctrine.<sup>8</sup> In Truman's address to Congress on March 12, 1947, he promised US support to any nation that found itself threatened and undermined by the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> At the time of Truman's

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Latham, "The Cold War in the Third World, 1963–1975" in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 265.

<sup>6</sup> Latham, "The Cold War in the Third World," 265.

<sup>7</sup> Schmidt, "Africa," 272.

<sup>8</sup> George Kennan. "The Long Telegram." Telegram, February 22, 1946. From Teaching American History.

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/the-long-telegram/>.

<sup>9</sup> Truman, Harry S. "The Truman Doctrine." Address, March 12, 1947. From Miller Center.

<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/march-12-1947-truman-doctrine> (Accessed March 7, 2022).

address, he was particularly concerned by the communist threat present in the Greek Civil War and the Turkish Strait Crisis. This speech was a call to abandon the US' traditional isolationist stance, embracing instead the 'responsibility' of a global interventionist policy.

During the Congo Crisis, this communist containment mentality can be observed in several instances. For example, a letter from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the US State Department, dated July 22, 1960, informed the administration of potential Sino-Soviet military aid to the Congo and outlined various courses of action. They recommended pressuring countries to deny the Soviet Union overflight permission within their airspace. If this denial was ignored, retort with a military response was mandated. In the case of a Sino-Soviet military presence being established in the Congo, the US was to confront the threat unilaterally, by force if necessary.<sup>10</sup> A National Security Council briefing document from the CIA, dated September 7, 1960, outlined several developments with regard to Lumumba's relationship with the Soviets. The intelligence suggested that the Soviet Union had been supplying Lumumba with disassembled machine guns, planes for logistical support, and possibly military personnel. It also drew attention to the fact that Soviet support could result in their securing access to Congolese resources and mineral wealth.<sup>11</sup> A CIA bulletin from September 8, 1960, interpreted Lumumba's growing patronage from the Communist Bloc, as an attempt to undermine the UN's position within the Congo and drive a wedge between Congolese and UN forces.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, eds. Harriet Dashiell Schwar and Stanley Shaloff (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), Document 145.

<sup>11</sup> General CIA Documents, NSC Briefing, September 7, 1960.

<sup>12</sup> General CIA Documents, Central Intelligence Bulletin, September 8, 1960.

At the time, the US bankrolled the majority of the UN's operating expenses, and thus occupied key positions within the organization. As a result, US foreign policy was channelled through the UN as an instrument, creating a facade of international diplomacy.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the UN's refusal to support Lumumba was largely a US policy decision. As such, the Communist Bloc's supposed attempt to undermine the UN's position in the Congo was also interpreted as an attempt to wage a proxy war, utilizing Congolese troops to disrupt US geopolitical aims. The Department of Defense and the CIA are two of the US government's most influential agencies; their appraisals of the Congo situation undoubtedly informed policy decisions undertaken by Washington. At the behest of the US, the UN's decision to refuse to help Lumumba bring an end to the secession is one such policy.

Another, rather cynical example can be seen in the CIA's meddling in the Congo's domestic affairs during the crisis. The CIA and Belgian intelligence worked symbiotically to recruit Congolese senators in order to organize a vote of no confidence within the parliament to allow President Joseph Kasavubu to dissolve the government and appoint a new prime minister.<sup>14</sup> Leading up to the vote, the CIA funded anti-Lumumba propaganda, demonstrations, and labour movements.<sup>15</sup> Kasavubu tried to dissolve the government before the vote; however, the scheme failed. Yet, the CIA was now intimately entangled in Congolese political affairs. A CIA document from

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The document cites Moscow Radio's criticism of UN activity in the Congo as an indicator of growing Soviet support for Lumumba.

<sup>13</sup> Schmidt, "Africa," 271.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen R. Weissman, "What Really Happened in Congo: The CIA, the Murder of Lumumba, and the Rise of Mobutu," *Foreign Affairs* 93 No. 4 (2014), 16.

<sup>15</sup> Weissman, "What Really Happened in Congo," 16.

November 22, 1984, recounted how the CIA Chief of Station in the Congo, Lawrence Devlin, aided and abetted Joseph-Désiré Mobutu to successfully overthrow Lumumba in a bloodless coup.<sup>16</sup> More than that, Stephen Weissman's *What Really Happened in the Congo* mentions that Devlin's non-interventionist attitude towards Lumumba's proposed transfer to South Kasai (whose leaders had 'called for Lumumba's scalp') was a significant factor in the eventual decision to move Lumumba to the secessionist province.<sup>17</sup> The fact that Devlin hid Lumumba's transfer proposal from his superiors in Washington further suggests that the CIA's interference is at least partially responsible for Lumumba's assassination in 1961.<sup>18</sup> The US' use of the UN to oppose the communist threat is reminiscent of the Korean War strategy, albeit much less lethal and dramatic. The CIA's use of clandestine operations to initiate coups and depose of anti-West or pro-Soviet leaders in favour of a West-leaning authority is similar to prior US operations in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954). Viewed from this angle, the interpretation of the Congo Crisis as a 'classic' Cold War engagement between the US and the Soviet Union is well-founded. In the years following the crisis, and especially after the turn of the millenium, a plethora of new information has enriched our understanding of this seminal event. However, these documents paint a much more complex picture.

In a memorandum of conversation between William A. M. Burden, the US ambassador in Belgium, and Lumumba, dated

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<sup>16</sup> General CIA Documents, CIA Helps Zaire Leader Crush Plot, November 22, 1984.

Note: The mutiny was mainly due to the officer corps remaining staffed primarily by white Europeans. Lumumba promoted Mobutu in an effort to promote racial unity in the army.

<sup>17</sup> Weissman, "What Really Happened in the Congo," 17.

<sup>18</sup> Weissman, 17-18.

February 25, 1960, Burden recalls Lumumba's clever manoeuvring around the question of communism, noting the latter's opportunism, and deeming him not to have any real loyalty to the Kremlin. He also mentions how Lumumba was definitely for sale, but on his own terms.<sup>19</sup> In a similar vein, even the CIA was aware of Lumumba's lack of any real radicalism. In a National Security Council briefing, dated June 29, 1960, there was speculation that certain key individuals in the new Congolese government were communists. Lumumba, however, was identified as an opportunistic neutralist, albeit with leftist sympathies.<sup>20</sup> In a telegram from the embassy in Congo to the US State Department, dated July 26, 1960, Consul General Robinson McIlvaine plainly states that Lumumba was "an opportunist and not a Communist," and that support from foreign powers, or a lack of it, will determine which way Lumumba will lean.<sup>21</sup> A telegram from the Consulate in Elisabethville to the State Department, dated July 1960, approximately two weeks after the secession had been announced, outlined several courses of action, and which surprisingly did not discount the option of supporting Lumumba's authority.<sup>22</sup> In light of these documents, the orthodox narrative of a wary US moving to eliminate communism and, by association, Lumumba, in the name of

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<sup>19</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, eds. Harriet Dashiell Schwar and Stanley Shaloff (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), Document 97. "In short, he gives the impression of a man...who is certainly for sale, but only on his own terms."

<sup>20</sup> General CIA Documents, NSC Briefing, June 29, 1960.

<sup>21</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, eds. Harriet Dashiell Schwar and Stanley Shaloff (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), Document 150.

<sup>22</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 146. Note: Elisabethville today is called Lubumbashi, and is the capital of the Katanga province.



national security appears inadequate in explaining the crisis' nuances.

Why did the US refuse to work with Lumumba in light of the latter's lack of any real ideological ties to communism? After all, he did turn to the UN and the US first. Granted, at the time of the secession, Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the UN, displayed real animosity towards Lumumba, and a desire to 'break' him.<sup>23</sup> However, the disproportionate influence wielded by the US in the UN could have easily been applied in such a manner as to soften Hammarskjöld's approach, even elicit his support to help Lumumba end the secession. Lumumba's decision to first approach the UN for support, and then the United States, clearly demonstrated a desire to operate within an international diplomatic network, and a desire, if not to loosely align himself with the West, to at least build a working relationship. In a telegram from the US embassy in the Congo, dated July 1960, McIlvaine informed the State Department that Joseph Iléo had stressed the importance of not allowing Lumumba to return from the US without at least some guarantee for future support, as failure to do so would surely encourage Lumumba to seek Soviet help.<sup>24</sup> It is clear that Lumumba was willing to enter into a working relationship with the West, a desire which he hinted at during his interactions with US diplomats such as Burden, and in his decision to visit the US. Despite Lumumba's fierce nationalism, there seemed to be a strong pragmatic vein running through his political consciousness, and the US, it can reasonably be argued, could

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<sup>23</sup> General CIA Documents, Central Intelligence Bulletin, September 9, 1960, 5 Hammarskjöld, like Eisenhower, feared the spread of communism. He was also convinced that Lumumba had genuine communist sympathies.

<sup>24</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume XIV, Africa, eds. Harriet Dashiell Schwar and Stanley Shaloff (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), Document 155.

have played on his pragmatism and ensured at least a workable degree of cooperation.

Indeed, Lumumba's alienation, arrest, and execution, seems to have been a foregone conclusion, and largely by design. This is illustrated by the way in which the CIA, Devlin specifically, maneuvered prior to, as well as after the assassination. Devlin was worried that the incoming Kennedy administration would abandon Eisenhower's hard-line policy regarding Lumumba.<sup>25</sup> He stated that there was an urgent need to take drastic measures before Kennedy was inaugurated.<sup>26</sup> It was Devlin's assertive intervention with Kasavubu, among others, that led to Lumumba's transfer and assassination, which Devlin reportedly took credit for.<sup>27</sup> Devlin, however, was not the only CIA man with a vested interest in determining Lumumba's fate. Individuals within the CIA brass, such as Allen Dulles, Richard Bissell, and Bronson Tweedy, were intimately involved in multiple assassination attempts on Lumumba, and they all felt as though they had created too much momentum in the direction of liquidating Lumumba to turn back, both for personal and professional reasons.<sup>28</sup> The fact that the plane carrying Lumumba changed course mid-flight when it became known that UN troops were stationed at Bakwanga Airport in South Kasai and headed for Katanga instead, further suggests that there was a specific motive behind the transfer; Lumumba falling into the hands of the UN would put him beyond the reach of extrajudicial

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<sup>25</sup> Weissman, *What Really Happened in Congo*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press 1983), 69.

<sup>27</sup> Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Mahoney, 67.

intentions.<sup>29</sup> The brutality of Lumumba's torture on the airplane, to the point of the air crew vomiting and locking themselves in the cockpit, further suggests what the motive behind this transfer was: a definitive end to Lumumba's "debilitating presence."<sup>30</sup>

In light of this previous analysis, it would seem that Lumumba's death was the only acceptable outcome for certain individuals in the West, as it was the only course of action that would guarantee an end to Lumumba as a dynamic within Congolese politics. But the CIA was not operating unilaterally. A Belgian parliamentary committee of enquiry regarding Belgian involvement in Lumumba's assassination concluded that Congolese authorities — Mobutu and Kasavubu — were aided by Belgian authorities in the transfer of Lumumba to Katanga.<sup>31</sup> The committee stated that there was no definitive proof indicating that Belgian officials were directly involved in the assassination, or that they had any prior knowledge of what was going to happen to Lumumba after his arrival in Katanga.<sup>32</sup> However, it is important to note that Belgian officials such as Major Jules Loos, the military advisor of the Ministry of African Affairs, and Lieutenant Colonel Louis Marlière, a former officer in the Force Publique and advisor of Mobutu, were involved in the planned killing of Lumumba.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it can be deduced that

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<sup>29</sup> Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, 70. The plane was initially planned to land in South Kasai, as Lumumba was to be handed to Albert Kalonji, leader of the South Kasai secession.

<sup>30</sup> Mahoney, 70.

<sup>31</sup> Parliamentary Committee of enquiry in charge of determining the exact circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the possible involvement of Belgian politicians, *The Conclusions of the Enquiry Committee*, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Parliamentary Committee of enquiry, *Conclusions of the Enquiry Committee*, 8.

<sup>33</sup> Parliamentary Committee of enquiry, *Conclusions of the Enquiry Committee*, 6.

the Belgians involved in the transfer did indeed have a thorough understanding of the fate that awaited Lumumba in Katanga. Therefore, the desires of certain interest groups and individuals were directly responsible for the removal from power, as well as apprehension and slaughter of Lumumba. The following discussion will integrate the significance of the Lumumba 'problem' into the broader framework of the Congo Crisis, and the Katanga secession in particular. An analysis of events prior to independence, as well as after it, will shed light on how the crisis and the secession came about, and how Lumumba was a victim of European neocolonial interests.

The Oral History Conference, organized in 2004 by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, is a treasure trove of insider information with regard to the Congo Crisis. Several key figures who were active during the tumultuous years following Congo's independence, including Congolese politicians Cleophas Kamitatu and Thomas Kanza, as well as Devlin, took part in this conference, with the former two providing valuable information regarding the Congolese perspective. Kamitatu, for example, recounted how shortly after the First Belgo-Congolese Roundtable Conference, a group made up of Americans and Belgians who called themselves 'Rearmament Morale' engaged some members of the Congolese delegation, informing them of their opposition to communism in the Congo.<sup>34</sup> Up to that point, communism, in theory and practice, was not an ideological framework which the Congolese people were familiar with to any significant degree. Yet, shortly after, the Catholic church in the Congo (a European institution that had served as a conduit for Belgian social and political aims)

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<sup>34</sup> The Congo Crisis, 1960-1961: A Critical Oral History Conference, The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 60.

began engaging in anti-communist rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> This propaganda campaign seems to have been incited by a Western interest group with the intention of initiating a psychological operation, thereby laying the groundwork for a political climate in which a non-compliant leader could be delegitimized and stripped of his popular support.

The Congo gaining independence meant that the country's landmass, which included its tremendous mineral wealth, fell under the authority of the Congolese government; the nationalization of its vast copper and cobalt reserves spelled disaster for European mining interests in the region. Moreover, the people behind the Comité Spécial du Katanga ('CSK'), the parastatal that was responsible for administering Katanga, agreed to dissolve the CSK and hand over two-thirds of its shares to the newly independent Congolese government, which the businessmen operating in the Congo knew was about to be headed by Lumumba.<sup>36</sup> That this propaganda campaign began shortly after the First Roundtable Conference, which saw Lumumba emerge as a powerful political figure, and in which the Belgians refused to go into any detail regarding Congo's economic future (i.e., the future of European mining companies) is no coincidence. Undoubtedly, the specific individual which this campaign was aimed at was the person most likely, and most expected, to win the premiership: Patrice Lumumba.

Another significant story, shared by Thomas Kanza, explained the manner in which Belgian officials exploited the ethnic and political infighting of the Congolese delegation. As

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<sup>35</sup> The Congo Crisis, 1960-1961: A Critical Oral History Conference, 60.

<sup>36</sup> John Kent, "The Neo-Colonialism of Decolonisation: Katangan Secession and the Bringing of the Cold War to the Congo" in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 1 (2017): 96.

such, the Belgians avoided discussing two key issues with respect to independence: the future of the Congolese economy and of the Force Publique. Kanza mentioned how the Belgians knew that leaving the issue of a predominantly white officer corps unresolved would lead to military instability for the Congolese army post-independence.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, Kamitatu details how, at the Second Roundtable Conference, Lumumba again tried to force the issue of the Force Publique, this time also at the behest of African Force Publique soldiers who demanded the Africanization of the military. Yet the Belgians continuously circumvented the question and avoided making any specific commitments.<sup>38</sup>

Kanza also noted Moïse Tshombe masquerading at the Roundtable Conferences as a nationalist, despite having already reached an understanding with the Belgians, knowing they would be managing his political clout in Katanga.<sup>39</sup> Already in early 1960, the Belgians were considering alternative avenues for the continuation of their commercial and economic interests; that is, if they had not already concocted the secessionist scheme. Kamitatu also mentioned how the secession was originally planned to be announced two days before independence, and how this scheme was to include the secession of the Kasai and Bas Congo regions. He casually and matter-of-factly remarks how Devlin was aware of this scheme.<sup>40</sup> As a matter of fact, a CIA document from June 27, 1960 — three days before Congolese independence — reported that a spokesperson for Tshombe's CONAKAT party had voiced a "determination to secede."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *The Congo Crisis, 1960-1961: A Critical Oral History Conference*, 32. This destabilization is exactly what ended up happening after independence.

<sup>38</sup> *The Congo Crisis*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> *The Congo Crisis*, 33.

<sup>40</sup> *The Congo Crisis*, 72.

<sup>41</sup> General CIA Documents, Central Intelligence Bulletin, June 27, 1960.

Beginning in March 1960, a month before the Second Roundtable Conference, Union Minière du Haut-Katanga ('UMHK'), the imposing mining company which dominated Congo's mineral trade, began financing the CONAKAT party.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, as soon as the secession was announced, UMHK forwarded an advance of 1,250 million Belgian francs to Tshombe's party.<sup>43</sup> It is also important to note that two days before the secession, Belgium deployed paratroopers with the stated intent of protecting European lives.<sup>44</sup> In reality, Belgian troops were deployed mainly to secure the assets and infrastructure of European mining firms and to protect the secessionists from African resistance, both from the Congo and from neighbouring countries.<sup>45</sup>

It is clear, then, that the secession had already been planned quite some time before the Congolese got their independence on June 30, 1960. Indeed, the considerable administrative and logistical challenge that comes with secession, not to mention the sheer weight of the political and diplomatic implications, demands an extended planning period. It is highly improbable that such a scheme could have been formulated in five days, from the start of the mutiny to the announcement of the secession. Pertinantly, two days before the Belgian government issued a *de facto* recognition of secessionist Katanga, the governor and the director of the National Bank of Belgium ('NBB') and the governor of the Banque Centrale du Congo Belge

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<sup>42</sup> Olivier Boehme. "The Involvement of the Belgian Central Bank in the Katanga Secession, 1960-1963," *African Economic History* 33 (2005), 3-4.

<sup>43</sup> Boehme. "The Involvement of the Belgian Central Bank in the Katanga Secession," 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> Zeilig, *Lumumba*, 105.

<sup>45</sup> Didier Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Palo Alto, CA: Greenwood Press, 2002), 119.

et du Ruanda-Urundi ('BCCBRU') had a meeting on July 14, 1960 to discuss how to go about setting up a central bank of Katanga.<sup>46</sup>

Undoubtedly, the development of the Belgian involvement in the secession was moving entirely too fast to have been planned haphazardly, much less to have been a spontaneous response to events as they were unfolding. The narratives supplied by Kamitatu and Kanza, interpreted in light of what transpired after independence, strongly indicate several things. First, that the secession had been plotted in advance of independence for quite some time, explaining the Belgian delegation's reluctance to discuss the economic future of the Congo. Second, that the anti-communist propaganda that started shortly after the First Roundtable Conference served to build a political climate, both domestic and eventually international, which would enable the planners of the secession to reinterpret the threat against their financial interests through a Cold War lens, thus gaining the tacit support of the US and shielding themselves from charges of neocolonialism. Third, that the inadequate time that the Belgians had allotted to train the Congolese in matters of statecraft intentionally rendered the latter unprepared for governance.<sup>47</sup> And last, that the refusal of the Belgian delegation to resolve the issue of the Force Publique was a calculated move to destabilize the Congolese army and chain of command, thus making a forceful reintegration of Katanga under a strong nationalist Congolese leader difficult, if not impossible. In light of these observations, the orthodox narrative, which maintains that the mutiny and the ensuing

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<sup>46</sup> Boehme, "The Involvement of the Belgian Central Bank in the Katanga Secession," 4-5.

<sup>47</sup> General CIA Documents, NSC Briefing, April 13, 1960.

"Belgians belatedly attempting [to] train Congolese administrators for takeover."



violence, and which some Belgians like Pierre Wigny tried to sell as a communist plot, is not only simplistic, but overtly misleading.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, it has to be concluded that the secession, the mutiny, and the Congo Crisis as a whole, was consciously and purposefully initiated by a Western interest group. The question remains as to who exactly comprised this group? Besides the CIA, clearly the bulk of this group were Belgians, who had long-standing colonial political, social, and economic ties in the region. It appears, therefore, that both public Belgian officials and private Belgian businessmen were among the planners of the secession. Who, if any, of these factions, can be said to have been the main driving force? The answer lies in the complex relationships that existed between the Belgian government, the former colonial government, and the various holding companies, like Société Générale de Belgique, who owned the private firms operating in the Congo and in Katanga. As John Kent notes in his *The Neocolonialism of Decolonisation*, these three types of organization had had such a close relationship with one another that they regularly swapped personnel.<sup>49</sup> In other words, public and private interests were intimately woven together.

This sort of amalgamation of public and private interest is strikingly similar to the Guatemalan coup six years earlier. Jacobo Árbenz, who had been elected president in 1951, undertook major land reforms in 1952. On June 17, 1952 the Guatemalan congress passed the Agrarian Reform Law which had been introduced by Árbenz. Through this piece of legislation the government redistributed unused land to Guatemalan peasants. The landowners were compensated, although at rates

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<sup>48</sup> Kent, "The Neo-Colonialism of Decolonisation," 102.

<sup>49</sup> Kent, 96-7.

which many found to be unacceptable. One such landowner was the US based United Fruit Company, who had lost over 300,000 acres of land between 1953 and 1954.<sup>50</sup> United Fruit refused the compensation proposed by the Arbenz administration and appealed to the Guatemalan Supreme Court. However, when these efforts failed to yield any results, the company turned to the US State Department.<sup>51</sup> The CIA, under the direction of the Eisenhower administration, conducted clandestine operations, leading to the overthrow of Árbenz and the ascendancy of the pro-US dictator Carlos Castillo Armas. The operations were allegedly conducted in the name of communist containment; the official narrative held that, under Árbenz, Guatemala came under the sway of communism, as evidenced by Árbenz's socialist land reforms.

However, just as in the case of the Congo Crisis and the Katanga secession, a closer look at the Eisenhower administration reveals a much more complex account of the motivations to topple Árbenz. John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's secretary of state, had represented United Fruit in Latin America during his time at the law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell.<sup>52</sup> In the same year, Dulles represented Sullivan and Cromwell client J. Henry Schroder Banking Corporation in negotiating a deal by which United Fruit acquired the International Railways of

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<sup>50</sup> Marcelo Bucheli, "Multinational corporations, totalitarian regimes and economic nationalism: United Fruit Company in Central America, 1899–1975" *Business History* 50, no. 4 (July 2008): 445.

<sup>51</sup> Bucheli, "Multinational corporations, totalitarian regimes and economic nationalism," 445.

<sup>52</sup> Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 124.

As Sullivan and Cromwell's executive partner in 1936, John Foster Dulles was intimately involved in the contract negotiations that won United Fruit enormous land concessions from the Guatemalan government, then headed by dictator Jorge Ubico.

Central America.<sup>53</sup> His brother, and CIA Director, Allen Dulles, had also worked for Sullivan and Cromwell and became a director of the Schroder Banking Corporation; the Schroeder Banking Corporation was also a “depository of secret CIA funds for covert operations.”<sup>54</sup> Assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs John Cabot owned a significant amount of stock in United Fruit, and his brother Thomas Cabot had been the president for the company.<sup>55</sup> Anne Whitman, the wife of United Fruit’s public relations director Edmund Whitman, was Eisenhower’s personal assistant.<sup>56</sup>

That is to say, there were several connections between United Fruit and the Eisenhower administration. Just as in the Congo, direct ties to government apparatuses by private interests had intimately fused public and private interests under the guise of national security threats and communist containment policy. On the Belgian side, several public officials were simultaneously involved in private enterprises in the Congo. D'Aspremont Lynden, who was the senior officer in the Belgian royal household, was also the commissioner of Société Générale de Belgique. Prince Amaury, from the House of Merode, was the representative of the royal house on the college of twelve commissioners, the ruling of Société Générale. Ministers Wigny, Sceyven, and De Vleeschauer were deeply involved in several

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<sup>53</sup> Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Harvard: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005), 106.

The IRCA owned most of Guatemala’s railways.

<sup>54</sup> Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 106.

The Schroder Banking Corporation owned stock in the United Fruit owned IRCA.

<sup>55</sup> Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 124.

Thomas Cabot had also worked in the State Department under Truman.

<sup>56</sup> Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 107.

colonial projects, as was the president of the Belgian chamber Baron Kronacker.<sup>57</sup>

The communists involvement in Árbenz's government, that is, the employment of communists in low-level positions, was not as substantial as the communist involvement in politics in Brazil, Chile, and Costa Rica.<sup>58</sup> Yet, Washington did not feel the need to intervene in these countries. Simply put, Washington's major concern and cause for interference was the threat to United Fruit's financial interests. Similarly, the communist threat in the Congo was quite weak, and in light of Lumumba's lack of any real ideological ties to communism, it was the potential threat that he posed to the mining interests that was the reason for Western intervention.

However, by trying to narrow down the group responsible, there are observable differences in the attitudes and ways in which public and private individuals engaged with the secession. The Belgian government, or rather, the public institution, was quite divided, with some officials supporting the idea of a *de facto* recognition of the Katanga secession, some being wary of the diplomatic implications, and others outright opposing it.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, the private sector, namely UMHK, was more or less unified in agreement in their support for the secession. This can be observed in various instances. UMHK, for example, tried to finance military and paramilitary groups in order to protect its assets and infrastructure.<sup>60</sup> Another,

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<sup>57</sup> Zeilig, *Lumumba*, 106-107.

<sup>58</sup> Zeilig, 106.

<sup>59</sup> Boehme, "The Involvement of the Belgian Central Bank in the Katanga Secession," 2-3.

<sup>60</sup> Parliamentary Committee of enquiry in charge of determining the exact circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the possible involvement of Belgian politicians, The Conclusions of the Enquiry Committee, 4.

rather striking (and almost comical) example is the experience of UN diplomat Sture Linnér during two meetings with the president of UMHK and the president of Banque Commerce de Belge — among numerous other representatives of European financial interests — where he was essentially berated by an outraged group of businessmen, called a criminal, and told to leave Katanga “or else.”<sup>61</sup> While both public and private Belgian individuals were involved, the capital investment as well as the financial and commercial interests of private executives put them into a much more delicate and vulnerable position in case of the nationalization of Congo’s mineral trade. As such they have to be regarded as more closely involved with, and as the main drivers behind, the secession.

The financial support that Tshombe and CONAKAT began receiving from UMHK in March 1960, in addition to the 1,250 million Belgian francs advance they received immediately after the announcement of the secession, further supports the idea that private mining interests were at the very heart of the secession. In fact, the Belgian parliamentary enquiry plainly concluded that without UMHK money, the secession would have been impossible.<sup>62</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that private financial and commercial interests were the primary dynamic behind the secession. However, even this group of private investors and executives was not concentrated into a single organization. A closer analysis of this group shows that it consisted of a complex intertwinement between various holding and mining companies.

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<sup>61</sup> Secretary-General U Thant, “Correspondence and cables - Moise Tshombe, Belgians, Hammarskjold and Bunche trips to Congo and Katanga” in *Secretary-General U Thant (1960-1971)*, 1960, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Parliamentary Committee of enquiry in charge of determining the exact circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the possible involvement of Belgian politicians, *The Conclusions of the Enquiry Committee*, 4.

Société Générale de Belgique was the majority owner of UMHK.<sup>63</sup> Tanganyika Concessions Limited (TCL), a British holding, mining, and railway company, was also a major shareholder of UMHK stock.<sup>64</sup> Both Société Générale de Belgique and TCL were founding members of UMHK.<sup>65</sup> Société Générale de Belgique was a major shareholder in TCL and conducted most of its operations in Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zambia) through this British company.<sup>66</sup> In addition, TCL was the majority owner of the Benguela Railway, the longest and most important railway in Africa at the time, connecting the continent's interior with the Angolan coast, which was vital for shipping purposes.<sup>67</sup> TCL was also active in Katangan mining operations. As will be illustrated, TCL also enjoyed a close relationship with the government of its home country, Great Britain.

The chairman of Tanganyika Concessions was Charles Waterhouse, a British MP belonging to the Conservative Party.<sup>68</sup> Waterhouse was also a board member of UMHK.<sup>69</sup> Three other Conservative MPs also served on the board of TCL, and the Conservative Party itself received most of its financial backing from the company.<sup>70</sup> Political parties required funds to operate, and it was in the Conservative Party's best interest to maintain a smooth cash flow coming from Africa. The British members of this financial cabal used their direct connections to the British government to enable white mercenaries to enter Katanga from

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<sup>63</sup> General CIA Documents, Central Intelligence Bulletin, February 1, 1967.

<sup>64</sup> General CIA Documents, Transmittal of Material, January 18, 1967.

<sup>65</sup> Boehme, "The Involvement of the Belgian Central Bank in the Katanga Secession," 2.

<sup>66</sup> General CIA Documents, Transmittal of Material, January 18, 1967.

<sup>67</sup> General CIA Documents, Transmittal of Material, January 18, 1967.

<sup>68</sup> The Congo Crisis, 1960-1961: A Critical Oral History Conference, The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 82.

<sup>69</sup> Kent, "The Neo-Colonialism of Decolonisation," 96.

<sup>70</sup> Kent, "The Neo-Colonialism of Decolonisation," 96.

the British protectorates of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.<sup>71</sup> Airfields in these protectorates were also used for air operations against UN forces.<sup>72</sup> Not only were TCL MPs a vital strategic asset during the secession itself, but they wielded considerable power within this Anglo-Belgian financial interest group, especially Waterhouse. When Thomas Kanza was the Congolese ambassador in London, he spoke to Alexander Frederick Douglas-Home about the secession, upon which the latter gave the former a list of eleven persons whom he should convince to put an end to the secession.<sup>73</sup> Among the names were Charles Waterhouse, whom Kanza eventually convinced to meet with Congolese Prime Minister Cyrill Adoula.<sup>74</sup> After meeting Adoula and obtaining assurances that mining operations would continue running smoothly in favour of European interests, Waterhouse informed Adoula and Kanza to consider the secession as good as over.<sup>75</sup> After the Belgians and British were convinced that their financial interests would not be threatened upon reunification, they abandoned Tshombe and threw their weight behind the UN operations in the Congo. After UN troops successfully secured Elisabethville and Jadotville during Operation Grandslam on January 17, 1963, Tshombe surrendered, effectively ending the secession.<sup>76</sup>

The Congo Crisis in general, and the Katanga Secession in particular, are complex issues due to the several competing interest groups operating and influencing domestic events at the time, and the numerous tribal identities that the Belgians had

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<sup>71</sup> General CIA Documents, USSR International Affairs, January 11, 1962.

<sup>72</sup> General CIA Documents, USSR International Affairs, January 11, 1962.

<sup>73</sup> *The Congo Crisis, 1960-1961: A Critical Oral History Conference*, 82.

<sup>74</sup> *The Congo Crisis*, 82.

<sup>75</sup> *The Congo Crisis*, 82.

<sup>76</sup> Steve Marsh and Tia Culley, "Anglo-American Relations and Crisis in The Congo," in *Contemporary British History* 32, no. 3 (2018), 366.

attempted to unite into a shared geographical space. This hastily developed road to independence left a hitherto colonized and subjugated population with an administrative challenge that would have tested even an 'organized' Western democracy. This situation was already far from ideal, and the aggressive intervention of Belgian, British, and American interest groups made a successful attempt at development and modernization all but impossible. Historians of the Cold War, and of the Congo, generally agree that Western interference during these formative years crippled the political, social, and economic development of the Democratic Republic of Congo, effects of which can still be observed today. The strategy of Belgian businessmen in the Congo to rely on tribal strongmen (such as Kasavubu and Tshombe), rather than a central government apparatus, meant that these businessmen ignored the continued fragmentation of the Congo. The Belgians had, after all, tried to unite over two hundred ethnic groups into a shared geographic region, and the rivalries that existed between various ethnic groups were extensive.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the promotion of Mobutu ushered in three decades of kleptocracy in which this Congolese dictator accepted bribes from foreign governments and security agencies, took payments from foreign investors, diverted funds from the government budget, embezzled export earnings, and redirected foreign aid and foreign loans into his pockets.<sup>78</sup> The sordid state of the contemporary Congolese economy is directly tied to Mobutu's legacy of plunder. However, the focus of this uninvited European intervention needs to be shifted away from the United

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<sup>77</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 136-137.

<sup>78</sup> Steve Askin and Carole Collins. "External Collusion with Kleptocracy: Can Zaïre Recapture Its Stolen Wealth?" in *Review of African Political Economy* 20, no. 57 (1993), 75.



States and the orthodox Cold War narrative towards Belgian and British private interests, particularly UMHK, Société Générale de Belgique, and Tanganyika Concessions Limited. As such, the historiography of the Congo Crisis would benefit immensely from the placing of the proper emphasis on the neocolonial activities of a select group of European capitalists and politicians.

Despite the plethora of evidence available, some academics continue to focus on the orthodox Cold War narrative. For example, The Cambridge anthology briefly mentions how Katanga managed to secede with help from Brussels, before shifting focus upon Washington's Cold War policy and plans to assassinate Lumumba.<sup>79</sup> Using the word 'Brussels' to identify the supporters of the secession suggests that this aid came entirely from the Belgian government without further elaboration. The Oxford anthology is more effective at narrowing down the significant role played by mining interests, while also identifying Lumumba as a threat to those interests.<sup>80</sup> However, Schmidt fails to mention Société Générale de Belgique, UMHK, or TCL. By identifying these companies as Western mining interests, they are reinforcing the West-East dichotomy of the orthodox Cold War narrative. Schmidt also states that after Katanga had seceded from Congo, the Belgian government and other Western interest groups backed the secession. The reader is therefore never truly informed about the extensive involvement of the private mining interests in the planning of the secession. Hence, the real significance of the intervention of Belgian and British private interests remains entirely absent in both accounts. Undoubtedly, the United States and the Soviet Union sparred in the Congo. But this engagement was entirely different by design compared to

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<sup>79</sup> Latham, "The Cold War in the Third World," 265.

<sup>80</sup> Schmidt, "Africa," 271.

places such as Cuba, Korea, or Egypt. The chaos, poverty, and bloodshed that followed Congolese independence must be recognized as part and parcel of the European neocolonial legacy that continues to haunt the African continent.

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## **Fin de l'émancipation des femmes soviétiques? Le décret de 1936 et l'interdiction de l'avortement dans l'Union soviétique**

François de Montigny

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L'Union soviétique fut le premier pays au monde à légaliser l'avortement le 18 novembre 1920. Après les révolutions de 1917, les Bolchéviques introduisirent dès 1918 un nouveau code familial ; le *Code sur le mariage, la famille et la tutelle* de 1918 garantissait l'égalité des femmes devant la loi. Il légalisait et ne permettait que le mariage au civil. Le concept d'illégitimité dans le droit de filiation fut aboli et tous les enfants devinrent ainsi légitimes et eurent droit à un soutien parental. Le divorce fut aussi libéralisé et devint permis sans justification requise. L'agenda supportant l'adoption de ce code progressif voulait se débarrasser des anciens systèmes d'oppression, religieux ou patriarcaux, et établir, comme l'indique Wendy Goldman, une nouvelle fondation pour l'égalité des sexes<sup>1</sup>. C'est dans un tel contexte que fut légalisé l'avortement le 18 novembre 1920. Décrété après la guerre civile en Russie, l'avortement fut légalisé pour des raisons de santé publique. Avec les dangers élevés des avortements illégaux, l'objectif était de protéger les femmes en tant que mères pour le bien-être de la société soviétique, plutôt que pour leurs droits individuels<sup>2</sup>. En 1926, le gouvernement émit un nouveau code sur le mariage, la famille et la tutelle pour répondre à plusieurs enjeux sociaux. Après un débat national prolongé, le gouvernement soviétique libéralisa encore plus le

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<sup>1</sup> Wendy Goldman, « Family Code on Marriage, The Family, and Guardianship », dans *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, éd. par James R. Millar, 2 (New York, NY: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 475.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon A. Kowalsky, « Abortion Policy », dans *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, 2.

divorce qui pouvait maintenant s'accomplir sans le consentement du partenaire, reconnu les mariages de fait selon la cohabitation, et permit l'adoption<sup>3</sup>.

Cela étant dit, le 27 juin 1936, le Parti communiste annonça le « *Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions* »<sup>4</sup>. L'objet principal de ce décret était la restructuration de la famille par l'interdiction des avortements, l'aide financière et matérielle aux mères en couche et aux mères de famille nombreuse, des restrictions aux critères de divorce, et des conséquences sévères pour ceux qui ne contribuaient pas aux pensions. On pourrait se douter que ces mesures témoignent d'un recul social par rapport aux politiques libérales qui avaient été adoptées dans les années vingt ; le décret de 1936 ne représenta en fait qu'une continuation des politiques de contrôle implémentés par le gouvernement soviétique sur le corps des femmes.

### **Pourquoi l'interdiction de l'avortement a-t-il été instauré?**

La légalisation de l'avortement en 1920 était considérée comme une solution temporaire. À l'époque, l'avortement était compris comme un mal social nécessaire qui disparaîtrait lorsque les conditions économiques et matérielles de l'Union soviétique s'amélioreraient, mais ne témoignait pas d'une volonté émancipatrice de la part des autorités soviétiques. Dès 1936, les préoccupations démographiques du Parti communiste

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<sup>3</sup> Wendy Goldman, « Family Code of 1926 », dans *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, 474.

<sup>4</sup> Du titre long : *Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions, the Improvement of Material Aid to Women in Childbirth, the Establishment of State Assistance to Parents of Large Families, and the Extension of the Network of Lying-in Homes, Nursery schools and Kindergartens, the Tightening-up of Criminal Punishment for the Non-payment of Alimony, and on Certain Modifications in Divorce Legislation, June 27, 1936*. Dans *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1936. *Sistematicheskoe sobranie deistvuiushchikh zakonov Soiuza sovetskikh sotsialisticheskikh respublik* (Moscow, 1936), text 309.



contribuèrent à l'interdiction de l'avortement. Les changements dans la politique soviétique furent pragmatiques en vue du projet politique d'industrialisation soviétique et ne furent pas émancipateurs en vue de la condition féminine.

La légalisation de l'avortement était comprise comme un mal nécessaire en attendant que l'État trouve un remède aux causes de l'avortement : « la pauvreté, les maladies, les familles nombreuses et le manque de logement »<sup>5</sup>. Au début des années 1920, la famine faisait rage et l'URSS était en crise à la suite de la Première Guerre mondiale, aux révolutions, et à la guerre civile. L'avortement était alors une pratique courante ; beaucoup de femmes avaient recours aux avortements illégaux pour mettre fin à leurs grossesses dans ces conditions socio-économiques difficiles. Hélas, le danger de complications médicales était significativement plus élevé pour les avortements illégaux, qui mettaient en danger la vie des individus qui en avaient recours. Dans son article de 1981, Janet Evans compare ainsi le taux de mortalité des avortements illégaux à Berlin au début des années 1930, qui était de 4%, au taux de mortalité des avortements légaux à Moscou, qui lui était de 0.005%<sup>6</sup>. L'impact de l'accès à un avortement sécuritaire sur la sécurité des individus expliqua sa légalisation en 1920 en vue de rendre une pratique comprise comme inévitable, plus sécuritaire.

Malgré cela, l'avortement était perçu négativement par le gouvernement central. Dans le décret de 1936, l'avortement fut décrit « as a social evil » en utilisant un passage de Lénine contre

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<sup>5</sup> Dorothy McBride Stetson, « Abortion Policy Triads and Women's Rights in Russia, the United States, and France », dans *Abortion Politics*, Githens, Marianne et Dorothy McBride Stetson (Routledge: 1997), 99. Traduction libre.

<sup>6</sup> Janet Evans, « The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question: The Case of the 1936 Decree 'In Defence of Mother and Child.' », *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 4 (1981): 762.

le malthusianisme<sup>7</sup>. En 1936, le Parti communiste fit référence aux écrits de Lénine pour convaincre des méfaits de l'avortement. L'opinion des autorités communistes resta la même de 1920 à 1936. Ainsi, l'avortement ne fut légalisé qu'à contrecœur, et compris comme une solution temporaire en 1920. D'ailleurs, les avortements légaux étaient découragés par les fonctionnaires soviétiques locaux et de nombreux médecins. Paula Michaels, une historienne ayant étudié l'effet de l'interdiction de l'avortement au Kazakhstan, décrit que « even during the period of legalisation, Russian authorities applauded Kazakh reluctance to resort to this practice »<sup>8</sup>. Les femmes kazakhes étaient ainsi moins enclines que les femmes russes à avoir recours à l'avortement en raison d'une mentalité plus religieuse et agraire. La légalisation de l'avortement ne permit pas de briser tous les tabous autour de la pratique, décourageant de nombreuses femmes à y avoir recours<sup>9</sup>. En étant jugé comme un mal nécessaire aux conditions socio-économiques précaires de l'époque, la légalisation de l'avortement de 1920 ne reflétait pas une idéologie émancipatrice de la part du Parti. La persistance de la perception négative de l'avortement contribuait notamment à la recherche d'une raison pour abolir cette politique.

En 1936, l'amélioration des conditions économiques en Union soviétique fut utilisée comme cette excuse à la criminalisation de l'avortement. Dès 1920, la future désuétude de l'avortement était anticipée. Le décret de 1936 cita la loi de 1920 : « the Soviet Government permitted on November 18, 1920, the practice of abortion [...] for women so long, [...] as “the moral

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<sup>7</sup> Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions, June 27, 1936. Dans Izvestiia.

Grossièrement, la théorie malthusienne en est une de surpopulation. En logique, l'appel à l'autorité est un sophisme.

<sup>8</sup> Paula Michaels, « Motherhood, Patriotism, and Ethnicity: Soviet Kazakhstan and the 1936 Abortion Ban », *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 2 (2001): 313.

<sup>9</sup> Michaels, « Motherhood, Patriotism, and Ethnicity », 311-312.

*heritage of the past and the difficult economic conditions of the present still force a section of women to submit to this operation" »<sup>10</sup>. L'interdiction de l'avortement en 1936 fut ainsi justifiée par l'amélioration des conditions matérielles, culturelles et politiques. Cependant, les conditions économiques de l'URSS étaient encore désastreuses. Beaucoup d'officiels pensaient qu'une amélioration des conditions matérielles et économiques inciteraient les femmes à ne pas avorter. Wendy Goldman résume ainsi la pensée officielle de l'époque : « Officials in the Commissariats of Health and Justice believed that once women had access to sufficient food, housing, child care and medical services, they would have no further need for abortion »<sup>11</sup>.*

Dans les années 1930, cette présomption fut démentie par des études démographiques. La raison principale de l'interdiction de l'avortement était l'inquiétude des autorités soviétiques face aux statistiques démographiques. Les autorités soviétiques perçurent alors l'avortement comme une nuisance à la société et à leurs politiques pro-natalistes puisqu'il s'agissait de la méthode principale de contraception chez les femmes soviétiques, en l'absence d'autres options.

Au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, la démographie et la reproduction étaient étudiées en tant que science par les États pour mieux gérer leurs populations. L'État possédait les statistiques démographiques et les moyens d'influencer le taux de natalité par le contrôle des mesures contraceptives. Cependant, le gouvernement soviétique refusa, dans une optique pro-nataliste, d'investir dans la contraception ou l'éducation sexuelle. Les femmes, souvent d'origine paysanne, désiraient naturellement tout de même s'informer et avoir le pouvoir de contrôler leur reproduction. Les

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<sup>10</sup> *Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions*, June 27, 1936.

<sup>11</sup> Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 256.

paysannes consultèrent à cette fin des représentantes du Zhenotdel, la section féminine du Parti communiste<sup>12</sup>. Or, le manque de volonté de l'État d'investir dans des ressources contraceptives contribua à la difficulté d'en trouver. De plus, une pénurie de caoutchouc limitait grandement la production de préservatifs et de diaphragmes<sup>13</sup>. Avec peu de ressources disponibles et un gouvernement qui ne désirait pas en octroyer, il en résulta que l'avortement joua un rôle critique pour les femmes soviétiques puisqu'il s'agissait de la méthode contraceptive principale à la fin des années 1920<sup>14</sup>. Il s'agit ainsi de comprendre l'avortement comme une mesure contraceptive contribuant à une autonomie reproductive limitée pour les femmes soviétiques. Cependant, comme le fait remarquer Paula Michaels, le succès même de la légalisation de l'avortement mena à sa chute<sup>15</sup>. Les décideurs politiques remarquèrent l'effet de l'avortement sur le taux de natalité et y virent un problème.

Stanislav G. Strumilin, un statisticien soviétique, observa que les femmes ayant recours à l'avortement ne le faisaient pas nécessairement à cause de leurs conditions économiques, mais souvent par choix personnel. À la suite d'études démographiques, S.G. Strumilin découvrit que dans les groupes sociaux-économiques plus aisés, les femmes avaient un taux de fécondité inférieur. Cette découverte contredisait l'idée que l'amélioration de la situation économique réduirait le recours à

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<sup>12</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 259.

<sup>13</sup> Wendy Goldman, « *Women, Abortion, and the State, 1917-1936* », dans *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, and Transformation*, Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, et Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 247.

<sup>14</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 260-1.

<sup>15</sup> Michaels, « *Motherhood, Patriotism, and Ethnicity* », 313.

l'avortement et augmenterait le taux de natalité<sup>16</sup>. Au contraire, cela prouva que l'amélioration des conditions socio-économiques ne diminuait pas, mais accroissait le recours à l'avortement. La faible fécondité des femmes était ainsi perçue par les autorités soviétiques comme un choix personnel de ne pas avoir d'enfants. Il s'ensuit que la baisse du taux de natalité fut perçue par les dirigeants soviétiques comme une conséquence de l'avortement. En effet, en 1934, il y eut à Moscou 57 000 naissances pour 154 584 avortements<sup>17</sup>. L'influence de l'avortement sur le taux de natalité influença les préoccupations démographiques des dirigeants communistes. Le taux de natalité affectait directement la réalisation des objectifs du projet de modernisation de l'Union soviétique, c'est-à-dire l'industrialisation et la collectivisation. De 1928 à 1932, le taux de natalité descendit de 42,2 à 31,0 naissances par mille personnes. Cette chute du taux de natalité qui suivit les phénomènes de collectivisation et d'industrialisation inquiéta les démographes soviétiques puisqu'elle correspondait à l'entrée des femmes comme main d'œuvre industrielle<sup>18</sup>. La décroissance du taux de natalité pouvait constituer un obstacle à l'accomplissement de ces objectifs de modernisation. À l'époque, tous les gouvernements européens tentent de contrôler leurs populations et de les accroître. La politique stalinienne pro-nataliste fut érigée pour répondre aux besoins du travail industriel et d'une guerre totale<sup>19</sup>. En effet, les plans quinquennaux pour moderniser le pays requéraient une main-d'œuvre considérable. Afin de combler le manque d'ouvriers, des ouvrières furent embauchées au nombre de 6,6

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<sup>16</sup> David Hoffman, « Mothers in the Motherland: Stalinist Pronatalism in Its Pan-European Context », *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 1 (2000): 37-8.

<sup>17</sup> Hoffman, « Mothers in the Motherland », 39.

<sup>18</sup> Hoffman, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Hoffman, 48.

millions entre 1928 et 1937<sup>20</sup>. Le besoin de main-d'œuvre afin d'accomplir la politique d'industrialisation supplanta les autres politiques et donc, comme l'explique David Hoffman, « individual reproductive rights were subordinated to national demographic concerns »<sup>21</sup>. Donc, l'avortement fut perçu comme un obstacle à l'industrialisation du pays et fut interdit et criminalisé en 1936. En résumé, le décret de 1936 affirma que les meilleures conditions de vie justifiaient la fin de la légalisation de l'avortement. Cette optique reflétait davantage le besoin démographique des autorités soviétiques que l'opinion de l'ensemble de la société.

### **Quelles ont été les réactions?**

Les réactions au décret de 1936, qui fit plus que simplement interdire l'avortement, ne furent pas uniquement négatives, les femmes soviétiques n'étant pas un bloc monolithique. Sous Staline, la censure était de mise. Malgré cela, un débat eut lieu malgré le contrôle et la censure gouvernementale. Ainsi, les voix dissidentes aux échelons inférieurs pouvaient s'exprimer, mais n'avaient aucun effet sur les décisions. Le débat réel au sein du gouvernement fut également contraint à se conformer à la ligne officielle du Parti<sup>22</sup>. La vision officielle fut d'ailleurs transmise par une propagande intense de la machine étatique qui mettait en garde contre les dangers de l'avortement pour les femmes et qui promouvait les joies de la maternité.

Les risques de lésions corporelles des avortements furent décriés dans le décret de 1936 : « In view of the proven harm of abortions, to forbid [it] » sauf si la vie de la mère est en danger ou

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<sup>20</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 310.

<sup>21</sup> Hoffman, « Mothers in the Motherland », 48.

<sup>22</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 332-4.

pour des maladies génétiques graves<sup>23</sup>. Dans la presse soviétique de l'époque, Janet Evans rapporte que l'emphase fut mise sur les dangers de l'avortement. Les journaux féminins offrirent une vision binaire des dangers de l'avortement afin de décourager leurs lectrices d'y recourir et de les encourager à avoir des familles nombreuses<sup>24</sup>. La discussion de l'interdiction de l'avortement fut ainsi limitée de cette première façon.

La maternité était présentée comme une source de bonheur. Dans les journaux, la maternité fut présentée comme la source de tous les bonheurs et comme fonction principale des femmes à l'aide de photos et d'articles<sup>25</sup>. Les autorités soviétiques indiquaient aux femmes que les enfants sont source de bonheur et insistaient sur l'importance d'avoir des enfants<sup>26</sup>. C'est dans ce contexte, où l'avortement était discrédité par la propagande pro-nataliste de l'époque, qu'il faut observer les réactions des femmes soviétiques.

Malgré l'interdiction de l'avortement, nombreuses sont ceux et celles qui soutinrent le décret de 1936. Parmi les lecteurs du journal *Izvestiia*, Prof. M. Malinovskii, lecteur du journal, mit en garde des dangers de l'avortement. Une autre lectrice se déclara être une mère célibataire, et affirma sa joie d'avoir affronté les épreuves de la vie avec son fils. Elle refusa de concevoir la grossesse comme une affaire privée<sup>27</sup>. Si certaines lettres étaient éditées pour se conformer à la ligne politique du Parti, il est raisonnable de penser qu'un certain nombre de femmes soviétiques appuyaient ces opinions suite à la

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<sup>23</sup> *Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions*, June 27, 1936.

<sup>24</sup> Evans, « The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question », 762.

<sup>25</sup> Michaels, « Motherhood, Patriotism, and Ethnicity », 323.

<sup>26</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 333.

<sup>27</sup> « Answer to the Student » et « Do Not Underate the Evil! » cité dans *From the Discussion in Izvestiia*, May 29, 1936. Dans *Izvestiia*, 29 May 1936.

libéralisation extrême du divorce et du mariage durant les années 1920.

L'expérimentation des années 1920 en matière de mariages et divorces engendra chez certaines femmes soviétiques un désir de stabilité familiale. Goldman reprend l'expression « sexual anarchy »<sup>28</sup> pour décrire la période entre la fin de la révolution d'Octobre jusqu'en 1936. C'est durant cette période, en 1926, que les femmes pouvaient divorcer sans la connaissance de leur partenaire. Beaucoup de femmes soviétiques se considéraient victimes de cette libéralisation extrême. En 1927, les deux tiers des mariages se terminaient en divorce à Leningrad, et les trois quarts à Moscou<sup>29</sup>. De ces divorces, il était attendu des maris qu'ils paient une pension alimentaire à leurs épouses. Cependant, selon une étude dans la province de Viatka, les hommes à un taux de 90% refusaient de payer volontairement cette pension<sup>30</sup>. En 1935, le journal *Izvestiia* annonça que 100 000 parents ne payaient pas la pension alimentaire pour leurs enfants<sup>31</sup>. Les femmes soviétiques furent donc plus enclines à accepter les autres mesures du décret de 1936.

Plusieurs appuyèrent le décret de 1936 pour le soutien financier de l'État destiné aux familles nombreuses, les pénalités pour le refus du paiement de la pension et le resserrement du divorce. Le décret de 1936 promettait une somme de 2 000 roubles à la naissance du septième enfant et une somme de 5 000 roubles à la naissance du onzième enfant pour cinq ans. Cette aide financière s'appliquait aux familles ayant déjà ce nombre

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<sup>28</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 298.

<sup>29</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 297.

<sup>30</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 302.

<sup>31</sup> Evans, « The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question », 765.



d'enfants<sup>32</sup>. Cela bénéficiait et valorisait les grandes familles paysannes. Cependant, comme le fait remarquer Paula Michaels, accepter une aide financière n'équivalait pas à donner son approbation et soutien au régime<sup>33</sup>. Également, la mesure visant à « combatting light-minded attitudes towards the family and family obligations »<sup>34</sup> fut bien accueillie. Le décret de 1936 augmenta les frais de divorce à 50 roubles pour le premier, 150 roubles pour le second et 300 roubles pour le troisième et chaque divorce ultérieur. À cette époque, le salaire mensuel des ouvriers était d'environ 220 roubles<sup>35</sup>. Le refus de payer une pension alimentaire pour ses enfants fut criminalisé et prévoyait jusqu'à deux ans d'emprisonnement<sup>36</sup>. En résumé, certaines femmes soviétiques accueillirent positivement le retour d'une vision plus conservatrice de la famille après l'expérimentation libérale des années 1920.

Toutefois, d'autres femmes soviétiques furent très critiques face au décret de 1936 et à l'interdiction de l'avortement. Quelques jours avant le passage du décret de 1936, des activistes du Parti au Kazakhstan déplorèrent l'interdiction immédiate et totale de l'avortement et proposèrent une alternative, notamment pour les étudiantes – la génération future et prometteuse – afin de leur permettre d'avoir accès à des moyens de contraception

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<sup>32</sup> « II. On Increasing Material Aid by the State to Women in Childbirth and on Establishing State Aid to Large Families », cité dans *Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions*, June 27, 1936.

<sup>33</sup> Michaels, « Motherhood, Patriotism, and Ethnicity », 328.

<sup>34</sup> « VIII. On more severe Penalties for the Non-Payment of Alimony and Alterations in the Legislation on Divorce », cité dans *Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions*, June 27, 1936.

<sup>35</sup> Hélène Yvert-Jalu, « L'histoire du divorce en Russie soviétique. Ses rapports avec la politique familiale et les réalités sociales », *Population (French Edition)* 36, no. 1 (1981): 53.

<sup>36</sup> « VIII. On more severe Penalties for the Non-Payment of Alimony and Alterations in the Legislation on Divorce », cité dans *Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions*, June 27, 1936.

(incluant l'avortement)<sup>37</sup>. Une étudiante à l'Institut médical de Moscou écrivit dans une lettre au journal *Izvestiia* : « In five years' time when I am a doctor and have a job and a room I shall have children »<sup>38</sup>. Cette étudiante plaçait son éducation et sa profession avant son désir d'avoir des enfants. Elle remarqua aussi que la crise du logement l'empêchait d'avoir un enfant. En somme, malgré la censure et la propagande, les femmes soviétiques affichent une diversité d'opinions. Toutes, par contre, valorisaient les politiques qu'elles considéraient leur étant favorables, soient-elles libérales ou conservatrices.

### **Est-ce un abandon des politiques d'émancipation des années 1920?**

Le décret de 1936 peut être compris comme un retour à une vision traditionnelle de la famille, mais pas comme une rupture idéologique. Les politiques pragmatiques soviétiques, bien qu'égalitaires, n'avaient pas comme objectif l'émancipation des femmes. À partir de 1936, les femmes soviétiques furent de nouveau encadrées dans un cadre familial traditionnel. Par le culte de la maternité, l'emphase était mise sur la femme dans son rôle en tant que mère. Bien qu'il existait des services communautaires pour aider les mères de famille, il était présumé que les femmes s'occuperaient des tâches domestiques au sein de la maison<sup>39</sup>. Les communistes concevaient une vision traditionnelle des femmes qui étaient réduites à la fonction d'avoir et d'élever des enfants<sup>40</sup>. Il s'agissait, pour certaines, d'un échange tactique : le retour aux normes familiales traditionnelles

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<sup>37</sup> Michaels, « Motherhood, Patriotism, and Ethnicity », 316.

<sup>38</sup> « Letter from a Student ("I Object") », cité dans *From the Discussion in Izvestiia*, May 29, 1936. Dans *Izvestiia*, 29 May 1936.

<sup>39</sup> Evans, « The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question », 765.

<sup>40</sup> Michaels, « Motherhood, Patriotism, and Ethnicity », 323, 327.

assurait le respect de la mère et garantissait la responsabilité des maris envers leurs femmes, mais « it demanded that women assume the double burden of work and motherhood »<sup>41</sup>. Affirmer qu'il s'agit de la fin d'une émancipation féminine soviétique, c'est cependant ignorer qu'elle était minime lors des années précédant le décret de 1936.

En effet, les politiques soviétiques doivent être comprises comme pragmatiques plutôt qu'émancipatrices. Elles servirent à accomplir les objectifs de l'Union soviétique avant de chercher à émanciper les femmes. Le but principal du Parti communiste était d'industrialiser et de moderniser l'Union soviétique. Pour ce faire, le pays avait un tel besoin de main-d'œuvre qu'il puisa dans une ressource jusqu'alors sous-utilisée : les femmes. Ces ouvrières furent embauchées pour combler le manque de travailleurs lors des plans quinquennaux : « the second Five Year Plan, [...] relied heavily on female labor. In the first half of 1932, more than half of the new workers were women »<sup>42</sup>. Certes, l'égalité juridique dont jouissaient les femmes soviétiques est incomparable aux autres sociétés modernes de l'époque. Malgré tout, l'élargissement des réseaux de garderie était lié au besoin d'accéder à la main-d'œuvre féminine<sup>43</sup>. C'est notamment afin d'avoir plus d'ouvrières pour accomplir plus rapidement les projets d'industrialisation que le gouvernement soviétique promulgua des projets sociaux dont bénéficièrent les femmes.

L'entrée des femmes soviétiques sur le marché du travail ne fut pas synonyme de libération. Wendy Goldman rapporte qu'entre 1928 et 1932, le salaire réel chuta de 49%. Pour subsister, un ménage dépendait de deux salaires là où un suffisait<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 336.

<sup>42</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 312.

<sup>43</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 314.

<sup>44</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 316.

L'ouvrière était encore rattachée à son mari et celui-ci réciproquement pour que la famille nucléaire puisse subsister. Loin de causer une émancipation, cela obligea même les femmes à travailler pour combler la chute des salaires. En bref, les dirigeants soviétiques avaient besoin de plus d'ouvriers. Ils encouragèrent donc une politique pro-nataliste et embauchèrent des ouvrières, mais celles-ci n'acquiescèrent pas une nouvelle indépendance totale.

Ce désir de croissance démographique peut être observé dans les critères de demande d'avortement. Ces critères sont assez stricts, par la fin des années 1920, les femmes soviétiques pouvaient rarement obtenir un avortement lors de leur première grossesse et l'avortement lors d'une première grossesse fut même interdit en 1935. En fonction des obstacles mis en place limitant l'accès à l'avortement, Janet Evans indique que le principe d'avortement sur demande n'aurait même jamais été suivi<sup>45</sup>. En n'autorisant l'avortement qu'aux femmes dans des conditions de pauvreté et ayant déjà plusieurs enfants, le gouvernement révéla son désir de soutenir le taux de natalité pour avoir un bassin d'ouvriers plus large. L'interdiction de l'avortement en 1936 ne fit que confirmer ceci. Les droits individuels des femmes furent toujours relégués derrière les besoins de la nation soviétique.

Tout au long de sa légalisation, l'avortement ne fut jamais perçu comme un droit individuel. La pratique était plutôt perçue comme un enjeu social avant d'être considérée comme un droit reproductif féminin. Le commissaire de la santé, Nikolai Semashko, indiqua que la pratique était un enjeu social puisqu'elle avait la possibilité de contrarier les objectifs de l'État soviétique en réduisant le taux de natalité<sup>46</sup>. Même Alexandra

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<sup>45</sup> Evans, « The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question », 760.

<sup>46</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 256.

Kollontai, pourtant si radicale, croyait que la nécessité pour l'avortement disparaîtrait avec les meilleurs jours et voyait l'enfantement comme une obligation sociale<sup>47</sup>. L'avortement était donc considéré anti-social plutôt qu'un choix émancipateur.

De plus, les lois et politiques des années 1920 n'eurent pas un caractère émancipateur. Certes, les politiques visant la création de services préscolaires, de cuisines communes et de garderies avaient un caractère social dont bénéficiaient les femmes soviétiques. Cependant, ces politiques mises en place n'avaient comme objectif que d'aider les femmes à réaliser leurs tâches ménagères. Comme le remarque justement Janet Evans : « merely reducing the burden of the household chores would not eliminate inequalities within the home as long as housework (some of which would still exist) was regarded as women's work »<sup>48</sup>. Ainsi, il est permis de douter de l'étendue de l'émancipation des femmes soviétiques grâce aux lois et politiques promulguées de 1917 à 1936.

## **Conclusion**

En somme, le décret de 1936 refléta la vision pragmatique des autorités soviétiques et révéla que le corps des femmes était encore – et avait toujours été – soumis au contrôle du gouvernement. Le décret de 1936 interdisant l'avortement fut promulgué parce que l'avortement était toujours perçu comme un mal social. Sa légalisation en 1920 fut comprise comme une solution temporaire qui deviendrait désuète à mesure que les conditions économiques s'amélioreraient. Les autorités soviétiques perçurent un lien entre avortements et décroissance du taux de natalité, et interdissèrent l'avortement pour réaliser

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<sup>47</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 256-7.

<sup>48</sup> Evans, « The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question », 770.

leurs objectifs de modernisation qui requéraient une grande main-d'œuvre. Les réactions à l'interdiction de l'avortement furent variées. Le débat autour du décret de 1936 était contrôlé par le sommet grâce à une propagande étatique qui affirmait les dangers corporels de l'avortement et les bonheurs de la maternité. Certaines femmes soviétiques eurent des réactions positives face au décret de 1936 et voulurent restructurer la famille à la suite de lois de libéralisation expérimentales sur le divorce et le mariage des années 1920. Les autres mesures du décret, telles que le financement des familles nombreuses et les limitations sur le divorce, furent aussi bien accueillies. D'autres femmes soviétiques contestèrent l'interdiction de l'avortement telles que des étudiantes qui priorisaient leur profession et leur éducation. Enfin, l'année 1936 marqua le retour à une vision traditionnelle de la famille, avec la femme en son centre dans son rôle de mère. Il s'agirait alors de la fin de l'émancipation des femmes soviétiques. Cependant, les politiques antérieures n'étaient pas si émancipatrices. Le travail salarié n'a pas mené à l'indépendance et les critères pour avoir un avortement étaient tellement restreignants qu'il était impossible d'y avoir accès sur demande. Tout au long de l'époque soviétique, les tâches ménagères incombèrent aux femmes. L'avortement n'avait jamais été perçu comme un droit individuel, mais bien comme un acte anti-social et intrinsèquement contraire au projet national soviétique. Le décret de 1936 refléta que cette mentalité n'avait pas évolué.

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**'Monarch of the Pen': William Cornwallis Harris - the Victorian Archetype of Big Game Hunters**

Aidan Elliot

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European hunting culture represents a fascinating intersection between western doctrines of race, ecology, and colonialism. Victorian fascination with the big game hunter emerged in tandem with ideas about social Darwinism and settler colonialism. Hence, it is logical that big game hunters were glorified as colonial heroes and civilizing agents. Some scholars attribute the emergence of the Victorian fascination with the big game hunters to Roualeyn Gordon-Cummings, who returned from South Africa with thirty tonnes worth of trophies in 1848.<sup>1</sup> By the 1870s, famous big game hunters like Frederick Courtney Selous had captured Britain's popular imagination with hunting stories, trophies, and exhibits. Accordingly, Gordon-Cummings and Selous have been the subject of extensive scholarly examination. These hunters' published narratives of the natural world informed public perceptions of nature during an era of rising literacy at the height of colonialism. In order to extrapolate the connections between the big game hunter archetype and its significance within Victorian popular culture, one must establish the archetype's intersection with contemporary narratives about empire and nature. By analyzing the career of their forerunner, William Cornwallis Harris, new light may be shed on the emergence of the hunter archetype, supplying historians with an alternative lens through which to view Victorian visions of colonial conquest during a period of profound imperial

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<sup>1</sup> Angela Thompsell, *Hunting Africa: British Sport, African Knowledge and the Nature of Empire*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 12.

transformation. Through various forms of representation, how did Harris come to exemplify and symbolize the qualities and dimensions of what would become the Victorian big game hunter by 1870? To what extent can the literary stabilization of the big game hunter as the master of the colonial wilderness be used to trace a shift in Britons' senses of nature? Harris identifies himself as a military officer, sportsman, geographer, natural scientist, engineer, and statesman in his writing, and also expresses anxieties about nature, masculinity, and imperialism which would only grow alongside the British Empire.

In the last four decades, the analysis of the culture of empire has flourished; travelogues recorded by hunters, tourists, and explorers are critical texts scholars use to probe the previously neglected connections between empire, Victorian culture, masculinity, hunting, and ecology. During the ecological turn of the 1980s, scholars like James Turner, Keith Thomas, Stephen Clark, Mary Midgley, and Yi-Fu-Tuan published works that produced a renewal in the study of human relations with nature.<sup>2</sup> Rather than simply considering the environment a peripheral backdrop, these academics viewed the environment as a vital cultural product inside the Victorian-imperial consciousness. John Mackenzie's *The Empire of Nature* and Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate* are two pioneering works that focused explicitly on the role of hunting in colonial spaces. Mackenzie spearheaded the analysis of the ecological impact of hunting by definitively linking Britain's colonial expansion to British preoccupations with natural sciences, the gentlemanly code, and sport. Similarly, Ritvo concludes that the Victorian

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<sup>2</sup> Trevor R. Pringle, "Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*, Harvard University Press, London (1987), P. vii." *Journal of Historical Geography* 14, No. 3, 1988, 311.

understanding of wild and domestic animals may be attributed to the phenomenon of big game hunting. Ritvo's core argument is that the late Victorian period represented a dramatic transition from viewing nature as an antagonist to viewing nature as "vulnerable to human control," a shift spurred by advances in European science and technology.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, these two texts form a foundation with which most studies in the subfield of imperial big game hunting must contend.

Paradoxically, the civilisation that the British eagerly exported and imposed across the world stage was also the source of an identity crisis. When interpreting history through masculine and ecological lenses, scholars have argued that the Victorians' increasing alienation from nature stirred various anxieties, including fears of racial "degeneration."<sup>4</sup> British confidence in reason, modernity, and racial superiority were offset by various industrial, ecological, and gendered changes which encouraged men to seek romantic adventure on the colonial frontier in reaction to the reality of 19th century society.<sup>5</sup> Eager to alleviate these anxieties, big game hunters displayed their masculinity through the hunt and the kill, revealing a self-imposed obligation to reshape nature and indigenous peoples in the path of western civilization.<sup>6</sup> Suffice to say, Mackenzie's and Ritvo's ideas are foundational in understanding Britain's identity crisis.

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<sup>3</sup> Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: the English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, (1987), 3.

<sup>4</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire*, London: Routledge, 2016, 195.

<sup>5</sup> Thompsell, *Hunting Africa*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Robert A. Stafford, "John M. Mackenzie. The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988," *British Journal for the History of Science*, (1990): 123.

Most pertinent to this study are works that examine the informal hunting code's concepts of "fair play" and gentlemanly honour, to which most British participants in the colonial hunt adhered.<sup>7</sup> Through hunters' narratives, historians like Greg Gillespie have illuminated the informal creed by which they legitimized and disguised their violent actions behind a veil of nobility and supremacy.<sup>8</sup> Notably, other scholars such as Pablo Mukherjee have defined the ways that hunters transgressed their code and how they rationalized their infractions.<sup>9</sup> Famous hunters like Selous and Gordon-Cummings have been the subject of numerous monographs, often relating their exploits to the colonial hunting code, inspired by imperial authority, conquest, and manliness— the essences of empire. Additionally, the narratives also superficially offered solutions to the identity dysphoria by including the working class in their "fantasies of mastery" and the imperial project.<sup>10</sup>

Via the exploration of the archetypical harbingers of the 1830s and 1840s, historians can trace the origins of the multivalent big game hunter archetype. William Cornwallis Harris is but one example of an early nineteenth-century hunter, whose literary texts convey the ideals that would become synonymous with the Victorian big game hunter a decade before the phenomenon's rise to prominence. In 1823, Harris joined the army of the East India Company, eventually attaining the rank of Captain in 1834. In 1836-1837, on personal leave from the army,

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<sup>7</sup> Greg Gillespie, "Cry Havoc? British Imperial Hunting Culture" in *Hunting for Empire: Narratives of Sport in Ruperts Land, 1840-70*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 37.

<sup>8</sup> Gillespie, "Cry Havoc?," 37.

<sup>9</sup> Pablo Mukherjee, "Nimrods: Hunting, Authority, Identity," *The Modern language review* 100.4 (2005): 923.

<sup>10</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 49.

Harris embarked on his first notable journey into southern Africa. As a result he composed two written works, *Narrative of an Expedition into Southern Africa during the years 1836 and 1837* published in 1838, followed by his book of illustrations *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa* published in 1840. On official business from Queen Victoria to negotiate a trade treaty with Sahla Selassie, Harris embarked on his second major journey into Africa between 1841 and 1843.<sup>11</sup> This journey produced his three-volume account of the delegation, called *The Highlands of Aethiopia* published in 1844. He also produced designs for a railway across the isthmus of Suez in 1845.

The popularity of the big game hunter in Victorian culture emerged roughly three decades after Harris' death. The very existence of the popularity of the genre speaks to the vicarious nature through which "the artisan, the clerk and the shop-worker were invited in[to]" the author's conception of empire, nature, race, and masculinity.<sup>12</sup> Breaking from the period norm of ivory hunting, Gordon-Cummings' traditional hunting approach was successful due to the marketing of his exploits during the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>13</sup> Although he did not have the same successful marketing methods as Gordon-Cummings, Harris nevertheless received praise for his first novel which prompted his appointment as an ambassador for the Queen in 1841-1843. His second work also received moderate acclaim, at least enough to warrant criticism and local fame in British India. Charles Beke critiques the needlessly complicated prose of Harris' text, which often obscures his meaning.<sup>14</sup> Harris' travelogues touch upon the

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<sup>11</sup> The king of the autonomous region of Showa in Ethiopia then called Abyssinia.

<sup>12</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 50.

<sup>13</sup> Thompsell, *Hunting Africa*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, xviii.

same narrative structures as his successors, even if his writings often lacked their literary flair and nuance. Gordon-Cummings' and Selous' tales featured the big game hunter narrative elements like courage in the face of hostile wilderness, violent administration of the *Coup de Grace*, and masculine prowess.<sup>15</sup> Although Harris was not a skilled writer, his hunting tales anticipated some of these thematic elements, earning him modest celebrity at the start of the Victorian Era and feature in the *Bengal Sporting Magazine* of 1838. Harris, however, did not market his stories to the same degree as his successors; thus, his literary accounts were less influential among the public than those of the renowned hunters of the late-Victorian period.

Despite moderate fame, contemporaries recognized Harris as a forerunner of later imperial hunters. Four decades after Harris' death, an article entitled *The Sable Antelope* within the column *The Naturalist*, praised Harris' accomplishments as a natural scientist and hunter. This source links Harris with the accomplished hunters of the 1870s and delineates his achievements of cataloguing wildlife and discovering the Sable Antelope. In Bryden's article, he recognizes that "Cornwallis, besides being a hunter *Primus in Terris*, was a capable artist, and a sound naturalist."<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, at the height of big game hunting's popularity, Harris remained aligned with the famous hunters as a prolific figure for having operated within the boundaries of the hunter's code. His memorialization as a virtuous hunter demonstrated that in the age of growing literacy,

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<sup>15</sup> Gillespie, "Cry Havoc?," 54. Note that the *Coup de Grace* means the killing stroke.

<sup>16</sup> H. A. Bryden, "The Sable Antelope" *The Field*; Aug 4, 1888, 1,858; *British Periodicals*, 190. *Primus in Terris* means first on the earth.

his narratives continued to hold the minds of his audience captive.

Representations of Harris typically exaggerated his character, a theme recurrent in later hunter narratives. His self-representations in his works form the basis for the contemporary understandings of Harris' persona. The *Abyssinia, A Statement of the Facts* by Charles Beke calls into question the accuracy of Harris' self-representation. Beke, a private citizen travelling in Abyssinia, supplied Harris with maps and documents for his trip into Showa. Nevertheless, Harris shortchanged Beke, excluded him from Harris' delegation, and denigrated him in an "unfriendly notice" to the *Bombay Times* in December 1841.<sup>17</sup> Harris' letter to the *Bombay Times* characterized Beke as someone from whom "nothing very wonderful is to be expected", totally ignorant of "the habits, manners, and languages of the East" and "unsuited to the task he had undertaken."<sup>18</sup> A feud formed between the two, resulting in an exchange of criticisms. Hence, Beke published a negative review of *The Highlands of Aethiopia* in a newspaper. The critique prompted Harris to write a 45-page response in the introduction of the second edition of *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, dismissing his detractor as a "most implacable and malignant character."<sup>19</sup> This highlights that Harris curated his image as a man of honour, and disputed claims of unfair dealings by emphasizing his "forbearance" and "trustworthiness" as a dependable source of knowledge in the face of "animadversions."<sup>20</sup> Gillespie notes that

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<sup>17</sup> Charles Beke, *Abyssinia. A Statement of the Facts*, (London: James Madden, 8, Leadenhall Street, 1845), 9-26.

<sup>18</sup> Beke, *Abyssinia*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> William C. Harris, Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, Vol. I, (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, Second edition, 1844), xviii.

<sup>20</sup> Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, xviii.

the narratives published by later hunters “served specific purposes by constructing the archetype of the imperial man and presenting him for moral and physical emulation.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, the practice of fabricating stories extended beyond Harris’ stories into other hunter narratives.

As a military officer, Harris occupied a liminal space between explorer and hunter that informed the emergence of the big game hunter archetype. Ritvo argues that the popularization of big game hunting narratives was a gradual process, first disseminating outwards from a class of elite British readers interested in “exotic natural history often produced by the explorers who had no time for sport.”<sup>22</sup> Harris’ audience was his fellow military engineers, of whom accounted for half of the subscribers for his first text, while the other half of the subscriber base was elite and public audiences in Bombay.<sup>23</sup> Although Harris’ understandings of ecology and masculinity resonated with a particular readership, this literary niche benefited from rising literacy rates, as epitomized by the popularity of Gordon-Cummings’ *Five years of a hunter’s life in the far interior of South Africa*. Literacy in Britain had risen drastically since Harris’ death in 1848, and by the end of the 19th century it had risen to 75% for British men and women.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the increase in the literary accessibility of the big game hunting narratives, coincided with an increase in readership.

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<sup>21</sup> Gillespie, “Cry Havoc?,” 35.

<sup>22</sup> Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 256.

<sup>23</sup> Ritvo, 256.

<sup>24</sup> Max Roser and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina (2016) - “Literacy.” *Published online at OurWorldInData.org*. Retrieved from: '<https://ourworldindata.org/literacy>' ; See Figure 2 to see the graph from the Max Roser and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina text with a visual representation of literacy in England.



When one considers the hunter's behaviour as similar to that of a contemporary military officer, in essence, an instrument of discipline, the central theme of establishing order on the frontier through technologically-enabled violence emerges. In chapter 11 of *Narrative of an Expedition into Southern Africa during the years 1836 and 1837*, Harris and his party find themselves near the land of Mzilikazi, the King of Matabeleland.<sup>25</sup> In brief, the group is obstructed by a "contumacious" rhino which, despite a peaceful effort to move it, Harris felt he was required to kill it.<sup>26</sup> His narrative is such that he is the person who clears the path, facilitating his party's arrival at the residence of the King. Harris makes use of the literary device of understatement to legitimize his narrative. In essence, by remaining cool and collected in the face of danger he enhances his "stature of hero."<sup>27</sup> In a more overtly dangerous encounter in chapter 8 of *Narrative of an Expedition*, Harris recalls an instance when he is separated from his group. Stranded at night in a foreign land, he manages to find a dwelling and prevails against the "Monarchs of the forest" which were roaring so relentlessly that he repeatedly "fire[d] [his] rifle to give [his horse] confidence."<sup>28</sup> Further, as he approached his companions' camp the next morning, he discharged his rifle again, relieving the fear that his absence had inspired.<sup>29</sup> The rifle is a form of order capable of inciting violence and restoring security. In the situation with the lions, the danger he emphasizes is not only the animals with whom he is in close contact, but also the "piercingly cold" night and the "scorching

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<sup>25</sup> Note that Matabeleland is in modern-day southwestern Zimbabwe.

<sup>26</sup> William C. Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, (Bombay: American Mission Press, 1838), 103.

<sup>27</sup> Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 258.

<sup>28</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 73.

heat”of day.<sup>30</sup> Harris suggests that the true danger is that of overcoming natural conditions, and without civilization such a task is extremely difficult. The officer-hunter equipped with a tool crafted by civilization can overcome the fiercest of animals and the harshest of conditions, bringing order to the most hostile of lands. Hunters accentuated their moments of danger to emphasize the security brought about by modern civilization.

The officer-hunter, exemplified by Harris, underwent a transition into the hunter by way of a transformation of their use of unrestrained violence into an ethic of restraint. The secondary literature shows how British society saw the colonies as the place to make the officer, to rid him of effeminacy, and to test his virtues.<sup>31</sup> Mangan and McKenzie examine the conservation movement in the late nineteenth century, concluding that the unrestrained and reckless officer-hunter’s’ devotion to ‘fair play,’ exemplified by Harris, was modified to include restraint in a period of decreasing game population to conform to “an improved image.”<sup>32</sup> In Harris’ *Narrative of an Expedition into Southern Africa*, his reckless violence is best highlighted by a passage in which he encounters a “moving mass of game” and subsequently “leav[es] the ground strewn with the slain” with little remorse for the dead.<sup>33</sup> As such, this shows that Harris fits within the earlier continuity of the hunter archetype in which unrestrained violence is favoured, a concept later dwarfed by practices of restraint.

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<sup>30</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 71.

<sup>31</sup> J.A. Mangan and C McKenzie, “Martial and Moral Complexities: Changing Certainties in Changing Imperial Landscapes,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 9 (2008): 1172.

<sup>32</sup> Mangan and McKenzie, “Martial Masculinity in Transition,” 1243.

<sup>33</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 68.

The 'sportsman' was an integral part in all of Harris' narratives.<sup>34</sup> Harris constantly anthropomorphised nature, emphasizing its dangers to depict the ways in which he bested his animal rival on equal footing. He refers to an antelope as a "great bully", a lion as giving a "good natured glance *en passant*", and elephants as making "extraordinary forced marches, invariably travelling in troops during the night, and with all military precaution."<sup>35</sup> The narrative technique of anthropomorphization provided the British public with a set of understandable and human qualities to make sense of an increasingly alien realm of animals while making reference to masculine and imperial themes of the conquest of natural spaces. The granting of traditionally-Victorian masculine agency to animals is supported by iconographic scholarship which posits that animals which were valued for trophy hunting and display were those, "exhibiting human male virtues such as aggressive displays of dominance and courage in battle."<sup>36</sup> The idea of trading blows with nature and overcoming it was a clear part of the hunter archetype even when Harris was journeying through southwestern Africa. From the first sentence of his introduction in *Narrative of an Expedition*, it is evident he sees hunting as an integral part of his identity: "From my boyhood upwards, I have been taxed by the facetious with shooting madness, and truly a most delightful mania I have ever found it."<sup>37</sup> Harris and other hunters' views of fair play and conquest of nature transfers

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<sup>34</sup> A sportsman or an outdoorsman, is a person who participates in outdoor sporting activities.

<sup>35</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 71. ; William C Harris, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, (London: W Pickering, 1840), 118.

<sup>36</sup> Karen Wonders, "Hunting Narratives of the Age of Empire: A Gender Reading of Their Iconography," *Environment and History* 11, no. 3, (2005): 282.

<sup>37</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, xii.

through their narratives, affecting the way the British public viewed the conquest of wild spaces.

Sportsmen were romanticized as figures reclaiming a connection to nature by violent domination. In general, hunters show through their narratives how the pursuit of game could be “celebrated in mythical terms of high romance, [but] was also, importantly, a brutal act of violence.”<sup>38</sup> The sportsman on the frontier was the gentleman hunter re-establishing a connection with and domination over nature on the wild frontier. In doing so, they forged concrete meaning and shattered the “sense of ineffability, which is experienced physically and emotionally as much as conceptually” by the British public in the period of industrialization.<sup>39</sup> The masculine assertion of domination on the colonial frontier was an “Imperial fantas[y] of mastery” which invited the public to participate through narrative, allowing space for them to resolve tensions in their gender identity through imperialism.<sup>40</sup> The narrative of the hunt told by hunters reasserted British identity with rigid conceptions of gender, race, and class. These stories provided participation in imperialism to an increasingly literate and urban population disconnected with nature and unsure of their place within a wider world.

Harris’ contributions to European geographical understandings of southern Africa cannot be overlooked as one of the most informative contemporary appraisals of the state of game hunting in the region. Scholar Angela Thompsell accounts for the explosion of big game hunting in the mid-nineteenth century, showing how the closing of the frontier became an

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<sup>38</sup> Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 266.

<sup>39</sup> Iain McGilchrist, “Romanticism and the Industrial Revolution.” In *The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (Yale University Press), 2009. 363.

<sup>40</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 50.

important goal for explorers. In the 1850s and 1860s, explorers sought to “further mankind’s knowledge” by mapping the blank spaces of Africa.<sup>41</sup> In so doing, “[they] came to embody those qualities the Victorians regarded as emblematic of all that was best about themselves as a people.”<sup>42</sup>

In his introduction to *The Highlands of Aethiopia* responding to Charles Beke’s criticisms. Harris combats Beke’s accusations that he has not added to academia with his stores of geographical findings, “Some additions, moreover, to geographical science I undoubtedly have made, and there are those who have not been ashamed to borrow them.”<sup>43</sup> However, mapping the part of Africa through which he travelled was not his primary goal in 1836. Harris makes known his desire to explore north beyond the Tropic of Capricorn, but cannot do so due to time constraints; “We were yet compelled to sacrifice to circumstances our thirst for geographical discovery beyond the Tropic of Capricorn.”<sup>44</sup> This shows that while not a main focus, Harris views cartography as secondary to his duties as a hunter and explorer. In essence, satiating the western-European thirst for knowledge of the natural world was something that the hunter archetype was uniquely situated to achieve.

Current scholarship places the accomplishments of Harris within the larger geographic history of southern Africa, showing how his work related to subsequent maps of the region.<sup>45</sup> On the

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<sup>41</sup> Thompsell, *Hunting Africa*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Thompsell, 15.

<sup>43</sup> Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, xxiv.

<sup>44</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 130. The Tropic of Capricorn is a latitudinal line like the equator which demarcates Africa’s tropical region and runs through Mozambique, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia.

<sup>45</sup> See Figures 5 & 6 for the relevant maps ; Norman Etherington, “A False Emptiness: How Historians May Have Been Misled by Early Nineteenth

one hand, some scholarship credits him for recording the 'Great Trek' of 1836, in which he provided the first route to Mzilikazi's capital, turning the focus of mapmaking from the coast to the interior of the Transvaal.<sup>46</sup> His participation in the transition of mapmaking to the African interior and his account of the migration of Dutch settlers into the interior indicates Harris served as an intermediary between the explorers and hunters. Beginning in 1806, the Dutch migration was a catalyst for the expansion of the colony and diminution of the frontier, permitting an increase in civilian and military personnel in the colonies by the height of the British empire.<sup>47</sup> These events create a continuity of colonization from the relatively untouched interior of the pre-Harris explorers to the thoroughly mapped and colonized African interior of the 1870s that hunters like Selous forcefully conquered. On the other hand, scholars dispute the usefulness of his maps, showing the volatility of mapmaking in the early nineteenth century. Before the British colonial government conducted comprehensive surveys north of the Vaal River, British cartographers relied on accounts of travellers in the region to make their maps as "hunters, traders, and missionaries pushed into previously uncharted territories."<sup>48</sup> These scholars show how Harris excised a large triangular tract of land from South Africa in his map through his use of imprecise calculations.<sup>49</sup> Like his embellished self-representations, the maps

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century Maps of South-Eastern Africa," *Imago mundi (Lympe)* 56, no. 1 (2004): 70-73.

<sup>46</sup> Jane Carruthers. "Friedrich Jeppé: Mapping the Transvaal c. 1850-1899," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 4 (2003): 959.

<sup>47</sup> Thompsell, *Hunting Africa*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> Carruthers, "Friedrich Jeppé," 973.

<sup>49</sup> See Figure 5 for a visual map of the land he excised from Africa based on his non-exact methods of marking his location. Again, showing that his main focus was hunting and not geography, but that geography played a part in his narrative.

demonstrate that the depictions of the hunters were viewed as credible agents of the imperial project later on. Moreover, his work was imprecise because he did not have the proper technology to accurately map the area, using instead the standard of his day which was the ‘Burchell Method.’ This technique used anecdotal and narrative-based references, which were “designed specifically to accompany a written text.”<sup>50</sup> Harris’ clumsy mapmaking directly depicts his primary focus on hunting over that of furthering geographical knowledge.

Harris’ self-depiction as a natural scientist, engaging in the illustration and sketching of nature, popularized the physical icons of the hunt in the late nineteenth century. Published in 1840, Harris’ *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa* contextualized animals in their natural state, which contributed to Victorian conceptions of zoology.<sup>51</sup> Notably, the portraits were accompanied by measurements of each animal, which Harris considered an impressive feat given the “manifold disadvantages that there exist” in the process of recording, archiving, and importing the data of the wilderness back to civilization for mass consumption.<sup>52</sup> He cites as his chief concern that the information “might prove acceptable to the naturalist, the sportsman, and the lover of wild scenery.”<sup>53</sup> The pictures in *Portraits of the Game* capture an early form of the Victorian fascination with exotic hunting trophies.

John Mackenzie discusses the role of the iconographer, illustrator, and engraver in documenting the scenes of the hunt that became ubiquitous in British society. According to

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<sup>50</sup> Carruthers, “Friedrich Jeppe,” 959.

<sup>51</sup> Harris, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, v.

<sup>52</sup> Harris, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, vi.

<sup>53</sup> Harris, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, vi.

Mackenzie, the “great wealth of hunting publications was supplemented by the iconography of the Hunt” which made its way in the form of pictures, but also “tins, packagings, plates, textiles and furniture.”<sup>54</sup> In tandem with the rise in literacy and an ever-increasing interest in big game hunting, additional markets for hunting-related imagery impacted the ways that the public conceptualized nature. Ultimately, Harris’ loosely scientific drawings supported his narrative accounts. H.A. Bryden connects Harris’ preliminary imagery to later hunters, stating that, “he has handed down to posterity the completist [sic] catalogue of the fauna of that country [via] accurate descriptions of almost every kind of game then known to exist between the Zambesi and the Indian Ocean.”<sup>55</sup> As such, Bryden reveals that Harris was a significant source of scientific illustrations of southern African wildlife during the popular era of big game hunting in 1888. Harris’ portraits of wild animals in their natural habitat were subsequently transplanted into the canon of the hunter narrative, influencing public perceptions of the colonial frontier.

Carl Georg Schillings’ 1907 book, *In Wildest Africa* notes some of Harris’ achievements, asserting the latter’s centrality in the early processes of documenting natural history, “Harris must be considered as a quite trustworthy authority. His works are indeed the most complete first-hand evidence we have as to the state of the fauna of South Africa at the time.”<sup>56</sup> Schillings

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<sup>54</sup> John Mackenzie, “The Imperial Pioneer And Hunter And The British Masculine Stereotype In Late Victorian And Edwardian Times,” in Mangan, J.A. and James Walvin, *Manliness and Morality Middle Class Masculinity In Britain And America 1800 to 1940*, 1987, 182.

<sup>55</sup> Bryden, “The Sable Antelope,” 190.

<sup>56</sup> Carl Georg Schillings, *In Wildest Africa*. Tran. Frederick Whyte. London: Hutchinson & Co. Vol 1. 1907, 130. Schillings was writing at a time when Africa



recognized the historical importance of Harris' account as a testament to the prevalence of animals found within the African interior before his time. Schillings laments wildlife decline, which is a theme that is also visible implicitly in Harris' writings. Harris expresses a precursor to ecological concern by noting the disappearance of wildlife and the change in ecosystems. The second chapter in the *Narrative of an Expedition* provides an example of Harris' dismay at the decline of the animal population around the southern coast. He laments how the "miserable country, which had been described to [his party] as abounding with game of every description" only revealed a scattering of three ostriches and twenty spring bucks "on the distant horizon."<sup>57</sup> Despite the narrative of animal abundance in the earlier texts of Harris and Gordon-Cummings, the inklings of scarcity were concealed beneath the surface. Harris' remark underscores the role of narrative in shaping conceptions of nature; just as he expected the wildlife in southern Africa to be abundant, so too did the literate British public. Considered collectively, later hunters such as Schillings sought to validate Harris' claims regarding the natural world during their own journeys, cementing the informal canon of the hunter archetype.

In the end, Harris' concern for ecological decline was contextualized within his conceptions of race, gender, and class; ideas which would form the basis of the hunter's code. Mackenzie discusses Harris' disappointment with the lack of coastal wildlife, attributing its decline to the "African hunters, confronted with vast herds in the interior, [who] were bent on

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had been explored, marked, and colonized by Europeans, and the system of wildlife reserves was put in place.

<sup>57</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 8.

extermination."<sup>58</sup> Harris' literary works were not motivated by wildlife protection, they were the result of the inevitability of both the decline and the conquest of nature by 'civilization.' These ideas codified dominance over the 'uncivilized spaces' and 'primitive races,' doctrines which were commonly held by Europeans at that time. In 1888, Bryden reflected on the role of Harris' work, specifically *Portraits of the Game*, in lieu of wildlife decline, "in a hundred years' time, this noble work . . . will, when most of the animals depicted in it shall have become extinct, be a treasure indeed."<sup>59</sup> In 1907, Schillings echoed a similar sentiment about the necessity of documenting the natural world while it was still intact.<sup>60</sup> At the zenith of the British empire, both of these writers' publications linked Harris' work to their own conception of the decline of nature and the triumph of British civilization. Although Harris had consideration for the ecological effects of wildlife decline, they remained underdeveloped since he encountered an interior teeming with game.

Another major consideration linking Harris to a broader trend of growing Victorian sensibilities of nature was informed by his participation as a quasi-scientist in cataloguing enterprises. For Harris, the honour of discovering and associating himself with a hitherto unknown animal was as important as the physical trophies acquired through the hunt. In *Narrative of an Expedition*, Harris encounters an "entirely new and very interesting species" of sable antelope of which he sends back a specimen to the Zoological Society of London.<sup>61</sup> Although the

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<sup>58</sup> John Mackenzie, "Hunting and Settlement in Southern Africa," in *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, 95.

<sup>59</sup> Bryden, "The Sable Antelope," 190.

<sup>60</sup> Schillings, *In Wildest Africa*, 262.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Bell, "Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London," 1838, 1.

antelope was given the scientific name *Hippotragus Niger* by the society, it was immortalized by its unofficial name the 'Harris Buck'.<sup>62</sup> The antelope's masculine symbolism is promoted in Harris' description of its physical characteristics - "horns thirty-seven inches over the curve...; flat, slender, sub-erect, and then strongly bent back scimitar-wise."<sup>63</sup> The iconographic nature of his discovery falls within an identified motif of "horns and antlers of exceptional size," noted by historian Karen Wonders, who examines the patterns of hunter trophies and the different meanings they attributed to them.<sup>64</sup> Harris' scientific classification of the Sable antelope simultaneously represents the potency of British imperialism and the masculine reverence for certain aspects of nature.

Harris' role as a statesman in his voyage to southern Africa and his journey to Ethiopia highlight contemporaneous racial views best encapsulated by later hunters like Frederick Courtney Selous. Though Harris required the aid of native companions for hunting, his rhetorical treatment of them revealed underlying perceptions of racial hierarchy. Scholar Michael Adas states that "the mastery of nature and overall social development frequently influenced the judgments of European... travelers", who often measured human worth upon implicit and specific racial observations.<sup>65</sup> Along those lines, Harris makes known his disdain for his Khoekhoe travelling companion, Andries Africander, whom he viewed as racially inept, calling him, "a coward, a mutineer, and a liar," cautioning

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<sup>62</sup> See Figure 6 for Harris' picture of the Sable Antelope.

<sup>63</sup> Harris, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, 125.

<sup>64</sup> Wonders, "Hunting Narratives of the Age of Empire," 279.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Adas, *Machines As the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989, 216.

the reader of “his pernicious example and rebellious conduct.”<sup>66</sup> Aside from calling most Africans he encountered savages, Harris rarely praised his paid attendants, whom he viewed as indolent, cowardly, and unskilled drunkards.<sup>67</sup> Adas notes the frustration of many travelers with what they perceived as the indolence of their native guides given their Victorian preconceptions.<sup>68</sup> In *Hunting Africa*, Thompsell shows how the early nineteenth century European hunters and explorers went from describing native hunting techniques in a neutral manner to eventually omitting them from their expeditions.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, Harris’ racial views were implicit in his narratives, yet he still chose to travel with African companions out of necessity rather than racial acceptance. With the coalescence of social Darwinism, racial hierarchy came to the fore, culminating in Selous’ racially-motivated decision to stop hiring native guides, a trend that ended with the abandonment of the practice by the end of the century.<sup>70</sup> The so-called “class-based ethos” of the hunter’s code enforced this hierarchy of European males, excluding those they deemed inferior.<sup>71</sup> Since *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1850, it can be deduced that Harris’ implicit racial views reflect a broader Victorian understanding of race.

In his introduction to *Portraits of the Game*, Harris explains why he focused on animals instead of the peoples of southern Africa. To him, nature was more engrossing, and it would defeat the purpose of his hunting journey to interact ‘unnecessarily’ with the locals. As such, he avoided “interviews with the wild

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<sup>66</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Harris, *Narrative of and Expedition into Southern Africa*, 183.

<sup>68</sup> Adas, *Machines As the Measure of Men*, 246.

<sup>69</sup> Thompsell, *Hunting Africa*, 21.

<sup>70</sup> Thompsell, 21; See Figure 1 for a visualization of this timeline and other important figures and events.

<sup>71</sup> Gillespie, “Cry Havoc?,” 38.

races of the human species . . . [in the land] . . . where the grim lion prowls monarch of all he surveys.”<sup>72</sup> Harris’s mission is one of a hunter, who needed to be free to set up camp for several days in one spot free as opposed to having more nomadic designs like the explorer.<sup>73</sup> It is important to note Harris’ paternalistic attitude, since he calls the natives “primitive children of the desert.”<sup>74</sup> For him, the idea was to explore and hunt in the wild and his interactions with native peoples were always secondary to his hunting activities. Again, his implicit racial bias against Africans is evident in that he considers them objects of study.

Harris’ *Narrative of an Expedition* served to legitimize his appointment as an emissary of the Crown whose goal was to conclude a trade agreement with King Sahla Sellasi.<sup>75</sup> Overall, this work underscored the effective nature of his self-representations as a statesman to the court of King Mzilikazi of Matabeleland.<sup>76</sup> In his second journey in the Ethiopian kingdom of Showa, Harris attempted to illustrate the compatibility of hunting and statecraft. In *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, Harris, after declining to take part in a tribal conflict, proposes instead that he kill an elephant with a singular “rifle ball,” thereby gifting two elephant tusks to the monarchs as a sign of union between the Queen of England and the King of Showa.<sup>77</sup> In essence, hunting is used as a form of statecraft, whereby the emissary of the Queen could impress a foreign court with technological marvels and hunting prowess. Harris

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<sup>72</sup> Harris, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, v.

<sup>73</sup> Thompsell, *Hunting Africa*, 42.

<sup>74</sup> Harris, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, v.

<sup>75</sup> See the letter found in the Introduction of the *Highlands of Aethiopia*.

<sup>76</sup> Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, lxiii.

<sup>77</sup> Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, 298.

demonstrates that hunters could derive authority from their skills and narratives constructed within the imperial sphere.<sup>78</sup> Harris also showed the hunter's virtue of restraint and nobility, which valued precise killing, ending the animal's life swiftly and mercifully. Ultimately, Harris' narrative highlights the political versatility of the frontier hunter, an actor akin to a 'man on the spot.'<sup>79</sup> Skill with European technology were staples of the hunter narratives, later codified into rules of action that governed the comportment of future hunters in colonial spaces.

Undoubtedly, Harris' involvement as an engineer in the proposition of the Suez railway relates directly to his imperial disposition. As a Captain of the Royal Bombay Engineers, Harris designed a railway system to transport ships across the Isthmus without discharging their cargo as a means of cutting costs.<sup>80</sup> By the means of Western technology, Harris' railway designs in 1845 sought to facilitate European expansionism by incorporating the periphery into their world system. Though his designs were not selected, these plans underscore his belief in the transformational power of European ingenuity, specifically the steam engine. By and large, the construction of the Suez Canal, completed in 1869, not only contributed to the bending of physical space to ease colonial migration but also increased participation in big game

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<sup>78</sup> Mukherjee, "Nimrods," 939.

<sup>79</sup> A man on the spot is a figure or company, such as Cecil Rhodes, who acted as an extension of the empire in local settings, often working to extend the British Empire through their actions.

<sup>80</sup> "Suez Railroad." *Dwight's American Magazine, and Family Newspaper* 1, no. 19 (14 June 1845): 303. American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society, Accessed 4 Feb. 2021. ; "Project for Transporting Laden Merchant Vessels by Railroad across the Isthmus of Suez." *Foreign Quarterly Review* [New York, NY], 35, no. 69 (1 Apr. 1845): 137. *American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society*, Accessed 4 Feb. 2021.

hunting.<sup>81</sup> Uncoincidentally, this 'shrinking of the world' facilitated the popularization of big game hunting in the 1850s which happened concurrently with the imperial expansion of the Suez Canal.

The processes of industrialization alienated the British public from nature, and anxieties about emasculation coupled with the rise of literacy created a new lucrative market for frontier-inspired literature. Hunting texts were written for, and consumed by, a Victorian public that was struggling to find its place within a rapidly globalizing world. The publication of hunter expeditions may have served to alleviate and bridge contemporary anxieties and expectations regarding the growing diaspora between the natural and urban realms of the nineteenth century. The masculine hunter protagonist symbolized themes of mastery over nature and triumph over colonial wilderness, serving as a foil for the effete lords of imperial Britain and superficially shielding Britons from the troubling uncertainties of colonial rule. In sum, the hunter is a multifaceted figure that took on various roles like the military officer, sportsman, geographer, natural scientist, and engineer.

By breaking down the big game hunter archetype into its constituent elements, they may be viewed as imperial agents, pioneering and informing later British perceptions of nature and empire. Public understandings of nature were, in large part, cultivated by a growing fascination with big game hunting, a genre that grew increasingly popular after the death of William Cornwallis Harris in 1848. As a rugged figure and adherent to the hunter's code, Harris' journeys turned novels into southern

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<sup>81</sup> Donna Brunero "Zachary Karabell, Parting the Desert: The Creation of the Suez Canal New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2004: 310. ISBN: 0-375-40883-5. (hbk.); 0-375-70812-X (pbk.)," *Itinerario* 29, no. 3 (2005): 188.

Africa in 1836-1837 and the kingdom of Showa in 1841-1843 revealed fledgling desires for the conquest of nature. The public did not just read the exploits of contemporary hunters, they also participated vicariously in their adventures along the colonial frontier. Metropolitan Britons read the narratives “with as much avidity as a romance by all sorts and conditions of man.”<sup>82</sup> The morality of the hunt facilitated the navigation of tensions inherent in Victorians’ gendered perceptions of the wild, which rendered it something to be commodified, exploited, tamed, and appropriated as an ambivalent garden into which to retreat. Simultaneously, the hunt’s narratives shaped popular conceptions and participation in empire per the genre’s explosion in popularity post-1870. However, many popular ideas about the colonial wilderness were based upon biased domestic experiences and embellished imperial narratives. While Harris failed to achieve the literary success of his contemporary Roualeyn Gordon-Cummings, his works undoubtedly informed and exacerbated Victorian sensibilities about the far-flung reaches of the British empire, a feat cultural historians have overlooked.

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<sup>82</sup> Thompsell, *Hunting Africa*, 12.



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Appendix

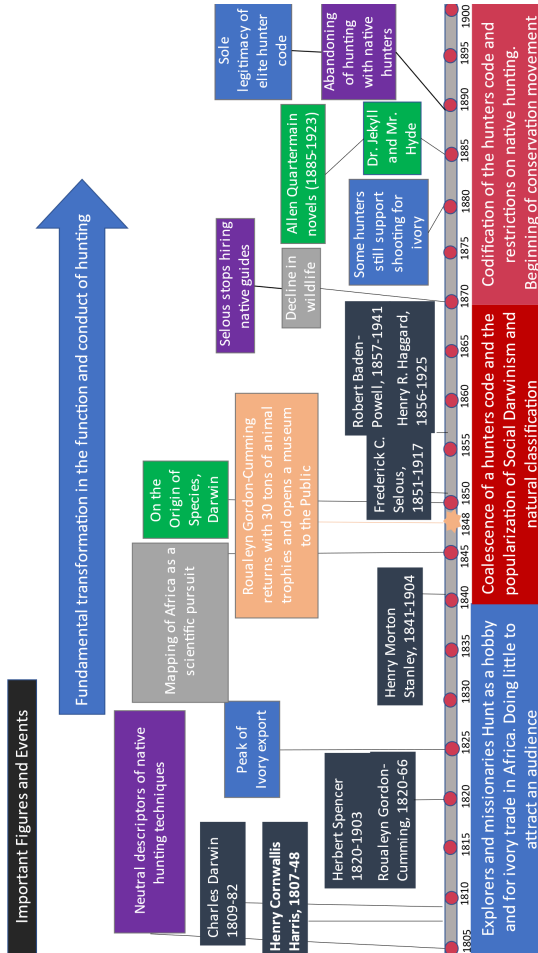


Figure 1. Timeline of Important Figures and Events. Tracing important figures, evolution of hunting function, hunting techniques, and literary works. Highlighting the pivotal moment in the popularization of big game hunting. By Aidan Elliot.

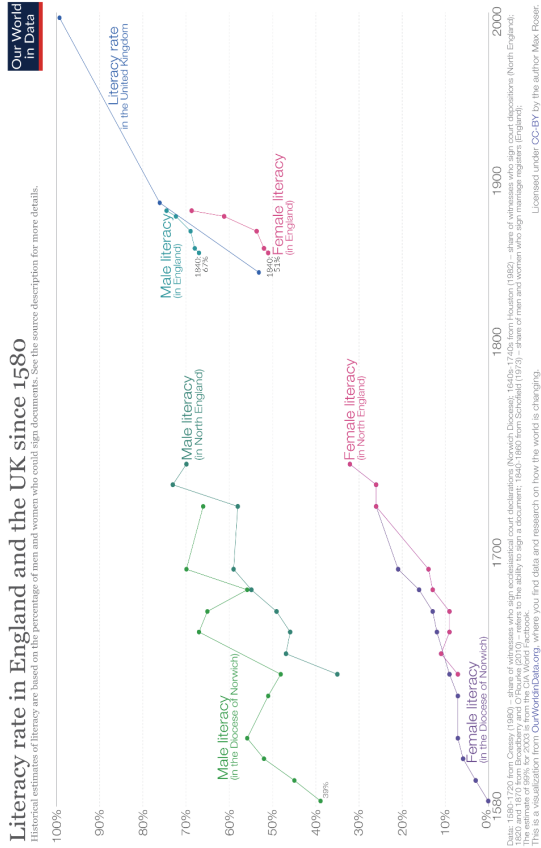


Figure 2. Literacy Rate in England and UK since 1580. From Roser, Max and Ortiz-Ospina, Esteban, "Literacy". Published online at OurWorldInData.org. 2016.

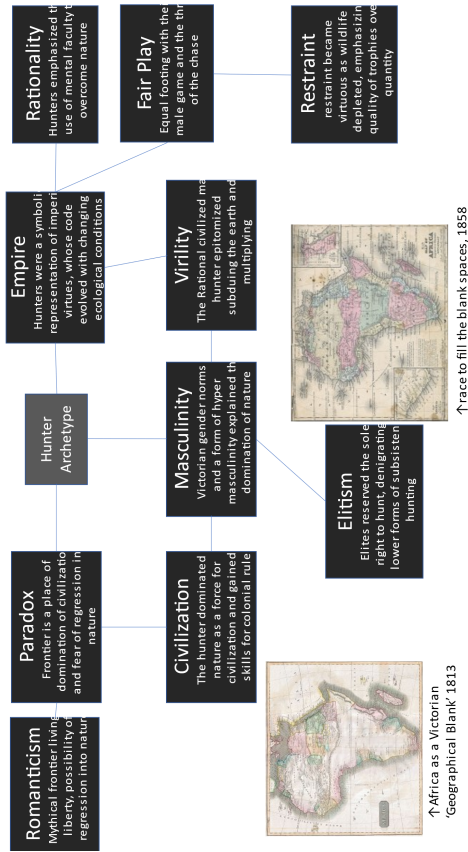


Figure 3. Visual Explanation of the Hunter Archetype. by Aidan Elliot.

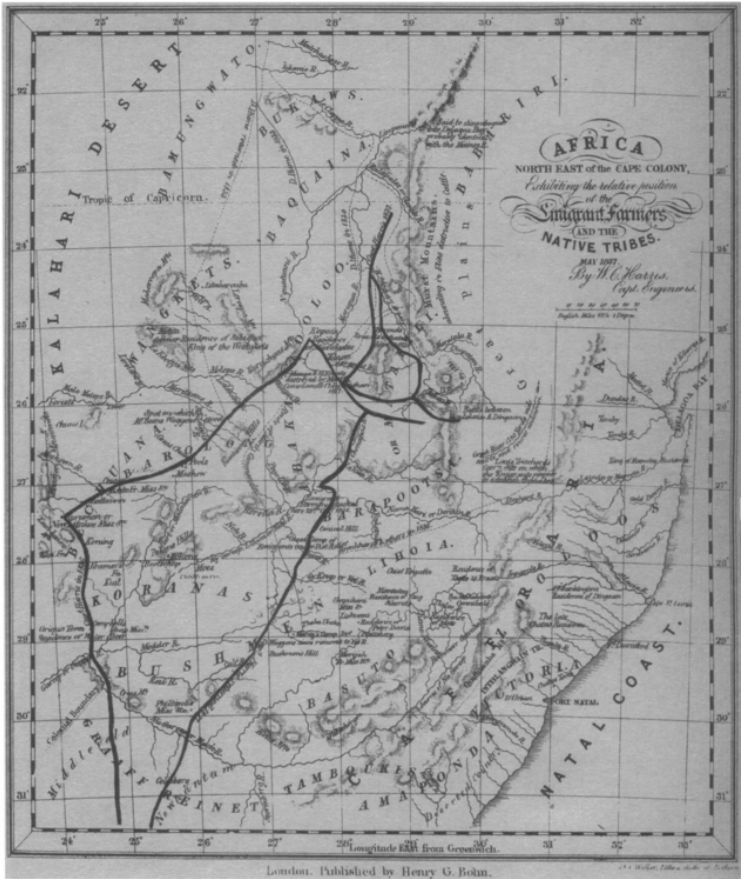


Figure 4. 'Africa, North-East of the Cape Colony, Exhibiting the relative Position of the Emigrant Farmers and the Native Tribes, May 1837' by W. C. Harris and first published in his book, *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa* (London, 1837). Harris's circuitous route into the interior in 1836-37 is marked by a continuous line. From: Etherington, "A False Emptiness," 69.

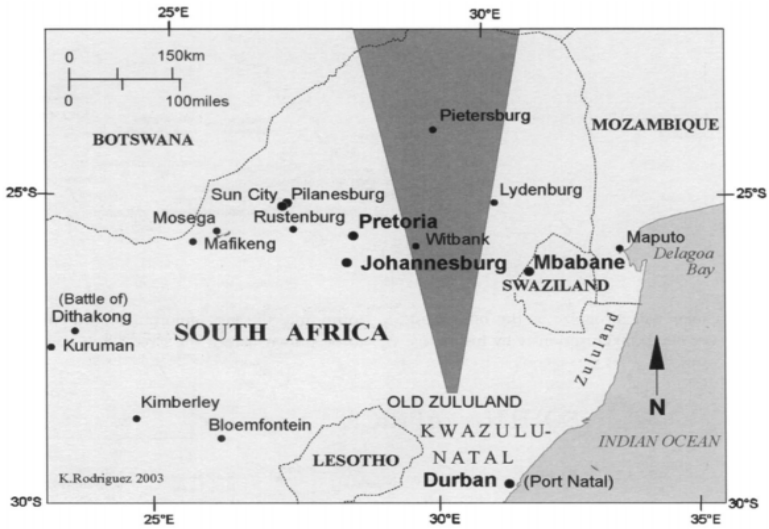


Figure 5. Map to show the triangle of land that was inadvertently excised from Harris' map through cartographical ignorance. From Etherington, "A False Emptiness," 72.





Figure 6. *Aigocerus Niger*, The Sable Antelope. From Harris, William C, "Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa." London: W Pickering Chancery Lane. 1840. 124.

« C'est la faute à qui? » : Les réponses de la presse torontoise à l'émeute de Christie Pits en 1933

Mary Howard

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Widespread disorder raged over a vast area of Toronto streets for hours last night when rioting broke out following the display of a swastika emblem on a white quilt during a baseball game in Willowvale Park.

In the disturbance which flared up like a spark among tinder, scores were injured: five were removed to hospitals. Lead pipes, baseball bats, broom-handles and clubs were freely used. Police at times were almost overwhelmed or outnumbered; reserves were called out and batons were drawn...

The disturbance became largely racial in character, bands of Gentiles and of Jews apparently taking up opposing sides in the battle...More than 8000 persons were involved or enmeshed in the disturbances shortly after they begun<sup>1</sup>.

- *The Toronto Mail and Empire*, 17 août 1933

### Introduction

Le *Toronto Mail and Empire* publièrent cet éditorial le matin du 17 août 1933, le lendemain de la pire émeute raciale de l'histoire canadienne. La nuit du 16 août 1933, des milliers de

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<sup>1</sup> « Thousands Caught up in Park Melee Gangs Wielding Lead Pipes and Bats Sweep Streets, Bludgeoning Victims », *The Mail and Empire*, 17 août 1933.

jeunes juifs et de jeunes chrétiens se battirent dans les rues de Toronto en réaction au déploiement d'un drapeau à croix gammée; le drapeau en question fut affiché par un spectateur d'un match de baseball amateur au parc Willowvale (aussi connu sous le nom « Christie Pits »), résultant en de fortes réactions de la part des spectateurs juifs. Cet incident n'était que le plus récent des nombreuses représentations de la croix gammée en août 1933. Au début du mois, une organisation à croix gammée (connue sous le nom de Swastika Club) avait été formée en vue de protéger les plages de Toronto et de les préserver de ceux qu'ils appelaient « les indésirables<sup>2</sup> ». La perception du symbole de la croix gammée de la communauté juive de Toronto étant déjà inextricablement liée à Hitler et à ses crimes antisémites en Allemagne, l'apparition de ce symbole dans leur communauté contribua à l'accumulation d'un sentiment de colère qui aboutit à l'émeute du 16 août. Cela étant dit, les Juifs n'étaient pas les seuls à avoir eu des réactions fortes à la croix gammée; en fait, tout le monde avait une opinion sur les événements d'août 1933, et ces opinions furent principalement formées par les journaux qu'ils lisaient.

Toronto avait quatre grands journaux à l'époque : *The Star*, *The Evening Telegram*, *The Globe*, et *The Mail and Empire*. *The Globe* et *The Mail and Empire* étaient des journaux du matin tandis que *The Star* et *The Evening Telegram* étaient publiés le soir. Chacun avait sa propre histoire et sa propre idéologie qui éclairèrent la façon dont ils conceptualisent l'émeute et ses suites. Dans les articles et les éditoriaux de la semaine du 17 au 24 août 1933, ces journaux rapportèrent les faits de l'émeute et firent part à leur lectorat de leurs avis concernant ceux qu'ils en tenaient

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<sup>2</sup> Cyril Levitt et William Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 54.

responsables. Après avoir étudié systématiquement ces quatre journaux ainsi que *Le Devoir* et *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle* de Montréal, nous avons cerné quatre grands coupables accusés dans la presse : les voyous, les communistes, la police, et l'immigration. Les raisons pour lesquelles les journaux ont ciblé ces groupes témoignent non seulement de leurs propres idéologies et opinions sur l'événement, mais éclairent également la vie politique et sociale à Toronto dans les années 1930 et les tensions qui y régnaient.

### **L'antisémitisme au Canada: un bref aperçu historique**

Pour comprendre l'émeute de Christie Pits, il faut d'abord comprendre le contexte dans lequel évolua la communauté juive au Canada. Malheureusement, on ne peut pas le faire sans retracer l'histoire de l'antisémitisme, qui est inextricablement lié à l'histoire des Juifs du monde entier, y compris le Canada. Le mot « sémite » n'a été inventé qu'au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle – par un allemand au nom de Wilhelm Marr – mais le sentiment anti-juif existait déjà depuis des millénaires<sup>3</sup>. Après la montée au pouvoir du christianisme au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, les Juifs connurent une persécution particulière. Comme les chrétiens considéraient que Jésus était Dieu, et que les Juifs étaient coupables de l'avoir tué, ils les accusaient de déicide – un crime incompréhensible<sup>4</sup>. À cause de ce crime, les Juifs furent maltraités par leurs voisins chrétiens tout au long du Moyen Âge et de l'époque moderne. Ils furent exilés des royaumes chrétiens et subirent régulièrement des attaques violentes<sup>5</sup>. Ces attaques étaient connues sous le nom de

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<sup>3</sup> Ira Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Robinson, 15.

« pogroms », un autre terme inventé au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, mais qui faisait référence à la pratique de « dévaster ou démolir violemment », visant principalement des communautés juives<sup>6</sup>. Ces pogroms étaient surtout motivés par des perceptions illusoire que les chrétiens avaient des Juifs. En particulier, les idées selon lesquelles les Juifs « profanaient l'hostie<sup>7</sup> » et utilisaient le sang d'enfants chrétiens dans leurs rituels provoquèrent une fureur énorme chez les chrétiens qui motivait leur violence à l'égard des Juifs<sup>8</sup>.

Avec la modernité est venue l'obsession des « races » - l'idée pseudo-scientifique que certaines ethnies seraient supérieures à d'autres. Pour les adeptes de cette croyance, les Juifs faisaient partie des races « inférieures », menaçant la société par leur nature parasitique en même temps qu'ils complotaient discrètement pour obtenir le pouvoir mondial<sup>9</sup>. La publication en 1904 d'un pamphlet extrêmement antisémite, *Les Protocoles des Anciens de Sion*, attisa les flammes de cette haine en exploitant les anciennes craintes chrétiennes ainsi que la peur que les Juifs contrôlèrent les finances du monde<sup>10</sup>.

Bien que la plupart de ces idées racistes étaient originaires d'Europe, elles imprégnèrent également la conscience canadienne. Les premiers Juifs arrivèrent au Canada - encore des

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<sup>6</sup> « Les Pogroms », *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, [<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/fr/article/pogroms>] (page consultée le 10 décembre 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Étant donné que les chrétiens du Moyen Âge croyaient que le pain et le vin utilisés lors de la communion étaient littéralement le corps et le sang de Jésus, l'accusation de « profaner l'hôte » voulait que les Juifs sachent que c'était vrai et qu'ils voulaient s'en venger.

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism*, 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, 40; Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 131, 141, 304.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews: Conspiracy, Anti-Semitism, and the Protocols of Zion* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 50.

colonies britanniques - au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>11</sup>. La première congrégation juive s'établit à Montréal en 1768, et tenta de s'intégrer à ses voisins britanniques<sup>12</sup>. Malgré le fait que leur population dans le Canada-Ouest n'était que d'environ une centaine de personnes, les Juifs ouvrirent la première synagogue à Toronto en 1845<sup>13</sup>. Au cours des dernières décennies du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la population juive au Canada augmenta de manière significative, passant de 2 443 en 1881, 6 501 en 1891 et 16 401 en 1901. D'ici 1920, on comptait déjà plus de 100 000 Juifs au Canada<sup>14</sup>. Ils représentaient un petit pourcentage de la population canadienne, mais leur taux d'immigration au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle démontre la popularité du Canada comme destination de l'immigration juive à l'époque.

La présence d'une communauté juive grandissante au Canada ne signifiait cependant pas leur popularité, ou même leur tolérance. Malgré le besoin de colons dans l'Ouest canadien, le gouvernement n'était pas favorable à l'installation de communautés juives au Canada. Le colon canadien idéal était un fermier britannique vivant dans une région rurale, et comme les Juifs n'étaient généralement pas des fermiers et vivaient habituellement dans des zones urbaines, ils n'étaient pas du tout recherchés<sup>15</sup>. Ce raisonnement économique était ainsi redoublé du fort préjudice des Canadiens à l'égard des Juifs, qu'ils considéraient comme inassimilables et donc indésirables<sup>16</sup>. Les

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<sup>11</sup> David S. Koffman, *No Better Home?: Jews, Canada, and the Sense of Belonging* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 83.

<sup>12</sup> Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Louis Rosenberg et Morton Weinfeld, *Canada's Jews : A Social and Economic Study of Jews Canada in the 1930s*(Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Rosenberg et Weinfeld, *Canada's Jews*, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism*, 35-36.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism*, 38.

Juifs immigrèrent malgré tout, et s'établirent dans des grandes villes comme Montréal, Toronto, et Winnipeg<sup>17</sup>. La compréhension que les Juifs avaient de leur statut au sein de la société canadienne de l'époque résulta en une réponse ambivalente de la part de la communauté juive existante face à l'immigration juive croissante dans les villes canadiennes: « The well-established Jews in those communities understood that, justly or unjustly, they too would be judged by the conduct and mores of these new immigrants<sup>18</sup> ».

Au fil du temps, ces nouveaux immigrants commencèrent à s'intégrer aussi, malgré l'antisémitisme rampant dans tous les aspects de la société canadienne. Les enfants juifs n'avaient pas leurs propres écoles et donc étudiaient souvent dans des écoles protestantes. Les Canadiens chrétiens ne voulaient pas de Juifs dans leurs écoles, mais ne considéraient pas que les Juifs avaient le droit d'avoir leur propre système d'éducation, de sorte que les tensions persistaient<sup>19</sup>. Un rapport du congrès juif canadien en 1937 indiquait que les Juifs étaient interdits l'accès aux hôtels, aux plages, et aux parcs, et que la discrimination contre les Juifs dans les domaines du logement et de l'emploi s'aggravait<sup>20</sup>. Outre cette violence structurelle, les Juifs subissaient aussi des attaques violentes, en particulier à Pâques. Le poète juif Irving Layton a écrit : « Around Easter...something seemed to happen to the gentiles. They took it as a cue to come and beat up on the Jews<sup>21</sup> ». Malgré toute cette discrimination, les Canadiens juifs ont essayé d'assimiler et de devenir de bons membres de la société canadienne. Cependant, les Juifs au Canada seraient bientôt

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<sup>17</sup> Robinson, 37.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> Robinson, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, 68.

<sup>21</sup> Cité dans Joe King, *From the Ghetto to the Main: The Story of the Jews of Montreal*(Montreal: Montreal Jewish Publication Company, 2001), 198.

confrontés par une autre expression d'antisémitisme - la croix gammée.

### **L'avant-veille de l'émeute: les « Swastika Clubs »**

La croix gammée, le symbole ayant mené à l'émeute au parc Willowvale le 16 août 1933, fut adopté comme symbole du parti nazi en Allemagne<sup>22</sup>. Le chef du parti était Adolf Hitler, arrivé au pouvoir en Allemagne en 1933. En raison des opinions et politiques antisémites et racistes d'Hitler et des nazis, la croix gammée fut rapidement associé au projet politique nazi, représentant un symbole de haine contre les Juifs. La communauté juive au Canada suivait la situation en Allemagne de très près, et la presse yiddish à Toronto, *Der Yiddisher Zhurnal*, publia des articles et des éditoriaux sur Hitler et les nazis avant même qu'Hitler ne devienne chancelier d'Allemagne<sup>23</sup>. Les autres journaux torontois commencèrent à s'intéresser à Hitler après le 30 janvier, date de son arrivée au pouvoir. Pourtant, malgré le fait que les journaux anglophones rapportèrent les faits de la situation politique en Allemagne, le ton du *Der Yiddisher Zhurnal* lorsqu'il adressait le contexte allemand était plus sinistre: la publication avertissait son lectorat d'un complot visant à exterminer les juifs d'Allemagne soutenus par Hitler et Goebbels<sup>24</sup>. Au début de 1933, les rapports sur les crimes contre les juifs en Allemagne devinrent de plus en plus fréquents, même dans les journaux anglophones. Le 27 mars, *The Evening Telegram* et *The Toronto Star* rapportèrent tous les deux sur l'expulsion des Juifs

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<sup>22</sup> « The History of the Swastika », *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, [<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/history-of-the-swastika>] (page consultée le 15 février 2022).

<sup>23</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 34-35.

<sup>24</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 36.



de la vie publique en Allemagne<sup>25</sup>. Ces reportages continuèrent tout au long du printemps et de l'été 1933. Ils montrent clairement que le public canadien ainsi que les Canadiens juifs auraient eu accès à de l'information concernant ce qui se passait en Allemagne et plus spécifiquement, qui Hitler était, ce qu'il planifiait, et ce que la croix gammée représentait.

Cela étant dit, l'apparition de la croix gammée à Toronto provoqua de vives réactions chez les citoyens de la ville, en particulier chez les Juifs. Le 1<sup>er</sup> août, une croix gammée apparut au club-house de Balmy Beach<sup>26</sup>. La même journée, la presse torontoise rapportait qu'une nouvelle organisation à croix gammée ( ou Swastika Club) s'était formée en vue de préserver les plages des personnes « indésirables<sup>27</sup> ». L'organisation considérait ces individus comme des « visiteurs désagréables », salissant les plages au point où il fallu 13 hommes pour les nettoyer le lundi matin<sup>28</sup>. Bien que les Juifs ne furent pas explicitement mentionnés dans ces plaintes, l'antisémitisme du club à croix gammée était évident, d'abord dans le choix de son symbole, mais aussi dans ce que ses sympathisants ont décidé d'en faire. Le soir du 1<sup>er</sup> août, un groupe d'environ 100 jeunes hommes marchait sur la promenade, près de l'endroit où la croix gammée avait été trouvée ce même matin, en chantant une chanson anti-juive :

O give me a home, where the Gentiles may roam,  
Where the Jews are not rampant all day;  
Where seldom is heard a loud Yiddish word  
And the Gentiles are free all the day<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 58.

<sup>27</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 54-55.

<sup>28</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 57.

<sup>29</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 58.

Alors que les crimes d'Hitler étaient connus au Canada - et la croix gammée était clairement son symbole - entre 60 et 70 jeunes juifs sont arrivés à la plage le soir du 1 août. Toutes les croix gammées avaient été retirées et ils n'ont pas rencontré les jeunes hommes qui étaient là plus tôt. Les membres du Balmy Beach Canoe Club se sont sentis mal à l'aise et ont appelé la police qui a ordonné aux Juifs de retourner chez eux. Puisque les Juifs ne rencontrèrent pas les membres du club à croix gammée ni la croix gammée, il n'y eut aucune violence ce soir-là<sup>30</sup>.

Au cours des jours suivants, les objectifs du club à la croix gammée ainsi que la réaction du public se clarifièrent. Dans une lettre ouverte, le club déclara que leurs « members will appear on the beaches, boardwalk, and in...parks wearing a nickel-plated badge with a swastika thereon. They will simply wear the emblem. There will be no parades or demonstrations. No speeches will be made. We feel that the emblem will have a desired effect<sup>31</sup> ». Le club indiquait clairement qu'il utilisait la croix gammée parce qu'elle aurait l'effet désiré, c'est-à-dire l'absence des Juifs sur les plages. La lettre continuait en disant que leurs actions étaient légales, une opinion fortement débattue dans la presse. *The Toronto Telegram* soutena le club, en disant que ses membres avaient le droit de se réunir tant qu'ils n'enfreignaient pas la loi<sup>32</sup>. Le maire de Toronto, William Stewart, ne voulait aucune violence et essaya donc de convaincre les porteurs de la croix gammée de laisser tomber leur symbole. Pourtant, il n'y avait aucune loi qui l'interdisait, et le club ignora donc ses demandes<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 59.

<sup>31</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 61.

<sup>32</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 85.

<sup>33</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 88-90.

Les tensions persistèrent. Le 6 août, elles étaient si élevées qu'une émeute éclata presque. Le 13 août, après une conférence entre le maire, quelques représentants du club à la croix gammée, la police, et d'autres personnes concernées, le club fut forcé de laisser tomber son symbole, mais pas ses objectifs.<sup>34</sup> Une association pour la protection des plages, le « Beaches Protective Association » se forma, et « by 13 August, it appeared that the Jewish community would hence-forth be spared the indignity of witnessing the swastika emblem at the Beaches<sup>35</sup> ».

En vérité, le pire était encore à venir. Malgré le changement de symbole d'ancien « Swastika Club », les tensions restaient hautes. Les Juifs se sentaient menacés par la croix gammée, un symbole de haine à leur encontre. Lorsque'elle fut érigée à un match de baseball le 16 août, les tensions ont finalement débordé, menant à l'émeute.

## L'émeute

Ce soir-là, des milliers de personnes se rassemblèrent au parc Willowvale pour assister à un match de baseball entre une équipe chrétienne, St. Peter's, et une équipe juive, Harbord. Ces deux équipes s'étaient affrontées le lundi précédent, où les supporters de St Peter's avaient affiché une croix gammée<sup>36</sup>. Au début du match de 16 août, il y eut une petite explosion de violence, et puis, « a second fracas, indicative of what was to follow, occurred soon after<sup>37</sup> ». Les cris de « Heil Hitler » retentirent d'un groupe de « Willowvale Swastikas » et des centaines des jeunes juifs leur ordonnèrent de se taire. Au même

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<sup>34</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 99.

<sup>35</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 100.

<sup>36</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Six Hours of Rioting Follows Hiter Shout Scores Hurt, Two Held », 17 août 1933.

<sup>37</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Six Hours of Rioting Follows Hiter Shout Scores Hurt, Two Held ».

moment, un spectateur fut attaqué par un tuyau en plomb scié. *The Star* rapporta que « Other spectators, seeing the attack, rushed. At the same time, the Jewish section flocked to the fight. Batons, lead pipes and other weapons swung freely. The game was stopped, hundreds left the Pit league play-off game and gathered around the battling mobs<sup>38</sup> ». Après l'arrivée des policiers, les violences se calmèrent, du moins jusqu'à la fin du match<sup>39</sup>.

Après la victoire de St Peter's, une bannière affichant la croix gammée fut déployée dans le parc. De jeunes juifs partirent à la poursuite du drapeau le long du parc et chassèrent les coupables dans les rues voisines<sup>40</sup>. La foule qui avait assisté au match les suivirent, et quelques minutes plus tard, environ 10 000 personnes envahirent les alentours du parc<sup>41</sup>. À ce moment apparurent manches à balai, massues, et tuyaux en plomb sciés desquels s'arma la foule.. La bataille pour la croix gammée se poursuivit, enfreignant du coup la circulation dans les environs. La police arriva finalement, mais les officiers ne réussirent pas à contrôler la foule<sup>42</sup>. À 22h30, des camions remplis de Juifs se joignirent à l'émeute après avoir entendu la (fausse) rumeur selon laquelle un jeune juif avait été tué<sup>43</sup>. À ce point, la violence c'était répandue; plusieurs témoins furent blessés par des participants aveuglés par la peur et la colère de sorte que l'un

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<sup>38</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Six Hours of Rioting Follows Hiter Shout Scores Hurt, Two Held ».

<sup>39</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Six Hours of Rioting Follows Hiter Shout Scores Hurt, Two Held ».

<sup>40</sup> *Globe and Mail* « Hail Hitler is Youth's Cry: City is in Turmoil », 17 août 1933.

<sup>41</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Six Hours of Rioting Follows Hiter Shout Scores Hurt, Two Held ».

<sup>42</sup> *Toronto Star* « Six Hours of Rioting Follows Hiter Shout Scores Hurt, Two Held ».

<sup>43</sup> *Mail and Empire* « Thousands Caught up in Park Melee Gangs Wielding Lead Pipes and Bats Sweep Streets, Bludgeoning Victims », 17 août 1933.

d'entre eux rapporta: « if you saw a form loom in front of you, why you just hit at it, regardless of whether it was friend or foe<sup>44</sup> ». Finalement, à 1h30 du matin, le parc et ses alentours étaient presque déserts. Au moins quatre personnes furent transportés à l'hôpital, avec des dizaines d'autres blessées.<sup>45</sup>

Le lendemain matin, tous les grands journaux torontois avaient déjà une opinion sur ce qu'ils désignaient comme « the worst [fracas] in the history of the park<sup>46</sup> ». Toutes ces opinions sur les violences et les responsables mettent en évidence les idéologies de ces publications et de leur lectorat et éclairent la vie politique et sociale à Toronto dans les années 1930 et les tensions qui y régnaient.

## La réponse des journaux

### Le *Toronto Star*

Le *Star*, fondé en 1892, était le journal torontois le plus important, et plus libéral dans ses opinions. Sous la direction de son président Joseph Atkinson, pendant les années 1930, *The Star* s'affirmait comme défenseur de la liberté d'expression des citoyens, et était plus favorable aux immigrants que d'autres journaux<sup>47</sup>. Ces positions idéologiques - en ce qui a trait à des enjeux politiques et sociaux - sont discernables dans les articles et les éditoriaux du *Star*, et exemplifient à quel point l'idéologie d'une publication peut influencer le contenu de ses pages.

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<sup>44</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Six Hours of Rioting Follows Hiter Shout Scores Hurt, Two Held ».

<sup>45</sup> *Toronto Star* « Many Are Injured in Park Rioting », 17 août 1933.

<sup>46</sup> *Toronto Star* « Six Hours of Rioting Follows Hiter Shout Scores Hurt, Two Held ».

<sup>47</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 33; Robert Bothwell, « Toronto Star », *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historica Canada, 21 July 2009

[<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/toronto-star>] (page consultée le 10 décembre 2021).

D'après le titre du 17 août, « Draper Admits Receiving Riot Warning », il est clair que *The Star* tenait comme responsable de l'émeute la police. Le brigadier-général Dennis Draper était le chef de la police torontoise. Dans les jours qui ont suivi l'émeute, *The Star* condamna fortement Draper pour ne pas en avoir fait assez pour éviter les violences. La une du 17 août était dédiée à l'émeute, et informait le lectorat des détails du contexte : le déroulement des escarmouches durant le match, l'émeute, ainsi que les blessés, et ce, dans un ton plus ou moins neutre. Cela étant dit, un autre article sur la première page le 17 août intitulé « Did Not Believe It Was Serious [Draper] Tells Board » critiquait aussi le manque de réaction de la part de la police. Selon le rapport du *Star*, Draper avait été averti que ce match de baseball en particulier nécessiterait plus d'attention policière, mais il ne fit rien de cette information. En réponse à ces accusations, Draper avait cependant nié avoir eu connaissance préalable d'une émeute<sup>48</sup>. Dans leur investigation, le conseil des commissaires de police lui posa deux questions : comment pensait-il prévenir la violence dans les parcs de Toronto et « why can so many police be marshalled for the suppression of Communists and not the Swastika Clubs?<sup>49</sup> » Draper ne donna de réponse à aucune de ces questions.

La question sur les communistes faisait référence à un incident qui était survenu la même nuit que l'émeute. L'éditorial du 18 août en détailla les événements : « At Trinity Park where someone wanted to make a speech there was a strong force of police on Wednesday Night – the place was garrisoned to prevent speaking<sup>50</sup> ». Ces restrictions à la liberté d'expression étaient fréquentes à l'époque. La peur du communisme avait fait

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<sup>48</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Did Not Believe It Was Serious He Tells Board », 17 août 1933.

<sup>49</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Did Not Believe It Was Serious He Tells Board ».

<sup>50</sup> *Toronto Star*, « In Two Parks », 18 août 1933.

en sorte que la police avait le droit d’user de la force pour disperser des réunions qu’elle suspectait de répandre des idées dites « séditieuses<sup>51</sup>». *The Star*, en raison de ses tendances libérales, était le seul journal à défendre la liberté d’expression à Toronto tandis que les autres soutenaient la police à des degrés divers<sup>52</sup>. L’éditorialiste indiqua ainsi qu’il y avait au moins 24 policiers au parc Trinity pour surveiller un socialiste tandis qu’au parc Willowvale, où une émeute raciale avait éclaté, il y avait seulement six. Dans l’article du 18 août « Demand Police Board Call on Chief Draper to Resign His Office », *The Star* rapporta les paroles d’un capitaine Philpott, chef de la Fédération du Commonwealth Coopératif (F.C.C), qui critiqua vivement cette hypocrisie. Philpott condamna les actions de « Draper and his Cossacks<sup>53</sup> » au parc Trinity, et affirma que la F.C.C. soutenait la liberté d’expression ainsi que l’égalité des races. Les mots les plus forts sont venus au tout début de son discours : « Chief Draper is a man who is totally and utterly incapable of holding down his job<sup>54</sup> ». Clairement, Philpott croyait que Draper était responsable de l’émeute, et l’impression de ses paroles dans le journal ainsi que l’éditorial du même jour montre que *The Star* était d’accord.

Contrairement à Philpott, *The Star* condamnait aussi les voyous. Dans l’article « Hoodlum Street Gang Attacks Young Jew », l’auteur décrivait la violence et la peur perpétrées par ces jeunes voyous. La nuit après l’émeute, ce groupe, connu sous le nom de « Pit Gang », « roamed the slopes of the park, openly flourishing pieces of metal pipe, chains, wired broom handles,

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<sup>51</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 33.

<sup>53</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Demand Police Board Call on Chief Draper to Resign His Office », 18 août 1933.

<sup>54</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Demand Police Board Call on Chief Draper to Resign His Office ».

and even rockers from chairs<sup>55</sup> ». Ces individus furent décrit comme « terrorisant les résidents juifs » et agressèrent un jeune homme juif avec un tuyau en fer<sup>56</sup>. Le propriétaire d'une entreprise locale confirma la présence du « Pit Gang » et affirma qu'ils se rassemblaient toutes les nuits au parc<sup>57</sup>. Ces types de gangs étaient communs à l'époque, la Grande Dépression ayant fait en sorte que beaucoup de jeunes hommes n'avaient pas de travail et trouvèrent donc d'autres façons de s'occuper<sup>58</sup>.

*The Star* rapporta aussi sur les gangs juifs qui étaient présents à l'émeute. C'était le seul journal chrétien à examiner le côté juif en détail, et il les approcha avec plus de sympathie que le « Pit Gang ». Dans l'article « "Die With Boots On!" Cry of Incensed Toronto Jews », *The Star* examina les raisons qui avaient mené à la formation de ces gangs, soit pour combattre le racisme et l'antisémitisme auxquels ils faisaient face<sup>59</sup>. Selon l'article, ce gang utilisait la violence exclusivement en réaction face à cet antisémitisme, et cite un source proche de ces gangs qui constatait que leur volonté de se défendre venait de leur éducation britannique qui les enseignaient de ne jamais abandonner sans se battre. L'éditorial était plus balancé à l'égard des deux côtés: « The swastika movement, or rather the hoodlums who use this emblem for the purpose of giving offense to the Jews of the city must be looked after...At the same time the young Jews who muster in force and march to certain places where they hope to meet with trouble must be looked after too<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Hoodlum Street Gang Attacks Young Jew », 18 août 1933.

<sup>56</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Hoodlum Street Gang Attacks Young Jew ».

<sup>57</sup> *Toronto Star*, « "Die With Boots On!" Cry of Incensed Toronto Jews », 19 août 1933.

<sup>58</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 154.

<sup>59</sup> *Toronto Star*, « "Die With Boots On!" Cry of Incensed Toronto Jews ».

<sup>60</sup> *Toronto Star*, « In Two Parks ».



». À la fin de l'éditorial, l'auteur réaffirma que la ville de Toronto dénonçait expressément les émeutes raciales.

La réponse du *Star* nous informe sur ceux qu'ils tenaient responsables de l'émeute, ainsi que sur les tensions politiques et sociales de l'époque. La critique de Draper et de la police par *The Star* ne s'explique pas seulement par l'émeute elle-même, mais aussi par la suppression de la liberté d'expression que supportait la police, un problème courant dans les années 1930. Il est clair que la peur du communisme était un élément important du climat social de l'époque qui contribua même à la réponse de la police à l'émeute. Pour *The Toronto Star*, les jeunes voyous qui cherchaient la violence devaient être tenus responsables de l'émeute, mais Draper et la police étaient incontestablement en faute pour ne pas avoir fait assez pour la prévenir, ainsi que pour leur persécution de la liberté d'expression des citoyens de Toronto.

### **Le *Toronto Telegram***

Le principal rival et l'opposé idéologique du *Star* était le *Toronto Telegram*, fondé en 1876 par John Ross Robertson<sup>61</sup>. Le *Telegram* était un journal très conservateur qui était ouvertement anticomunisme, raciste, et xénophobe. Il voulait promouvoir la connexion britannique de Toronto et était donc très proche des positions de l'Ordre d'Orange, une organisation britannique protestante<sup>62</sup>. Dès les articles du 17 août, les positions et opinions du *Telegram* étaient très claires : l'émeute était un complot communiste organisé par des Juifs violents. En fait, le titre du 17 août, « Report Gunmen Here to Slay Swazis » n'avait rien à voir à

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<sup>61</sup> P. Rutherford, « *Paper Tyrant: John Ross Robertson of the Toronto Telegram* by Ron Poulton (review) », *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 55 no. 1 (March 1974), 91.

<sup>62</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 33.

l'émeute elle-même, mais faisait référence à une rumeur selon laquelle quelques juifs américains étaient venus pour tuer les chefs du club à croix gammée, ce qui n'a été jamais prouvé<sup>63</sup>. Les deux articles principaux sur l'émeute étaient intitulés : « Communists Incited Riot, Police Authority States » et « Jewish Toughs Began Trouble Says Witness<sup>64</sup> ». Ces articles accusaient les communistes et les Juifs d'avoir déclenché la violence. Le premier article commençait avec la phrase « The riot that last night sent Gentile and Jew at each other's throats in Willowvale Park was incited indirectly by young communists acting under the guise of the swastika banner, according to a police authority<sup>65</sup> ». Le *Star* réfuta cette affirmation en rapportant le nom d'un jeune chrétien arrêté avec de la peinture sur ses doigts<sup>66</sup>, ce qui démontra la paranoïa du *Telegram* à l'égard des communistes..

L'article « Jewish Toughs Began Trouble Says Witness » constatait que c'étaient les Juifs violents, et non pas la croix gammée, qui avait réellement engendré l'émeute. Selon un témoin, même avant le début du match, quelques jeunes hommes juifs avaient frappé un jeune chrétien après qu'il aurait fait une remarque sur Hitler. Le « Pit Gang » intervint pour sauver cet homme « innocent<sup>67</sup> ». Le reste de l'article suivit la même logique. Les Juifs auraient déclenché la violence et les chrétiens ne pouvaient s'empêcher de répondre:« we have to protect ourselves<sup>68</sup> ». Pourtant, l'article ne voulait pas que tous les Juifs soient

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<sup>63</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Claim Armed U.S. Thugs Seeking Lives of Swazis Blocked by Jewish Heads », 17 août 1933.

<sup>64</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Communists Incited Riot, Police Authority States », 17 août 1933; *Toronto Telegram*, « Jewish Toughs Began Trouble Says Witness », 17 août 1933.

<sup>65</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Communists Incited Riot, Police Authority States ».

<sup>66</sup> *Toronto Star*, « Police Get Youths Painting Nazi Sign », 17 août 1933.

<sup>67</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Jewish Toughs Began Trouble Says Witness », 17 août 1933.

<sup>68</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Jewish Toughs Began Trouble Says Witness ».

tenus pour responsables, mais seulement les jeunes voyous juifs qui avait causé le fracas<sup>69</sup>.

Alors que le *Star* accusait la police d'avoir laissé éclater l'émeute, le *Telegram* sympathisait avec celle-ci. Un article de 17 août affirmait que « police had been expecting trouble at the park [for days] and at the time the battle broke out an unusually large number of mounted men and constables were stationed nearby, but they were almost helpless to cope with the mob<sup>70</sup> ». Puisque le *Telegram* était conservateur, sa protection des institutions comme la police n'est pas surprenante, mais est un contraste frappant avec le reportage du *Star*.

Au cours des jours suivants, le *Telegram* apporta quelques corrections à ses reportages, y compris à l'une de ses sources qui affirma qu'il n'avait jamais dit que la violence avait *entièrement* été engendrée par des voyous juifs<sup>71</sup>, mais les coupables restèrent les mêmes. L'article « Card Swastika Raises Smiles », publié le 18 août, expliqua ce que le *Telegram* pensait de la croix gammée qui avait incité toute cette violence. Le court article rapporta qu'une croix gammée avait été montrée à l'hôtel de ville et qu'elle n'avait pas provoqué d'émeute<sup>72</sup>. Bien que le *Telegram* n'ait pas utilisé ou explicitement endossé le symbole lui-même, son attitude nonchalante à son égard montre qu'il ne le prenait certainement pas au sérieux comme catalyste de l'émeute du 16 août.

Dans l'éditorial du même jour, l'éditorialiste concédait comment la croix gammée était ressentie par la communauté juive, mais que cela ne leur donnait pas le droit d'attaquer ceux

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<sup>69</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Jewish Toughs Began Trouble Says Witness ».

<sup>70</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Communists Incited Riot, Police Authority States ».

<sup>71</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Boy Attacked on Streets but Outbreak Averted », 18 août 1933.

<sup>72</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Card Swastika Raises Smiles Telegram », 18 août 1933.

qui la portaient<sup>73</sup>. Il condamna la violence utilisée par les voyous juifs et conseilla aux Juifs qu'il valait mieux laisser tomber l'enjeu de la croix gammée. « They are, after all, entitled to their opinions, » écrit-il, « and if wearing the emblem is not illegal, it cannot be interfered with<sup>74</sup>. » Il poursuivit en affirmant que même si la croix gammée était illégale, seule la police aurait le droit d'agir: « private citizens have not the right to use force to effect its [la croix gammée] suppression or to punish its wearers<sup>75</sup>. » L'éditorial ne mentionnait pas les communistes, et était beaucoup plus généreux envers les Juifs en général, en blâmant seulement ceux qui avaient utilisé la violence et non pas toute la population juive. Cependant, *The Telegram* n'a jamais accusé les jeunes chrétiens d'être en faute. Tous les autres journaux utilisèrent leurs éditoriaux pour condamner les voyous *de chaque côté*, mais *The Telegram*, en défendant la liberté de porter la croix gammée et ne croyant donc pas que les porteurs étaient coupables, condamnait exclusivement les Juifs.

Pour *The Telegram*, les voyous juifs violents étaient responsables de l'émeute. La peur du communisme était tellement forte qu'il pensait que les communistes étaient derrière les attaques, mais cela ne pouvait pas être confirmé. Ce qui était clair selon *The Telegram*, c'était que les Juifs violents se firent justice eux-mêmes et attaquèrent des citoyens britanniques innocents, et qu'ils devaient être traduits en justice. L'éditorial termina de la même manière que celui du *Star* : « race riots are easily incited but difficult to put down. The ill-feeling engendered harms all sections of the community. » Libéraux ou

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<sup>73</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Swastika Attack No Excuse for Violent Attack on Wearers », 18 août 1933.

<sup>74</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Swastika Attack No Excuse for Violent Attack on Wearers ».

<sup>75</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, « Swastika Attack No Excuse for Violent Attack on Wearers ».

conservateurs, les principaux journaux de Toronto ne voulaient pas d'émeutes raciales.

### **Le *Globe and Mail***

Le *Globe and Mail* et le *Mail and Empire* étaient des journaux du matin, et étaient tous les deux plus petits que les journaux du soir<sup>76</sup>. George Brown, un homme politique du Canada-Ouest, fonda le *Globe* en 1844. Dans les années 1930, son président était W.G. Jaffrey, un chrétien fondamentaliste qui menait une forte campagne contre l'alcool et le communisme<sup>77</sup>. Malgré ses préjugés, le *Globe* réalisa un rapport assez neutre sur l'émeute, du moins dans ses articles. Le lendemain de l'émeute, le titre du *Globe* affirmait: « Swastika Feud battles in Toronto Injure 4 Fists, Boots, Piping Used in Bloor Street War ». « Hail Hitler is Youth's Cry: City is in Turmoil » était le titre du seul article publié par le *Globe* le 17 août, qui rendait les faits sur ce qui s'est passé. L'article félicitait la police pour ses actions préemptives et indiquait que la foule avait été dispersée facilement par les officiers, ce qui fut répudié par d'autres journaux<sup>78</sup>. Le journaliste prenait aussi soin d'utiliser des termes tels que « it is said » et « reputedly ». Cela montre que les faits n'étaient pas clairement établis le lendemain de l'émeute. Il n'y avait aucun jugement ni préjugé de l'un côté ou de l'autre dans cet article, simplement un reportage prudemment détaillé de ce qui s'était passé au parc Willowvale la veille au soir<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 33.

<sup>77</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 33.

<sup>78</sup> Il est intéressant de noter que ni le *Star* ni le *Telegram* étaient en accord avec le *Globe* sur ce point. Les deux soulignaient qu'il n'y avait pas suffisamment de policiers présents, mais pour des raisons différentes ; le *Star* pour supporter l'incompétence de la police et le *Telegram* pour montrer l'ampleur de l'émeute. Seul le *Globe* parlait de la facilité avec laquelle la police traita les émeutiers. *Globe and Mail*, 17 août 1933.

<sup>79</sup> *Globe and Mail*, « Hail Hitler is Youth's Cry: City is in Turmoil », 17 août 1933.

Dans les journées suivantes, le *Globe* continua son reportage sur l'émeute et ses suites. Les titres du 18 et 19 août, « Calm Prevails Again in Swastika War Zone » et « Three Held as Willowvale Park Riot Sequel » montre l'intérêt du public envers l'émeute. Malgré la gravité de l'émeute et les hautes tensions qui régnaient dans la ville, il n'y eut pas d'autres émeutes dans les jours suivants. Le journal rapporta plutôt les actions et décisions prises après l'émeute, comme l'édit du maire qui affirma que la croix gammée était interdite à Toronto et la formation de la nouvelle organisation pour la protection des plages.

Un autre article de 18 août, « Thousands at Parks Wait Watchfully; Reds, CCF in Clash », expliqua que « police drove a crowd of 2000 persons from Trinity Park [the previous night] when members of the Young Communist Party joined forces with the Toronto Council of Unemployed and interrupted a C.C.F. meeting<sup>80</sup> ». Cet article montre les tensions sociales et politiques à Toronto, mais contrairement au *Star*, n'apporte pas de jugement. Dans l'article de 19 août qui abordait la recherche pour les coupables de l'émeute, le *Globe* mentionna les « gangs » qui étaient présents la nuit de l'émeute, mais ne porta pas de jugement sur le fait que ces gangs existaient<sup>81</sup>. Ces deux articles montrent l'effort par le *Globe* de rester neutre dans ses reportages, laissant ses jugements et opinions aux éditoriaux.

Le *Globe* ne publia qu'un seul éditorial sur l'émeute, « Racial Fights Must Stop », publié le 18 août, et la neutralité qui régna dans les articles du *Globe* n'y était plus présente. L'éditorialiste lança une défense du chef Draper et de la police. Il commença par une discussion sur la critique que Draper reçut

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<sup>80</sup> *Globe and Mail*, « Thousands at Parks Wait Watchfully; Reds, CCF in Clash », 18 août 1933.

<sup>81</sup> *Globe and Mail*, « Police Question Other Members of Alleged Gang », 19 août 1933.

dans « certains quarters » (clairement une référence au *Star*) pour avoir utilisé la force pour disperser une foule socialiste et pour n'avoir rien fait pour empêcher l'émeute au parc Willowvale. L'éditorial remettait en question le fait que la police avait des connaissances préalables sur l'émeute puisque le *Star* n'avait pas voulu révéler son informateur. Il montrait le paradoxe dans la critique : « were a strong force assigned to every open-air assembly (specifically referring to Willowvale Park), what would the criticism be? Would the police be accused of insulting the law-abiding citizens of Toronto?<sup>82</sup> » le *Globe* concéda qu'un nombre adéquat de policiers aurait pu empêcher l'émeute, mais constatait tout de même que les jeunes voyous auraient pu commencer le trouble ailleurs. L'éditorialiste affirma : « it would not be inconceivable that the major part of the trouble was due to the well-known policy of communists<sup>83</sup> », mais n'allait pas aussi loin que le *Telegram* en le confirmant. Il condamna tous les jeunes voyous, et soutenait que « evidently there were young men present on both sides of the line-up prepared to exhibit bravado if the opportunity offered, and even willing to make an opportunity<sup>84</sup> ». Enfin, comme les autres journaux, le *Globe* condamna les émeutes raciales, en disant qu'elles n'étaient pas bonnes pour la réputation de Toronto. Se positionnant quant aux valeurs de liberté et d'égalité comme intrinsèques à un Toronto britannique, l'éditorialiste conclut en affirmant : « Anti-Jews or anti-Swastikas are anti-Toronto<sup>85</sup> ».

Les articles du *Globe* étaient plus ou moins neutres sur qui était responsable de l'émeute. Cependant, après avoir lu l'éditorial du 18 août, il est clair que pour eux, les principaux

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<sup>82</sup> *Globe and Mail*, « Racial Fights Must Stop », 18 août 1933.

<sup>83</sup> *Globe and Mail*, « Racial Fights Must Stop ».

<sup>84</sup> *Globe and Mail*, « Racial Fights Must Stop ».

<sup>85</sup> *Globe and Mail*, « Racial Fights Must Stop ».

coupables de l'émeute étaient les voyous des deux côtés. Il y avait de la méfiance quant au rôle du communisme dans l'incident, mais rien n'était confirmé. Le journal réfutait que Draper et la police étaient en faute et les défendait contre les attaques du Star par rapport aux événements au parc Trinity, montrant ses tendances conservatrices. Les seuls délinquants concrets dans tous ses reportages étaient les jeunes hommes juifs et chrétiens, cherchant une occasion de montrer leur bravade.

### **Le *Mail and Empire***

Le *Mail and Empire* fut fondé en 1895 par l'amalgamation du *Toronto Mail* et du *Toronto Empire*, deux journaux conservateurs de l'époque<sup>86</sup>. D'ici les années 1930, le *Mail and Empire* s'était transformé d'un « dull conservative newspaper » à un journal du peuple, « read by the “man in the street”<sup>87</sup> ». Le lendemain de l'émeute, son titre déclarait : « Scores hurt as Swastika Mobs riot at Willowvale mayor promises immediate probe of disturbance ». Le *Mail and Empire* réalisa presque le même reportage que le *Globe*, ce qui n'est pas surprenant puisque les deux ont fusionné pour former le *Globe and Mail* trois ans plus tard<sup>88</sup>. Comme le *Globe*, le *Mail and Empire* avait seulement un article le lendemain de l'émeute, « Scores hurt as Swastika Mobs riot at Willowvale Mayor Promises Immediate Probe of Disturbance », mais ce dernier était très détaillé sur ce qui s'était passé<sup>89</sup>. De la même façon que le *Globe*, le *Mail and Empire*

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<sup>86</sup> Richard J. Doyle, Jessica Potter, et Sasha Yusufali. « Globe and Mail », *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historica Canada, 2 July 2009. [<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/globe-and-mail>] (page consultée le 10 décembre 2021).

<sup>87</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*, 33.

<sup>88</sup> Levitt et Shaffir, 33.

<sup>89</sup> *Mail and Empire*, « Thousands Caught up in Park Melee Gangs Wielding Lead Pipes and Bats Sweep Streets, Bludgeoning Victims », 17 août 1933.



employait souvent un langage ambigu pour parler de l'émeute, utilisant des formules telles que « apparently » et « [it is thought] to have<sup>90</sup> ». Ceci n'est pas surprenant étant donné son positionnement idéologique plus neutre, ainsi que le fait que le *Mail and Empire* (et *The Globe*) avaient publié leurs rapports le matin après l'émeute tandis que le *Star* et le *Telegram* avaient une demi-journée de plus pour vérifier leurs faits.

Les articles du *Mail and Empire* dans les jours suivants n'étaient ni aussi nombreux ni aussi teintés d'opinion que ceux des autres journaux. En fait, il y avait seulement six articles dans le *Mail and Empire* portant sur l'émeute dans la semaine suivante, et la couverture se conclut le 21 août, seulement cinq jours après l'événement en question. Le faible tirage du journal et le manque d'opinions politiques ou sociales fortes expliquent l'absence d'articles dans le *Mail and Empire*, et fait en sorte qu'il est un des journaux le plus fiables pour rechercher l'émeute, puisqu'il essayait de plaire à personne. Dans ces quelques articles, le journal examina l'interdiction de la croix gammée et de la nouvelle organisation de protection, ainsi que la recherche pour les responsables de l'émeute, mais ne donna pas son opinion sur ceux qui l'en étaient. Comme le *Globe*, le *Mail and Empire* conserva son jugement pour les éditoriaux.

Le *Mail and Empire* n'eut qu'un seul éditorial sur l'émeute, publié le 18 août et intitulé « Must Stamp Out Racial War In Toronto<sup>91</sup> ». L'éditorialiste commença son article avec une forte condamnation de la violence, et affirma que « blame for the rioting must be apportioned equally between the two sides<sup>92</sup> ». Il croyait que les Juifs auraient dû rire aux idiosyncrasies des

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<sup>90</sup> *Mail and Empire*, « Thousands Caught up in Park Melee Gangs Wielding Lead Pipes and Bats Sweep Streets, Bludgeoning Victims ».

<sup>91</sup> *Mail and Empire*, « Must Stamp Out Racial War in Toronto », 18 août 1933.

<sup>92</sup> *Mail and Empire*, « Must Stamp Out Racial War in Toronto ».

porteurs de la croix gammée et non pas les attaquer. Cependant, il donna la condamnation la plus ferme de ces chrétiens de tous les journaux : « This is not in any sense to condone the malicious intent of the featherbrains who displayed the swastika and who ought to be submitted to psychiatric evaluation<sup>93</sup> ». Sans avoir le programme politique des autres journaux, le *Mail and Empire* pouvait critiquer les voyous sans utiliser de l'espace pour faire un argument idéologique. Pourtant, le journal utilisa quelques paragraphes pour discuter de la police, mais d'une manière différente de le *Star*. Le *Mail and Empire* était critique envers le fait que la police avait de l'information sur l'émeute auparavant, sous la forme d'une lettre portant sur les gangs à Toronto qui aurait dû être examinée. L'éditorialiste n'aborda pas l'incident au parc Trinity, mais était en accord avec la critique de beaucoup de socialistes: « the heads of police department [think]...that they can do as they please<sup>94</sup> ». Il leur rappela que c'étaient les impôts des citoyens de Toronto qui les finançait et que la police avait donc une responsabilité de les protéger. Étant donné que le *Mail and Empire* était lu par « the man in the street », mais était toujours conservateur, il est logique qu'il ait critiqué la police pour avoir mal géré l'argent des contribuables au lieu de supprimer la liberté d'expression. Comme les autres journaux, le *Mail and Empire* condamna fermement les émeutes raciales, et soutenait que « these things must be firmly stamped out in Toronto<sup>95</sup> ».

Malgré la neutralité de ses articles, le *Mail and Empire* montra ses opinions dans l'éditorial du 18 août : les jeunes voyous qui promouvaient la violence étaient responsables d'avoir causé l'émeute de Christie Pits. Les jeunes juifs n'auraient pas dû

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<sup>93</sup> *Mail and Empire*, « Must Stamp Out Racial War in Toronto », 18 août 1933.

<sup>94</sup> *Mail and Empire*, « Must Stamp Out Racial War in Toronto ».

<sup>95</sup> *Mail and Empire*, « Must Stamp Out Racial War in Toronto ».

attaquer les porteurs de la croix gammée, mais cela n'excusait pas du tout le comportement des jeunes chrétiens, qu'il a fermement condamné. La police était en faute, mais plutôt pour le fait de ne pas avoir investigué les gangs qui avaient provoqué l'émeute que pour la suppression de la liberté d'expression dans l'incident du parc Trinity.

### *Le Devoir*

Pour avoir une compréhension plus exhaustive de l'émeute, il est utile de regarder deux autres journaux non torontois : *Le Devoir* et le *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. Les deux étaient publiés à Montréal et montrent deux perspectives jusqu'à présent non examinées : celle des francophones ainsi que celle des Juifs eux-mêmes. Henri Bourassa fonda *Le Devoir* en 1910 pour défendre ses idées et opinions politiques<sup>96</sup>. L'un des éléments importants de son agenda était de protéger l'identité canadienne-française face aux vagues d'immigrants arrivant au Canada au début de XX<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>97</sup>. Dans un éditorial de 1913 intitulé « Le Péril de l'Immigration », Bourassa exprima clairement son opinion sur le sujet en exprimant que « l'immigration peut facilement devenir le suicide de la nation<sup>98</sup> ». Vingt ans plus tard, l'opinion du journal n'avait guère changé.

Le 19 août, *Le Devoir*, maintenant sous la direction de Georges Pelletier, publia un éditorial intitulé « En Marge de Bagarres à Toronto<sup>99</sup> », qui donnait son point de vue sur l'émeute. L'éditorial commençait avec une discussion sur l'enjeu de l'immigration au Canada dans les décennies précédentes.

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<sup>96</sup> Pierre Anctil, *À chacun ses Juifs : 60 éditoriaux pour comprendre la position du Devoir à l'égard des Juifs (1910-1947)* (Québec: Septentrion, 2014), 19.

<sup>97</sup> Anctil, *À Chacun Ses Juifs*, 19.

<sup>98</sup> Anctil, 122.

<sup>99</sup> Anctil, 265.

Pelletier tenait ces nouveaux venus responsables de l'augmentation de la criminalité au pays et les accusait d'avoir abusé de l'argent de l'État<sup>100</sup>. Il continua en soutenant que ces immigrants étaient responsables d'avoir importé le racisme au Canada qui a mené à l'émeute de Christie Pits. Pelletier constata que « le Juif au Canada n'a pas renoncé à être juif [et que] le Canadien d'origine...anglo-saxonne n'entend pas que le Juif le déborde, le déplace, le dépasse<sup>101</sup> ». Cela montre que Le Devoir voulait protéger même les Canadiens anglais, « débordés » par les Juifs qui agissaient « comme si le Canada était leur pays<sup>102</sup> ». Pour Pelletier, il est clair que le problème dans la société canadienne était les immigrants au Canada qui apportaient « dans leurs bagages les complexes questions de race...les têtes cassées à Toronto le prouvent nettement<sup>103</sup> ».

### **Le *Canadian Jewish Chronicle***

Le *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* fut fondé en 1914 à Montréal pour informer et défendre les intérêts de la communauté juive de la ville<sup>104</sup>. Le journal était publié chaque vendredi, et avait seulement un éditorial sur l'émeute, publié le 25 août 1933. Dans le court éditorial intitulé « A Regrettable Incident », l'éditorialiste réfléchit avec tristesse sur les événements au parc Willowvale, en notant que « *brawling and rowdiness is distinctly foreign to the Jew... [and therefore] the recent fracas...is not keeping with Jewish dignity*<sup>105</sup> ». Plus que tous les autres journaux, le *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* comprenait pourquoi les Juifs détestaient la croix

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<sup>100</sup> Anctil, *À Chacun Ses Juifs*, 266.

<sup>101</sup> Anctil, 267.

<sup>102</sup> Anctil, 267.

<sup>103</sup> Anctil, 267.

<sup>104</sup> « Canadian Jewish Chronicle », *University of Florida Digital Collections*, [<https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00018320/00001>] (page consultée le 14 décembre 2021).

<sup>105</sup> *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, « A Regrettable Incident », 25 août 1933, 3.

gammée, et décrivit le « mobocracy » au Canada comme un « ranting groups of chauvinists<sup>106</sup> ». L'éditorialiste ne défend pas la violence utilisée par les Juifs, mais admit que « under provocation, a man may allow his feelings to run away with himself<sup>107</sup> ». Il continua en affirmant que la provocation était reconnue comme une défense dans les tribunaux et que s'il y avait une défense pour l'émeute, c'était bien la provocation. Le *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* critiqua aussi la police pour ne pas avoir contrôlé leurs citoyens: « If the swastika has no place in civic life » il a soutenu, « the policemen should have been instructed to act against the disturbers<sup>108</sup> ». Comme le journal n'était pas publié à Toronto, il ne se prononça pas sur les détails du débat sur la police présente dans les journaux torontois, mais utilisa plutôt la situation comme une opportunité pour avertir les autorités à Montréal de prendre des précautions similaires. L'éditorial se conclua avec une forte condamnation de la violence des deux côtés ainsi que de l'incapacité de la police à faire son travail.

En raison de son identité juive, le *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* était le journal qui a le plus défendu la position de la communauté juive . Cela étant dit, son éditorial montre aussi l'équilibre délicat que les Juifs au Canada devaient maintenir; d'un côté, ils étaient indignés contre l'usage de la croix gammée, un symbole de haine et de persécution de leur peuple. De l'autre côté, ils vivaient dans une société qui déjà ne les aimait pas et dans laquelle ils ressentaient la pression de s'assimiler. Pour cette dernière raison, leur condamnation de la croix gammée et de ses défenseurs était tempérée par une condamnation de la violence

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<sup>106</sup> *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, « A Regrettable Incident ».

<sup>107</sup> *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, « A Regrettable Incident ».

<sup>108</sup> *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, « A Regrettable Incident ».

de la part des Juifs et une assurance que les Juifs étaient paisibles et tranquilles.

**Conclusion : c'est la faute à qui ?**

Qui était responsable d'avoir provoqué l'émeute de Christie Pits en 1933 ? La réponse varie selon le journal qu'on lit. Après une étude approfondie des grands journaux de Toronto ainsi que *Le Devoir* et le *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, on trouve qu'il semble avoir quatre grands coupables : les voyous, les communistes, la police, et l'immigration. Cette dernière n'est abordée que dans *Le Devoir* et reflète le contexte du nationalisme canadien-français et des opinions anti-immigration du journal. Toutes les autres publications ont plutôt choisi de blâmer une combinaison des trois autres coupables. Tout le monde a condamné les voyous; la violence utilisée par les deux côtés, juif et chrétien n'était pas acceptable pour les journaux libéraux ou conservateurs, chrétiens ou juifs. Tous les éditoriaux contenaient une affirmation selon laquelle les émeutes raciales devaient être éliminées à Toronto ou un espoir qu'elles le seraient. Pour certains journaux (le *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* et le *Mail and Empire*), les voyous qui portaient la croix gammée ont clairement provoqué les Juifs à la violence, tandis que d'autres (le *Telegram*) ne les ont même pas accusés d'être coupables, laissant toute la responsabilité sur les Juifs. Le *Telegram* et le *Globe* aussi ont accusé, sans preuve concrète, les communistes d'avoir incité l'émeute. Le *Star*, tout en affirmant que les voyous étaient en faute pour avoir utilisé de la violence, a condamné la police avant tout, pour ne pas avoir fait assez pour empêcher l'émeute ainsi que pour la suppression de la liberté d'expression au parc Trinity. Toutes ces accusations illuminent les grands enjeux préoccupant la société canadienne de l'époque : la Grande Dépression et les jeunes hommes sans travail, la hausse en

immigration, la Révolution d'Octobre et la peur de communisme, la suppression de la liberté d'expression, les relations avec les autorités, et l'équilibre précaire de la vie juive au Canada. Tous ces journaux et leurs lectorats étaient interpellés par ces questions, et les ont donc mobilisés pour conceptualiser l'émeute de Christie Pits et pour formuler leurs opinions sur ceux qui en étaient responsables.

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**“A sublime task, a magnificent endeavour”: The Woman’s  
Christian Temperance Union and Canadian-American  
Collaboration in the Late Nineteenth Century**

Marieke Jansen-Young

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In 1871, the *Olympia Washington Standard* declared, “Like a great tidal wave the temperance reform is carrying everything before it, from California to British Columbia.”<sup>1</sup> This wave of binational temperance advocacy continued to grow over the following decades, gaining momentum with the establishment of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in the late nineteenth century. The temperance movement, which advocated for abstinence from alcohol and later the governmental prohibition of alcohol, created intertwined and interconnected networks across the world which relied on each other to promote a vision of global social reform. Women from the United States and Canada were highly involved in this endeavour.

The WCTU was formed in the US in 1874, followed shortly by a Canadian branch later that year.<sup>2</sup> The American and Canadian chapters of the WCTU were closely aligned, and members of the American WCTU provided their Canadian sisters with temperance arguments, materials, and news, which were circulated in Canadian journals.<sup>3</sup> This collaboration and affinity continued in the following decades as the World’s

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<sup>1</sup> *Olympia Washington Standard* (Olympia, WA), Jun. 20, 1879, 1, qtd. in Stephen T. Moore, *Bootleggers and Borders: The Paradox of Prohibition on a Canada-U.S. Borderland* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 29, <http://muse.jhu.edu/book/35028>.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon A. Cook, *“Through Sunshine and Shadow”: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 15.

<sup>3</sup> Moore, *Bootleggers and Borders*, 30-31.

Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU) was established in 1883 and grew into the largest international women's organization of the period.<sup>4</sup> From their inception, the American and Canadian branches of the WCTU were characterized by intensive collaboration and the cross-pollination of ideas and practices. When the women's temperance movement became international, the relationship between Canada and the US remained key due to sentiments of Christian sisterhood and shared Anglo-Saxon heritage, often at the expense of other ethnic and religious groups within the two countries.

The study of the WCTU intersects the history of the temperance and women's movements in the US and Canada. The broad development of the temperance movement in both countries and its transition to prohibitionist sentiments have been extensively studied. While temperance was the primary objective of the WCTU, it was far from the only one. In line with its "Do Everything" policy, the WCTU extended its efforts to causes such as women's suffrage, education, moral reform, and the working conditions of women and children, as all of these were seen to lead back to temperance.<sup>5</sup> The expansive efforts of the WCTU have allowed scholars to study its various endeavours at local and national levels, especially its role in temperance education and the suffrage movement.<sup>6</sup> Historian Sharon A.

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<sup>4</sup> Patricia Ward D'Itri, *Cross Currents in the International Women's Movement, 1848-1948* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 39, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x004323055>.

<sup>5</sup> Riiko Bedford, "Heredity as Ideology: Ideas of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of the United States and Ontario on Heredity and Social Reform, 1880-1910," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 32, no. 1 (April 1, 2015): 81, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cbmh.32.1.77>.

<sup>6</sup> For examples, see Cook, "Educating For Temperance: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Ontario Children, 1880-1916," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* (1993), [https://journals.scholarsportal.info/details/08435057/v1993inone/f/nfp\\_eftwtctu](https://journals.scholarsportal.info/details/08435057/v1993inone/f/nfp_eftwtctu)

Cook explores the development of the WCTU in Ontario, arguing that it was characterized by evangelical feminist ideology that empowered women and enabled them to preach temperance as a moral and religious issue.<sup>7</sup> Scholars like Cook have generally focused on local and regional issues in Canada and the US related to the WCTU and the temperance movement.<sup>8</sup>

A binational perspective on the WCTU, especially on Canada and the United States' collaboration on the international stage, is largely missing from the historiography. Specific aspects of this relationship have been discussed by scholars such as Riiko Bedford, Dorothy A. Lander, and Stephen T. Moore. Bedford analyzes the ideology of heredity in the WCTU of Ontario and the US through its Department of Heredity as an extension of its moral reform objectives.<sup>9</sup> Lander evaluates the relationship between the American president of the National WCTU, Frances Willard, and Letitia Youmans, president of the Ontario WCTU and, later, the Dominion WCTU. In studying their autobiographies, she considers and problematizes their relationship within a context of American-Canadian cooperation.

<sup>10</sup> Moore explores the Canadian and American temperance

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[aocl.xml](#); Carmen Heider, "Suffrage, Self-Determination, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Nebraska, 1879-1882," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2005): 85-107; Carol Mattingly, "Woman-Tempered Rhetoric: Public Presentation and the WCTU," *Rhetoric Review* 14, no. 1 (1995): 44-61, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/465660>.

<sup>7</sup> Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow," 7.

<sup>8</sup> Marie L. Kreider and Michael R. Wells, "White Ribbon Women: The Women's Christian Temperance Movement in Riverside, California," *Southern California Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (1999): 117-134, <https://doi.org/10.2307/41171932>; Nancy M. Sheehan, "The WCTU and Educational Strategies on the Canadian Prairie," *History of Education Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1984): 101-119, <https://doi.org/10.2307/367995>.

<sup>9</sup> Bedford, "Heredity as Ideology."

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy A. Lander, "The 49th and Other Parallels in the Temperance Auto/Biographies of Letitia Youmans (Canada 1893) and Frances Willard (U.S. 1889)," *Vitae Scholasticae* 22, no. 1 (2005): 23,

movements, including the WCTU, with a focus on British Columbia and Washington. He argues that this region saw the highest levels of cross-cultural collaboration, in comparison to eastern Canada, due to B.C.'s relative isolation from Great Britain.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the other regional branches of the Canadian WCTU also had close contact with the American WCTU, characterized especially by a close relationship between Willard and Youmans.

Canada's role was often overshadowed in the World's WCTU, which corresponds to a gap in the literature on the subject, even though the work of Canadian temperance women was recognized by their American and international contemporaries.<sup>12</sup> Thus, an analysis of the Canadian and international WCTU publications will allow a deeper understanding of the role Canadians played internationally, in conjunction with their American allies. This analysis will be supplemented by the work of scholars such as Ian Tyrell, who, in his comprehensive discussion of the WWCTU, argues that the organization's influence was fueled by mechanisms of imperialism and evangelism, and that the WCTU used rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon superiority.<sup>13</sup>

Temperance work had begun in the early nineteenth century and had a long history of collaboration between

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<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A142385286/AONE?u=otta77973&sid=googleScholar&xid=a80f2602>.

<sup>11</sup> Moore, *Bootleggers and Borders*; Moore, "Cross-Border Crusades: The Binational Temperance Movement in Washington and British Columbia," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 98, no. 3 (2007): 130–142,

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40492029>.

<sup>12</sup> Frances Willard, *Women and Temperance; Or, the Work and Workers of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union* (Hartford, CT: Park Publishing Co., 1883), 602.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Canadian and American reformists.<sup>14</sup> However, the expanded structures of internationalism really took root towards the end of the century, specifically with the concerted organizational efforts of women. While women had long been involved in this movement, they became some of the world's leading temperance advocates, arguing that the cause was within their moral domain and so "women had become a power of righteousness."<sup>15</sup> The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was officially formed in 1874, and what began as an American organization quickly grew international offshoots.<sup>16</sup>

Letitia Youmans, who became a leading Canadian temperance advocate and was later president of the Dominion WCTU, created a union in Picton, Ontario, after attending the 1874 WCTU Convention in Cleveland.<sup>17</sup> Youmans was enthralled by the presentations and connected the Union's temperance work with the evils of alcohol consumption closer to home. When the women arranged themselves according to their states, Youmans found she "alone was left in the cold being the only Canadian woman. My husband ... addressed the lady presiding, 'Mrs Willing, could you take in Canada?'" Willing replied, "'Certainly, we will make it international.'"<sup>18</sup> Thus the first international alliance between American and Canadian temperance women began. Youmans was thoroughly impressed by the work she saw being done in the US, and she resolved that

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<sup>14</sup> Moore, *Bootleggers and Borders*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> Margherita Arlina Hamm, "The World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union," *Peterson Magazine* (Philadelphia, PA), September 1895, 982, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/137441746/abstract/CBB534E6E839411APO/3>.

<sup>16</sup> Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow," 15.

<sup>17</sup> Letitia Youmans, *Campaign Echoes: The Autobiography of Mrs. Letitia Youmans, the Pioneer of the White Ribbon Movement in Canada* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1893), 104, <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.26161>.

<sup>18</sup> Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 103-104.

“Canada would not be neglected,” returning home with “fresh materials” and “the germ at least of a Woman’s Temperance Union” in Canada.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, American temperance women were just as “astonished and delighted” by Youmans’ presentation, and saw great potential in their “bright young ally across the border,” the Canadian WCTU.<sup>20</sup>

This convergence of ideas and information persisted, and the WCTU in Canada and the United States maintained a close relationship in the decades that followed. While all Canadian chapters of the WCTU maintained communication with the American WCTU, American influence was especially present in the British Columbia WCTU. Historian Stephen T. Moore explores this close relationship, arguing that because B.C. was more isolated from Great Britain, the B.C. WCTU relied more heavily on its American counterparts, especially the Washington WCTU.<sup>21</sup> Frances Willard founded the B.C. WCTU in 1883, and her involvement remained prominent; for example, British Columbian girls in the Young Woman’s Christian Temperance Union were called “Willard’s Y’s.”<sup>22</sup> While Youmans founded many of the other WCTUs throughout Canada, Youmans still noted that Willard had “labored as faithfully in Canada as in her own country; her name in the Dominion is a household word.”<sup>23</sup> While American organizers such as Willard had a substantial impact on the Canadian WCTU, this collaboration went both ways. Willard cited Youmans as the origin of the phrase “Home Protection” in temperance work, referring to the idea that since

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<sup>19</sup> Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 104.

<sup>20</sup> Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years: The Autobiography of an American Woman* (Toronto: Woman’s Temperance Pub. Association, 1889), 433-434, <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.15134/1?r=0&s=1>.

<sup>21</sup> Moore, *Bootleggers and Borders*, 30.

<sup>22</sup> Moore, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, v.

alcohol could lead to domestic violence, temperance work would protect women and children, which became a central strategy for Willard and the WCTU.<sup>24</sup> Willard also mentioned in a biographical sketch of Youmans that Youmans was as “beloved and honored” in the US as she was in her own country.<sup>25</sup> Both Canadian and American temperance women influenced each other and collaborated to promote temperance work.

The press was a major vehicle for temperance reform work from the local to the international level. The WCTU had a department dedicated to the press, with the main objective of informing members, other branches of the WCTU, and the public about the work that the organization was doing, as well as proliferating temperance propaganda and rhetoric. The press was especially important for communicating between American and Canadian WCTU branches, both as a way to support each other with arguments and materials, and to depict the movement’s momentum.<sup>26</sup> The press was an essential part of the WCTU’s strategy; it published its own newspapers, such as the *Union Signal* in the US, *The British Women’s Temperance Journal* in the United Kingdom, and *The Woman’s Journal* in Canada. These journals all exchanged articles, allowing readers to “skim the cream of the temperance world each week.”<sup>27</sup> On average, between 1885 and 1924, a median average of 12.5% of the *Union Signal* reporting was dedicated to international news.<sup>28</sup> Willard recognized the importance of sharing and duplicating information for the international members of the WCTU: she wrote in her journal in 1893, “‘Pass the word along’-about

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<sup>24</sup> Willard, *Glimpses*, 401; Cook, “*Through Sunshine and Shadow*,” 89, 100.

<sup>25</sup> Willard, *Women and Temperance*, 602.

<sup>26</sup> Tyrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire*, 50-51.

<sup>27</sup> Willard, *Glimpses*, 434.

<sup>28</sup> Tyrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire*, 36.



woman suffrage, temperance & labor is the watchword in these days. How many worlds there are & how prone are we to think our own the chief!"<sup>29</sup> The press allowed temperance women to spread news of conventions, recommendations and strategies, and persuasive materials, and thus to understand what was happening elsewhere in the world.<sup>30</sup> It also fostered a sense of sisterhood with a shared mission, allowing readers to see the successes of other nations as foreshadowing to the progress to come in their own countries.

The WCTU in Canada and the US was primarily organized around localities, and this was where temperance workers typically had the most success. Throughout the nineteenth century, a series of prohibition acts were passed in various localities in Canada and the US due to the efforts of temperance societies such as the WCTU. The *Canada Temperance Act*—commonly known as the *Scott Act*—was inspired by the success of local option laws in Maine, Ohio, and Michigan. The *Scott Act* allowed counties or cities to prohibit the retail sale of alcohol when approved by a majority of the electors.<sup>31</sup> This act made the local focus of the WCTU vital, and in areas where temperance work was stronger, such as Ontario and the Maritimes, the majority of counties prohibited alcohol.<sup>32</sup> Willard praised Canada as the world leader in the prohibition struggle, citing its success due to its “homogenous” population, and its higher moral and religious standards than the US.<sup>33</sup> Willard

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<sup>29</sup> Willard, *Frances Willard Digital Journal, Journal 48*, December 4, 1893, Frances Willard House Museum and Archives, accessed March 18, 2021, <http://www.franceswillardjournals.org/browse-page.php?pageid=663999>.

<sup>30</sup> Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire*, 50-51.

<sup>31</sup> Moore, *Bootleggers and Borders*, 32-33.

<sup>32</sup> Moore, 33.

<sup>33</sup> “W.C.T.U. Convention Begun: Miss Willard Addresses the Delegates at the Horticultural Gardens in Toronto – Praises Canadian Austerity,” *New York*

similarly praised Canadian temperance efforts in her 1889 autobiography, writing, "We must look well to our laurels, or our allies of the maple leaf will be the first at the goal of prohibition."

<sup>34</sup> This framed temperance work as a competition between nations. Lander interprets this as a condescending remark; however, Willard's other references to Canada show that she publicly admired the work being done by her northern colleagues, and the success of one nation was seen to contribute to the cumulative global good.<sup>35</sup>

Although some Canadians worried about the Americanization of the Canadian WCTU and American interference in Canadian issues, this was not a universal concern and the spirit of collaboration prevailed.<sup>36</sup> Youmans predicted the continued harmony of "women tying together ... the Union Jack and Stars and Stripes with ribbons that are total abstinence badges, while the Yankee eagle soars above and the British lion crouches beneath."<sup>37</sup> In 1893, Ella Williams, president of the Dominion WCTU, recalled, "According to an old legend an American eagle screams on this side defiance to the British, and on the other side the British lion roars at the Americans: but neither bird nor beast interferes with the passage of the white ribbon."<sup>38</sup> In this metaphor, Canadians, through their relationship with Great Britain, would not be overpowered by

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*Times*, October 24, 1897,

<http://www.proquest.com/docview/95536259/abstract/CBB534E6E839411APO/14>.

<sup>34</sup> Willard, *Glimpses*, 434.

<sup>35</sup> Lander, "Temperance Auto/biographies," 32.

<sup>36</sup> Moore, *Bootleggers and Borders*, 30.

<sup>37</sup> Willard, *Women and Temperance*, 602.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Cumings, "Religious Intelligence: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union Congresses," *The Independent* (New York, NY), November 2, 1893,

<http://www.proquest.com/docview/90524877/abstract/CBB534E6E839411APO/7>.

Americans. Instead, these nations would set old rivalries aside. This glorified Anglo-Saxon unity for the temperance cause.

While the WCTU's international influence had begun almost immediately, the official international organization, the WWCTU was formed in 1883, with both the United States and Canada at the helm.<sup>39</sup> Willard described this lofty global vision in reference to the Union's emblem, writing in her autobiography, "White light includes all the prismatic colors, so the white ribbon stands for all phases of reform....Our emblem holds within itself the colours of all nations and stands for universal purity and patriotism, universal prohibition and philanthropy, and universal peace. ... Women's hands and hearts all round the world will be united by our snowy badge."<sup>40</sup> The WCTU repeatedly used the rhetoric of "civilization," in the Western conception of the term, to portray their cause as morally righteous and having international gravity. They claimed that "women from every civilized nation" were joined together in the temperance movement.<sup>41</sup> The WWCTU united the "sister societies" of the temperance movement to unify their goals and efforts.<sup>42</sup> After the US and Great Britain, the Dominion WCTU was regarded as one of the most "powerful auxiliaries of the World's W.C.T.U."<sup>43</sup> Canada was recognized for its temperance work at home and abroad. While the majority of the WWCTU's members were from the US, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia,

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<sup>39</sup> Tyrell, *Woman's World/ Woman's Empire*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Willard, *Glimpses*, 430.

<sup>41</sup> Woman's Christian Temperance Movement, "A Petition of Women to the Governments of the World," *The Christian Statesman* 19, no. 11 (November 12, 1885),

<https://link-gale-com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/apps/doc/JRYVHR541211205/NCCO?u=otta77973&sid=NCCO&xid=64719ebb>.

<sup>42</sup> Willard, *Glimpses*, 432.

<sup>43</sup> Willard, *Glimpses*, 432.

one of the organization's focuses was on spreading temperance across the world to non-English speaking countries, using the ideologies and mechanisms of imperialism.

The ideology of Anglo-Saxon superiority rested at the core of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. As the majority of its membership came from Great Britain and its current and former colonies, this commonality was emphasized in order to present a unified sisterhood and exemplify the presumed Anglo-Saxon ideal. Many of the prominent leaders of the organization had English heritage, a fact that was underscored in Willard's biographical sketches of the leading temperance women in the 1880s.<sup>44</sup> In addition to its leaders, the movement itself was presented in a way that emphasized its Anglo-Saxon unity: as journalist Margherita Arlina Hamm wrote about the WWCTU's mission, "It is a sublime task, a magnificent endeavour. It is undertaken with that Anglo-Saxon spirit which has conquered ocean [sic], and subjugated continents."<sup>45</sup> The WCTU's Anglo-Saxon heritage was thus explicitly connected to the history of imperialism.

This ideology connected the American and Canadian temperance women, along with British and Australian women, by espousing their supposed racial superiority. While the WWCTU welcomed members from all over the world, ranging from Japan to South Africa, non-white societies were often described with condescension that implied Anglo-Saxon temperance advocates were superior because of their race and religion.<sup>46</sup> WWCTU temperance advocates believed that "Christianity and Christian Temperance" alone would "civilize"

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<sup>44</sup> Willard, *Women and Temperance*, esp. 80, 88, 157, 321, 437, 527; Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Hamm, "The World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union," 983.

<sup>46</sup> Tyrell, *Woman's World/ Woman's Empire*, 85, 103.

these nations.<sup>47</sup> Due to this Anglo-Saxon ideology, the WWCTU generally avoided Canadian anti-American sentiment and American Anglophobia, though these were both common in Canadian and American societies at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> As historian Edward P. Kohn argues, at the end of the century, both nations had to adapt to new realities of Canadian-American relations, and did so by finding common ground in their Anglo-Saxon heritage and using the rhetoric of white supremacy.<sup>49</sup> The WCTU adopted these strategies in order to strengthen its united global temperance mission.

The women's temperance movement was built on a Christian foundation, with Protestant and evangelical ideologies as its primary motivation, though the WCTU purported to be non-denominational.<sup>50</sup> As one temperance journalist described, the term Christian in the WCTU's title was understood in its "broadest and deepest sense. The idea of the union is the improvement of the sex, and thereby the world, in every way, physically, mentally, socially, morally, and spiritually. Its aims are therefore as catholic as those of any church, while its work and agencies are more numerous and varied."<sup>51</sup> The WCTU women thus saw themselves as playing an essential part in spreading the gospel, as well as temperance, internationally. As historian Ian Tyrell points out, within this ideology, "Good and

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<sup>47</sup> Kara G. Smart, "Reports of World's White Ribbon Missionaries," in *Report of the Sixth Convention of the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union* (Union, 1903), 72,

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cbibliographic\\_details%7C1729151?account\\_id=14701&usage\\_group\\_id=95567](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C1729151?account_id=14701&usage_group_id=95567).

<sup>48</sup> Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>49</sup> Kohn, *This Kindred People*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> D'Itri, *Cross Currents*, 39.

<sup>51</sup> Hamm, "The World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union," 979.

evil knew no geographic boundaries, and pollutants anywhere threatened evangelical integrity everywhere.”<sup>52</sup>

Missions were thus a fundamental part of the WCTU’s objective, both at home and abroad. The temperance women valued their role in “sending the temperance light around the world.”<sup>53</sup> Urging members to donate to missionary temperance efforts, Margaret C. Munns, national treasurer of the WCTU, wrote, “The gospel message and temperance education go hand in hand.”<sup>54</sup> Christianity was intrinsic to the temperance movement, just as temperance advocates saw temperance as necessary for a good Christian society. While mission and temperance work spread to many colonies, Canadian contributions to the mission cause were specifically targeted towards India, reinforcing the British imperial connections in Canada.<sup>55</sup> Through these missionary activities, temperance advocates utilized the pathways available to them through imperialism, and bolstered the ideology of Christian Anglo-Saxon superiority.

The spirit of empire was incorporated into the discourse of the World’s WCTU. While the United States and Canada had very different relationships with England and the British Empire, their commonalities were emphasized instead. The imagery and motifs of empire were commonly called upon; as Basil Wilberforce, Archdeacon of Westminster, said, “The sun never

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<sup>52</sup> Tyrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire*, 24.

<sup>53</sup> Margaret C. Munns, “What Is a Light Line Union? A Catechism,” in Nancy M. Forestell and Maureen Anne Moynagh, *Documenting First Wave Feminisms Volume II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 81.

<sup>54</sup> Munns, “What Is a Light Line Union?,” 81.

<sup>55</sup> Forestell and Moynagh, *Documenting First Wave Feminisms Volume II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 68.

sets on the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union."<sup>56</sup> This conveyed the idea that the WWCTU was a moral empire that mirrored the reach and importance of the British Empire.<sup>57</sup> The goal of the WWCTU was to spread temperance and prohibition internationally using the mechanisms of imperialism. Therefore, the role of Great Britain within the WCTU was crucial due to its imperial connections.<sup>58</sup>

The WCTU's imperial ideology also manifested in the women's deference to and appreciation for the British monarchy. In anticipation of the first international WCTU convention in 1876, held in Philadelphia, the WCTU had sent a letter to Queen Victoria requesting that she send representatives.<sup>59</sup> The response from the queen's Private Secretary, though it stated that the queen could not interfere in the matter of temperance, was very well-received by the conventions' attendees. As the *New York Times* correspondent wrote, "The enthusiasm over this was great ... a rising vote of greeting was sent to Queen Victoria, the model wife and mother of the world, who, although as a Queen she could not send her approval, yet were she unfettered would send us such word as would touch our womanly hearts."<sup>60</sup> The American, Canadian, and British delegates all welcomed this correspondence with the monarch, who they believed righteously shared their opinion on temperance as a part of their

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<sup>56</sup> *Report of the First [British] Conference of the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Held May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1872* (Uxbridge, Eng.: Hutchings, 1892), 80.

<sup>57</sup> Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire*, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Tyrell, 27.

<sup>59</sup> "Woman's Temperance Work: A Large Convention of Women from All Parts of the World—Organization of the Woman's International Temperance Union—Addresses by Distinguished Ladies," *New York Times* (New York, NY), June 12, 1876,

<http://www.proquest.com/docview/93542011/abstract/9360A185BF6541D3PO/13>.

<sup>60</sup> *New York Times*, "Woman's Temperance Work."

unified bond of womanhood. The American reformists imitated this monarchical symbolism in the conceptualization of their own leader, Frances Willard. The second president of the American WCTU was frequently hailed as the “uncrowned Queen of America” or the “Queen of this white ribbon movement.”<sup>61</sup> As Tyrell notes, at the 1891 WWCTU convention, as the audience sang “God Save the Queen” while Willard was being escorted to the dais, it was unclear whether they did so out of deference to the British delegates and their queen, or to Willard herself.<sup>62</sup> The idea of a queen who led the temperance cause resonated with both republican Americans and monarchist Canadians and Britons.

The focus of the WCTU on white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant sisterhood alienated and marginalized other communities. Though the WCTU’s goal was global temperance, this rhetoric excluded groups such as Black Canadians and Americans, Indigenous peoples, French Canadians, and Catholics. Nevertheless, women from these marginalized communities participated in the WCTU to varying extents. Criminologist and sociologist Mariana Valverde argues that the Canadian WCTU was a racist organization, but historian Sharon Cook tempers this, pointing out that while the temperance women were reflective of the sentiments of the period and believed Anglo-Saxon society to be superior, the WCTU was more tolerant of the contributions of non-white people than many other Canadians, encouraging non-white women, especially Black women, to be temperance leaders in their

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<sup>61</sup> Bernie Babcock, *An Uncrowned Queen: The Story of the Life of Frances E. Willard Told for Young People*, (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903), <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.992141/1?r=0&s=1>; Cumings, “Religious Intelligence,” 45.

<sup>62</sup> Tyrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire*, 45.



communities.<sup>63</sup> Their success, however, varied.

In regard to the Black population in Canada and the US, the WCTU made an effort to include Black women as temperance advocates within their own communities.<sup>64</sup> In her speech at the 1895 WWCTU convention, Willard praised the white and Black women in the southern US who worked “with the utmost harmony and good feeling, though in separate societies.”<sup>65</sup> This was related to her claim that the WCTU did not differentiate based on race, colour, or creed.<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of Black people in Canadian WCTUs started later than in the US; the Ontario WCTU did not start formally soliciting Black members until 1894 with the establishment of a “Department of Work Among Colored People.”<sup>67</sup> However, it did not have immediate success; for example, the Toronto WCTU reported in 1896 that the Toronto Black community was “not ready” for the organization despite the efforts of temperance women, though what would constitute readiness was not mentioned.<sup>68</sup> Cook argues that the Ontario WCTU’s failure to include Black women was not due to a lack of desire to do so, but due to regional variation in the structures of local unions and the tendency to overlook the

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<sup>63</sup> Mariana Valverde, “‘When the Mother of the Race Is Free’: Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism,” in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women’s History*, ed. Mariana Valverde and Franca Iacovetta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 15-20; Cook, “*Through Sunshine and Shadow*,” 103, 106.

<sup>64</sup> Cook, “*Through Sunshine and Shadow*,” 103.

<sup>65</sup> Willard, “Women’s Social Reforms: Miss Frances E. Willard’s Speech at Queen’s Hall in London,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1895, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/95300029/abstract/CBB534E6E839411APO/12>.

<sup>66</sup> Willard, “Women’s Social Reforms.”

<sup>67</sup> Cook, “*Through Sunshine and Shadow*,” 104.

<sup>68</sup> *Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman’s Christian Temperance Union for 1895-6* (Toronto: Toronto Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, 1896), 46, [https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8\\_00863\\_7/1?r=0&s=1](https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_00863_7/1?r=0&s=1).

established leadership among Black women.<sup>69</sup> While the WCTU attempted to bring marginalized communities into the temperance movement, they regulated Black women's participation within the organization.

Like its work abroad, the WCTU took a "missionizing" approach to spreading temperance among Indigenous communities.<sup>70</sup> In Canada, the WCTU sponsored home missionaries and closely collaborated with Protestant missionary societies.<sup>71</sup> There were no recorded attempts to establish Indigenous unions or collaborate directly with Indigenous people, which was consistent with the settler Canadian ideology of the period which typically portrayed Indigenous peoples as "other."<sup>72</sup> In the US, Indigenous women played a larger role in the WCTU, with some holding leadership positions within the organization and many advocating for temperance within their communities. The WCTU also made efforts to form unions on reservations.<sup>73</sup> However, the discriminatory laws applied to Indigenous people's alcohol consumption were much stricter than those for non-Indigenous American and Canadian societies. In the US, Congress passed a comprehensive prohibition law in 1892 that specifically targeted all Indigenous people under US federal jurisdiction, which remained in force until 1933.<sup>74</sup> In Canada, the *Indian Act* of 1876 imposed prohibition on First

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<sup>69</sup> Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow," 105.

<sup>70</sup> Cook, 104.

<sup>71</sup> Cook, 104.

<sup>72</sup> Cook, 104.

<sup>73</sup> For an in-depth study on Indigenous women's participation in the American WCTU, see Thomas John Lappas, *In League Against King Alcohol: Native American Women and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1874-1933* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020).

<sup>74</sup> Rod Phillips, *Alcohol: A History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 234.

Nations people until 1985.<sup>75</sup>

The WCTU's work among Indigenous communities was an extension of missionary and colonial enterprises, and with the US and Canada's federal policies, the effects of the temperance movement within these spaces were long-lasting. White WCTU members valorized the mission of "the daughters of our own people" in bringing "the doctrine of total abstinence from that which is the enemy of all races" to non-white communities, including Indigenous ones, framing WCTU women as saviours.<sup>76</sup> While they positioned intemperance as harmful to all races, the WCTU emphasized the effects of alcohol on Indigenous communities, presenting Indigenous people both as victims of the alcohol trade who needed the protection of white society and using them to personify of the evils of alcohol abuse.<sup>77</sup> This reinforced existing and harmful false stereotypes of Indigenous cultures as uncivilized and violent.<sup>78</sup> The approach of the WCTU, other temperance societies, and the colonial Canadian and American governments was paternalistic, based on racial ideology, and promoted the perceived superiority of Anglo-Saxon "civilization."

Though the WCTU was a predominantly Protestant organization, it also tried to engage Catholics, with limited success. While Willard professed that the WCTU was "a society that has an open hand for Catholic and Protestant," in reality this

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<sup>75</sup> Phillips, *Alcohol*, 235.

<sup>76</sup> Woman's Christian Temperance Union, *Minutes of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, at the Eleventh Annual Meeting, in St. Louis, Missouri, 22-25 October, 1884* (Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publication Association, 1884), 86, [https://search-alexanderstreet-com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cbibliographic\\_details%7C2535896](https://search-alexanderstreet-com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C2535896).

<sup>77</sup> Lappas, *King Alcohol*, 123-124.

<sup>78</sup> Lappas, 123.

was not always the case.<sup>79</sup> Willard reached out to Catholic communities, for example by appearing at Irish-American temperance society meetings, and she praised the Catholic abstinence efforts, but this did not convince Catholics to participate in the WCTU.<sup>80</sup> Many in the WCTU saw intemperance as a moral failing that they associated with Catholics and immigrants, and this stigma impeded their efforts.<sup>81</sup> While many Catholics joined temperance societies, they rarely joined the WCTU.<sup>82</sup> Though the WCTU had limited success in Canada and the US among Catholics, they were even more constrained in Europe. As Tyrell notes, one of the organization's greatest strengths, its evangelical fervour, was also its greatest weakness in this respect.<sup>83</sup>

While there were branches of the WCTU in Québec, these were primarily organized by English Canadians and Americans.<sup>84</sup> When the WCTU reached out to Québécois, they were occasionally met with hostility; for example, in 1890, Ottawa's Young Woman's Christian Temperance Union caused a riot in Hull, Québec, when they tried to evangelize and spread the women's temperance movement among French Catholics.<sup>85</sup> In 1891, Willard noted that during her trip to Canada, the Québécois did not show support for the WCTU.<sup>86</sup> Other

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<sup>79</sup> Willard, *Glimpses*, 393.

<sup>80</sup> Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire*, 65.

<sup>81</sup> Stacy J. Williams, "Personal Prefigurative Politics: Cooking Up an Ideal Society in the Woman's Temperance and Woman's Suffrage Movements, 1870–1920," *The Sociological Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2017): 75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2016.1246894>.

<sup>82</sup> Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire*, 65.

<sup>83</sup> Tyrell, 65.

<sup>84</sup> Addie Chisholm, *Why and How: A Hand-Book for the Use of the W.C.T. Unions in Canada* (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1884), 23, <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.00628/25?r=0&s=1>.

<sup>85</sup> Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow," 3-6.

<sup>86</sup> Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire*, 73.

temperance advocates outside the WCTU achieved success in Québec, and leadership often came directly from the clergy during the nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> But, as Janet Noel argues, Québec temperance was closely linked to nationalism, so Québécois participation in a Protestant Anglo-American organization was limited.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, while the WCTU's evangelical methods and shared commonalities of Anglo-Saxon sisterhood strengthened temperance women's resolve and gave them a unified mission, it also inhibited their influence among communities that were not white, Protestant, or Anglo-Saxon, and created a hierarchy in opposition to their vision of global female temperance work.

The WCTU used imperial and racial ideology to create a model of global Anglo-Saxon, Protestant temperance sisterhood, but this necessarily excluded people who were not part of this community. While this ideology bound temperance women together, allowing for close collaboration between nations like Canada and the US, it also limited their reach. Despite its limitations, the WCTU was a powerful organization in the international women's movement. While the WCTU had little more than moral victories during the end of the nineteenth century, it grew into the largest women's organization in the world and worked towards goals such as universal suffrage in addition to its temperance work.<sup>89</sup> Women were provided avenues into the political arena that were viewed as socially acceptable, a trend that continued to grow during the early twentieth century. The WCTU also exemplified cross-national

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<sup>87</sup> Janet Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 155.

<sup>88</sup> Noel, *Canada Dry*, 155.

<sup>89</sup> Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 71; D'Itri, *Cross Currents*, 39.

collaboration between Canada and the United States, as well as international partnerships, and its impact was far-reaching. In the words of contemporaries, the WCTU's work "was a combination of the enthusiasm of all civilized nations;" however, the organization reflected a very narrow view of what constituted civilization.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> James T. Docking, "The World's Convention of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union," *Zion's Herald* (Boston, MA), July 17, 1895, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/127482950/abstract/CBB534E6E839411APO/4>.

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## **A Heavy Cap: the Power Dynamics Within the Maid's Uniform**

Gabrielle Kaduc-Stojic

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The clothing of the maid is versatile in both its cultural interpretations and the power dynamics implicit within it. The maid's uniform has evolved beyond a simple cleaning uniform, to become culturally coded with plenty of subtext. In film, the women who wear maid's clothing can be divided into the three divine feminine archetypes: maiden, mother, and crone. The culturally coded maid uniform is partially dictated by the woman who wears it. Similarly, it brings to mind the age-old proverb that 'the clothes don't make the (wo)man.' But what do they make? By examining the historical background of the maid's uniform, its impact on fashion, the maids who wear these uniforms in popular culture, and the sexualization of the uniform, we see that the uniform of the maid and its enduring popularity reveal the cultural interest and importance of power dynamics and status in England and North America from 1860 onwards.

The enduring image of the classic black and white maid's uniform as a trusted symbol continued into the late twentieth century, suggesting the importance of the uniform and the valuable information that it can convey. In the branding of cleaning services such as Molly Maid, one sees the lasting importance of the classic British maid uniform. The company was revamping the brand's image in the 1980s, and with it their uniforms. The chairman stressed the importance of their image, as "the [cleaning] market is driven by the working woman," and noted that "instant credibility and trust are crucial because in many cases, we'll be getting the key to their home on the first

visit.”<sup>1</sup> In the pursuit of a uniform that inspired credibility and confidence, they turned to the classic uniform of the British maid “to project trust and loyalty,” a choice that ended up being extremely successful for the company.<sup>2</sup> Molly Maid’s interest in turning to the classic British maid’s uniform shows how much the understanding and virtues of the British maid has remained within the public mind.

### **The Maid’s Uniform and its Background**

Molly Maid referencing the classic British maid’s uniform demonstrates the historical importance between the uniform and the position it retained in North America. Social historian Fanny Louvier’s article, “Beyond the Black and White: Female Domestic Servants, Dress and Identity in France and Britain, 1900-1939” examines how dress acted as a crucial tool through which French and British maids defined their identities.<sup>3</sup> Clothing has the unique ability to convey the wearer’s occupation, class, age, regional identity, gender, religion, and more.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, clothing functioned as a means to convey information about the wearer, and in doing so influenced how the wearer was perceived.<sup>5</sup> However, the majority of the history and historiography on clothing has revolved around the clothing of the upper class and items with more public symbolism, such as military uniforms and religious and ceremonial dress. While this

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Child, “Molly Maid’s Success Linked to English Image, Marketing,” *Crain’s Detroit Business* 5, no. 21 (1989): 7.

<sup>2</sup> Child, “Molly Maid’s Success Linked to English Image,” 7.

<sup>3</sup> Fanny Louvier, “Beyond the Black and White: Female Domestic Servants, Dress and Identity in France and Britain, 1900-1939,” *Cultural and Social History* 16, no. 5 (2019): 582, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1691475>.

<sup>4</sup> Louvier, “Beyond the Black and White,” 582.

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 4.

narrow focus hinders studying anything outside these bounds, historians' focus on the clothing of the upper class is largely due to the fact that those in the upper class were assumed to act as trendsetters, and their clothing is often better preserved.<sup>6</sup> The maid's uniform of the late nineteenth century was a particularly fascinating clothing item. Not only was it widespread in use, and well documented in style magazines, but it became an icon of the domestic service industry, and a pop culture motif. Despite its humble beginnings, the maid uniform is a relic of times past that has made its way into the collective memory as being simultaneously symbolic.

Many English households did not have distinctive uniforms for their female servants until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Rather, they would wear their own clothing and an apron. However, by 1860, high-quality patterned fabric had become so inexpensive that mistresses complained of their servants dressing similarly to them.<sup>8</sup> The introduction of uniforms was to redesignate the figure of the maid as apart from that of the mistress. This was considered especially important in the case of parlour maids who were seen by visitors of the house.<sup>9</sup> Having a maid who appeared virtually indistinguishable from the lady of the house would be something to be mocked, and was

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<sup>6</sup> Works that break with this trend include Daniel Roche's influential book on the wardrobes of the rich and the poor in Ancien Régime France, as well as Vivienne Richmond and John Styles' radical studies on the clothing of the poor in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which examine the prominent symbolism of clothing within all tiers of society. Louvier's article builds off of these works. Louvier, "Beyond the Black and White," 582.

<sup>7</sup> Fred Davis, "Of Maids' Uniforms and Blue Jeans: the Drama of Status Ambivalences in Clothing and Fashion," *Qualitative Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1989): 344, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00989396>.

<sup>8</sup> Forty, A. *Objects of Desire: Design and Society, 1750-1980* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 82.

<sup>9</sup> Forty, *Objects of Desire*, 82.

an opportunity not missed by contemporary cartoonists.<sup>10</sup> From 1860 onwards, it became commonplace for maids to wear what would become the classic maid's uniform; that of a black dress with a white cap, cuffs, collar, and apron.<sup>11</sup> This would remain the distinctive dress of the maid into the twentieth century and, despite no longer being worn by modern maids, remains the characteristic uniform.<sup>12</sup>

In a transnational context, women who migrated to North America brought styles and influences from their home country. Such was the case with maids and nannies from Britain and France who were the front-runners that dictated how maids should act and how they should dress. These expectations trickled over to North America through correspondence, newspapers, and immigration. What resulted was an often more relaxed version of the European maid or nanny. When members of the English upper class emigrated to North America, a household maid often accompanied them. Once landed, they frequently complained of the women's changed demeanour. Upon landing in North America, these maids were not instantaneously "imbued with a republican spirit" as their employers recorded.<sup>13</sup> Rather, these maids had demanded higher pay and better conditions, threatening to leave if their needs remained unmet.<sup>14</sup> Experienced housemaids were rare in North America, and so employers would be hard-pressed to deny their demands. This change in the servant's attitude put all the more importance on her dress. To reinforce her subordinate position, her employers would turn to the uniform to maintain the

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<sup>10</sup> Davis, "Of Maids' Uniforms and Blue Jeans," 344.

<sup>11</sup> Louvier, "Beyond the Black and White," 586.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, "Of Maids' Uniforms and Blue Jeans," 344.

<sup>13</sup> Marilyn Barber, *Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada*. (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Barber, *Immigrant Domestic Servants*, 4.

hierarchical class structure they were accustomed to in England.<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of her employers, her uniform would have been one of the few tools of status by which to remind the maid of her position.

In articles from the *New York Times* spanning from 1913 to 1945, the practice of wealthy, upper-class employers matching their housemaids' uniforms to the furnishings was popular. One such article, published in 1928, describes a woman whose boudoir was decorated in brown; upon outfitting her personal maid in the same brown hue, she had become distressed because the colour was "so unbecoming to her [maid]" that the employer, rather than fire the maid, opted to have the boudoir redone to match the maid's old uniform.<sup>16</sup> The recurring theme of deciding whether to fire a maid because she did not match one's decor was shockingly prolific in these articles, and reveals the underlying belief that one's maids were objects, or decoration in the employer's home. The uniform of the maid had the unique ability to place her among the employer's decor; as exemplified through parlour maids having multiple uniforms depending on the time of day. In the morning the maids would wear white and blue (or pink or mauve) striped dresses.<sup>17</sup> The classic black and white uniform was worn in the afternoon, the white frilly apron and cap remained the same with both morning and afternoon attire.<sup>18</sup> For employers, being able to have a maid whose sole purpose was menial domestic tasks that would not stain her

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<sup>15</sup> Barber, 4.

<sup>16</sup> "Maid Could not "wear" Shade so Furniture was Changed," *The New York Times*, 1 July, 1928, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1928/07/01/94145282.html?pagenumber=44>.

<sup>17</sup> Louvier, "Beyond the Black and White," 586.

<sup>18</sup> Louvier, "Beyond the Black and White," 586.



white cuffs, apron, and cap was a mark of respectability.<sup>19</sup> In employers' accounts of servants' dress, uniforms were mentioned only as a tool to further the status and respectability of the employer.<sup>20</sup> The condition of the uniforms provided for maids became a means by which members of the upper class judged one another. Poorly uniformed maids were considered a reflection of their employer, who was assumed to be either unable to afford 'respectable' uniforms or simply did not care to do so. In either case, the employer was assumed to be of a lower social echelon.

### **Class: the Highs, Lows, and the Aprons in Between**

While most clothing can convey personal attributes, uniforms specifically tend to be indicative of class. In "Of Maids' Uniforms and Blue Jeans: The Drama of Status Ambivalences in Clothing and Fashion," sociologist Fred Davis examines many of the social nuances that exist within fashion:

Clothing's ability to communicate information about the self can best be conceptualized in terms of the semiotic notion of a code (Barthes 1983). It would be mistaken, however, to think of clothing's code as the isomorphic equivalent of language (Culler 1977, Davis 1985, Enninger 1985) as proposed by Barthes and advanced, though more playfully to be sure, by the writer Alison Lurie (1981). Clothing's code is more ambiguous and semantically indeterminate. Except in the instance of uniforms (Joseph 1986), it usually alludes, suggests and insinuates much more than it denotes.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Louvier, 586.

<sup>20</sup> Louvier, 582.

<sup>21</sup> Davis, "Of Maids' Uniforms and Blue Jeans," 338.

Due to the uniform's ability to enforce a strict social hierarchy, servants often felt that their uniforms reduced them to their role. The uniform functioned to portray the maids as an 'other,' for the employers wanted to believe that they were different and better than their servants. The uniform prevented the humanity of the maids from being too visible, therefore allowing their employers to continue to see them as faceless bodies.<sup>22</sup> In the autobiography of Dorothy Fudge, a 1920s parlour maid, she shared her anger over her employer's use of the uniform to reiterate her inferior status. Her uniform had become so ingrained into her employer's perception of her identity, that when they saw her out of uniform they struggled to recognize her:

We went to Bournemouth with them [her employers], and on arrival, we were told they would meet us at a certain restaurant on the seafront. When the time came, we were having tea in the 'best room', and feeling very grand, when the colonel's sister came in. She told us Mr and Mrs Adams would be late picking us up and then, in a very loud voice, said: 'I hardly recognised you! You look so different without your caps!' We could have hit her.<sup>23</sup>

This reveals the alienation from one's own identity that can occur through employers' use of the maid uniform in an effort to maintain their respectable image.

With growing employment opportunities between 1900 and 1939, many women had choices of work beyond the domestic sphere for the first time. Work outside the home meant no uniform or one with fewer status indicators. Many women felt that a maid's uniform made them feel inferior to workers outside

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<sup>22</sup> Louvier, "Beyond the Black and White," 589.

<sup>23</sup> Dorothy Fudge, *Sands of Time: The Autobiography of Dorothy Fudge* (Wimborne: Word and Action, 1988), 27.

the home, and often made them feel self-conscious.<sup>24</sup> The classic white and black afternoon maid uniform was inherently linked to the domesticity of the occupation, as domestic service progressed away from productive tasks, it increasingly became about the social display of the employer.<sup>25</sup> As such, the uniform's function to reveal the maid's subordinate status was hard felt by the women, and they disliked that their uniforms marked them as still working within the domestic sphere.<sup>26</sup> In England, 27.6% of young women worked within the domestic service industry in 1921, making it the largest employment provider for young women.<sup>27</sup> However, by 1951, that percentage had dropped to just 5%.<sup>28</sup> Maids as a common fixture in upper-class houses were seen as a dying industry, and one's position as a maid further became seen as an outdated, and unstable profession.<sup>29</sup> The young women who had been working in the domestic service industry were moving towards professions seen as more modern, that granted better pay, more free time, and less employer oversight.<sup>30</sup>

### **The 'Little Black Dress' - Poorhouse, or Fashion House?**

Though the profession of the maid was dying out, the style of the maid's uniform became a source of inspiration for designers, such as Coco Chanel. The ubiquitous truth with fashion is the dichotomy between proclaimed wealth or pretend poverty: The tension between "ostentation versus understatement."<sup>31</sup> In the late 1920s, fashion designer Coco

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<sup>24</sup> Phillis Cunnington, *Costume of Household Servants From the Middle Ages to 1900* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1974), 125.

<sup>25</sup> Louvier, "Beyond the Black and White," 586.

<sup>26</sup> Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 22.

<sup>27</sup> Todd, *Young Women*, 23.

<sup>28</sup> Todd, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Todd, 22.

<sup>30</sup> Louvier, "Beyond the Black and White," 593.

<sup>31</sup> Davis, "Of Maids' Uniforms and Blue Jeans," 344.

Chanel created her famous 'little black dress.' The dress was made from high-end fabrics, but in a colour and cut that was commonplace. The 'little black dress' drew inspiration from the classic uniform of the maid and as such, the 'little black dress' could be described as the apotheosis to the maid's black afternoon dress.<sup>32</sup> As such, its appearance inspired connotations of humility, and the phenomenon that fashion writer Army Latour characterizes as "the art of dressing simply... and paying a great deal of money for the pleasure."<sup>33</sup> Wearing the 'little black dress' was thought to insinuate social superiority through its adoption of a lower-class style and colour.

Clothing is inherently connected to status through the understood connotations of colours, cuts, brands, uniforms, and through how it is worn. The status perceived through the uniforms of maids and nannies is not high within the social hierarchy, but clothes that are understated and reminiscent of these women's uniforms are. Such as with the case of the 'little black dress.' While Chanel's 'little black dress' was the 1920s version of distressed fashion, this intentional representation of penury through clothing is a theme that has continued to the modern day. In mainstream stores that are known to mimic runway fashion such as Zara and H&M, t-shirts, sweaters, and jeans are sold with holes in them or splattered with bleach stains. This distressed high-end fashion is, in essence, a fetishization of poor and working-class clothing. As such the 'little black dress' can be seen as a precursor to the glorification of unpretentious modesty.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Catherine Driscoll, "Chanel: The Order of Things," *Fashion Theory* 14, no. 2 (2010): 144, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174110X12665093381504>.

<sup>33</sup> Davis, "Of Maids' Uniforms and Blue Jeans," 344.

<sup>34</sup> Similarly to how the majority of fashion historians focused on the fashion of the upper-class as they were assumed trendsetters, we see a repeat of high-end fashion and its trickle-down effect.

## The Sexualization of the Maid and Her Uniform

In popular culture, representations of maids in the classic and stereotypical white and black uniform is called the 'French maid's' outfit.<sup>35</sup> However, the figure we associate with the French maid in a flattering 'little black dress' and flouncy apron was a "carefully constructed cultural figure that was used to export the fashion and sophistication of the French bourgeoisie to both national and foreign audiences."<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the French maid uniform is simply a sexualized version of the classic British maid's uniform. It is worth noting, that while the classic black and white frilled maid uniform is often called the outfit of the 'French maid,' in actuality, the French maid had no standard uniform. In scholarly literature it is evident that French maids had more relaxed expectations regarding their clothing, oftentimes an apron being the only additional clothing requirement of the employers.<sup>37</sup> In which case, it was not her clothing that marked her of her status, but the townspeople's knowledge of her occupation.

The stereotypical French maid, in her shortened and sexualized version of the classic British maid's uniform, became the representation of maids that has remained a fixture in the collective memory.<sup>38</sup> As the maid that became a prominent motif in popular culture had been created to appear classy and oftentimes erotic, it has resulted in sexualized stereotypes of the maid. In *Fetish: Fashion, Sex, and Power*, fashion historian Valerie Steele describes the maid figure to be "an obviously submissive

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<sup>35</sup> Louvier, "Beyond the Black and White," 583.

<sup>36</sup> Louvier, 586.

<sup>37</sup> Louvier, 586-87.

<sup>38</sup> Louvier, 586.

role” indicating the power differential “implicit in traditional gender stereotypes.”<sup>39</sup>

Maid uniforms are culturally coded as sexual. When exactly this happened is hard to pin down, and arguably they always have been. This is in part due to the history of the ‘French maid’ stereotype, but also because maids’ uniforms signified their place in the social hierarchy or, rather, their employer’s control and power over them. Therefore, as noted by Steele, the sexualization of the maid uniform does not come from its physical appearance, but the place it represents within the social hierarchy and the accompanying power dynamics. It is not the clothing that makes one person have a powerful role, and the other not, but rather the understood cultural significance, or the implied position that those clothes would naturally bring. That is to say, it is the accompanying fantasy that imbues the clothes with power.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, what exists at the root of the sexualization of the maid’s uniform is the understood power dynamic between the maid and her employer which remains at the forefront of social consciousness.

### **The Overlap of the Maid and the Nanny**

There exists in the literature an overlap between the maid and the nanny. Both occupied the sphere of live-in workers, one focused on the home, the other on the children. Although in some houses the maid also had nannying responsibilities.<sup>41</sup> Most

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<sup>39</sup> Valerie Steele, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex, and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 324.

<sup>40</sup> Susan, Branch Smith, "Fetish Fantastic: Tales of Power and Lust from Futuristic to Surreal," *Lambda Book Report*, November 24, 1999, <https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/fetish-fantastic-ales-power-lust-futuristic/docview/237025610/se-2?accountid=14701>.

<sup>41</sup> Louvier, “Beyond the Black and White,” 586.

servants, specifically in middle-class households, would work as maids-of-all-work, and would wear a uniform similar to that of a housemaid - a white and blue striped dress with a white apron and cap.<sup>42</sup> While the work spheres of the nanny and maid were similar, the varied importance of their uniform also existed: Nannies, housekeepers, and lady's maids had more responsibilities that placed them in roles requiring high levels of trust, and as such provided them a superior position within class hierarchies.<sup>43</sup> Their uniforms were recognized as belonging to individuals with increased importance, and therefore power, within their employer's household. While for some it could be a source of pride - that one had employment at all - for others it was a mark of their lower class and their place within the social hierarchy.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly to how the sexualization of the maid uniform arose, so too did the nanny experience the fetishization of her personhood through her uniform and the connotations that followed. A source used during the beginning stages of this essay was *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny* by Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy. While it was helpful in showing the social history of nannies - even though at times reading more like conjecture than fact - it revealed much on the fetishization of the nanny. While there were brief mentions to children making comments about wanting to marry their nanny, what was particularly trenchant was the author's inclusion of not one, but two separate chapters on the sexuality of nannies - each chapter being titled as a "sexual detour." The word detour adds to the idea of a fringe activity, or some sort of deviant behaviour. It is worth noting, that none of these nannies behaviour was as sexual

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<sup>42</sup> Louvier, 586.

<sup>43</sup> Louvier, 586.

<sup>44</sup> Louvier, 583.

as the chapter titles indicated. Instances such as the nanny's sexualization suggests that it is not the job that sexualized her, but like the maid uniform, the nanny's dress also placed her in a position under that of her employers. She lived and functioned in a space in which her actions were largely controlled. Therefore, the sexualization of the nanny, similarly to that of the maid, is rooted in the power dynamics that existed in her world, and that were exemplified through her uniform.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Marias: Maids in Film**

In film, we can examine the maid and nanny characters, and the connotation surrounding their uniforms. What arises are three distinct categories of these positions: the divine female archetypes of maiden, mother, and crone. The maiden is represented as a young and naive virgin, the mother as an oft-sexualized child-bearer, and the crone is the old, extremely knowledgeable, cranky figure.<sup>46</sup> The films *A Shot in the Dark* (1964), *Maid in Manhattan* (2002), *Madame* (2017), and *The Sound of Music* (1965) each have a maid or nanny character that explicitly falls into one of these three categories. All of these films also adhere to something dubbed the 'Maria rule,' in which the maid and nanny characters are overwhelmingly named Maria.

The popularity of the name Maria for a maid could be argued to have stemmed from *The Sound of Music* in which Maria (Julie Andrews) is a much-beloved nanny-turned-stepmother. As previously mentioned, while the roles of nanny and maid are not identical, there often exists plenty of overlap in their

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<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny*, Faber & Faber, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> While I did not go into exhaustive detail in the number of movies included, it is worth noting that not a single movie or television show that I researched while doing this paper had a maid or nanny character that did not explicitly fall into one of the three categories.



responsibilities. It is possible that through the vast success of *The Sound of Music*, the name Maria became culturally coded as the name of a beloved domestic care worker.

With regard to the films, *A Shot in the Dark* is a murder-mystery in which all clues point to the maid, Maria (Elke Sommer) being the killer. Maria evades custody because the detective is smitten with her. Despite her maid's uniform, Maria is the archetype of the mother, even with the uniform on. Despite all odds, she committed no murder in the movie and was considered romantically desirable the whole time. Her uniform is a pale blue with a white apron, collar and cuffs. However, the dress is very snug, something that would in no way be practical for cleaning, and instead alludes to her as a figure of sexual desire. *Maid in Manhattan* has a similar premise. This Maria (Jennifer Lopez), is invisible; however, when out of her uniform, she gets swept up in a romance and attempts to keep her occupation a secret. In the case of this movie, Jennifer Lopez is someone who is considered very beautiful in popular culture. However, through her anxiety and fear surrounding her sense of romantic self-worth while in her maid uniform, she is portrayed as being romantically undesirable - a crone figure. *Madame* is a romantic comedy in which a maid, Maria (Rossy de Palma), is recruited to play an aristocrat for the mistress of the house to avoid having 13 seated at the table. While Maria is not particularly old, the film presents her as being an accidental - and shocking - love interest due to her appearance and age, thus painting her as a crone - a stuffy old woman with no sexual value. However, the love interest only arises when she is out of her maid uniform and pretending to be a guest, thereby reinforcing the idea of the crone being tied to the uniform of the maid. This raises the question of whether it is the tasks that the

maid completes that make her be interpreted as the crone, or her physical self.

While it does not appear to be a consciously-held perspective, what became clear during the research of this essay was that the public's perception of maids and nannies is often conflated into one. As such, the understanding, stereotypes, and sexualization of these occupations experienced much overlap in popular media. In support of the argument that nannies and maids occupy the same sphere in the public mind; during the research about films for this paper on electronic forums, questions concerning maids or nannies in popular culture would be answered with films of both, suggesting that the terms are viewed as interchangeable. Therefore, within the public mind, there exists very little difference between the figure of the maid and that of the nanny.<sup>47</sup>

### **Conclusion: The End of the Maid?**

The history of the maid's uniform is rich and layered. While the traditionally dressed maid is a figure of the past, their image continues to endure as their uniform has become a stereotype that pervades pop culture through films. The image of the maid carries with it the implicit understanding of power

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<sup>47</sup> While there were no academic sources available on the topic, what did become clear during the research for this paper, was that any film set prior to 1900 deviated from the Maria rule, and modern films - post 1970 - with maids were often of Latin-American descent and named Maria. Perhaps this is because in the years following 1966, the immigration of women from Latin America to Canada who were working within the domestic care industry greatly increased. Therefore, while it would need more thorough research, I would argue that the 'Maria rule' is partially due to the increased percentage of Latin-American women working as maids and nannies in recent collective memory. Alan B. Simmons, "Latin American Migration to Canada: New Linkages in the Hemispheric Migration and Refugee Flow System," *International Journal* 48, no. 2 (1993): 282, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40202882>.

dynamics and control through the relationship between employer and employee. Its background originates in a hybrid between the classic - often considered respectable - British maid, and the corporate creation of the sexualized French maid. The modern image of the black and white maid uniform, is a mix of the British and French maid uniforms, with special emphasis on the perceived sex appeal of the uniform due to its historical ties to power differentials within employer households. The uniform's primary function of reinforcing the status divide between employer and maid was successful, though it often created an environment of animosity between the two as it emphasized the division between the mistress and the maid. As noted by maid and gardener Violet Firth in her memoirs during the First World War:

The woman in the fashionable silk frock tells the woman in the washed-out print dress that she cannot afford to give higher wages. In the evening, the woman in the kitchen uses her scanty leisure to patch the dress, and so make it hang together a little longer. Then she goes into the dining room to serve dinner and sees that the silk frock has been changed for a satin frock. Next evening, she patches the print dress again, because the material, never strong, is rotten with wear and washing. When she goes into the dining-room she sees that the satin frock is replaced by a lace frock. Is there any need for me to detail the feelings of that woman towards her employer?<sup>48</sup>

Firth's feelings were prevalent among the women of the domestic service industry. The special ability of the maid's uniform to

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<sup>48</sup> Violet Firth, *The Psychology of the Servant Problem: A Study in Social Relationships* (London: C. W. Daniel Co., 1925), 14.

divide women based on money, status, class, and power revealed the mistreatment and low-wages these women faced. The maid uniform's ability to erase the woman beneath provided employers with faceless workers and, more often than not, they became a type of decor exclusive to the upper class. In the case of Dorothy Fudge, it was seen that maids were objectified to the point that employers were unable to identify them outside of their uniforms. Their uniform was both a marker of their subordinate status within the social hierarchy, and a major facet of their identity to much of the population. As such, the maid uniform became a source of shame for many of the maids.

In addition, the maid and her uniform are frequent motifs in pop culture, and she is often used as a stylized and eroticized figure. This theme of consuming the figure of the maid and the woman beneath can be traced across much of women's history. The sexualization of her through her occupation and subordinate position is recurrent through much of history, and remains a part of the modern conception of the classic black and white maid uniform. As a result of this research, it becomes evident that the enduring popularity of the maid and her uniform reveal the cultural interest in, and the importance of, power dynamics and status within class hierarchies. In addition, the maid's uniform exemplifies the cultural obsession with sexualizing women in vulnerable occupations.

While the power differential exacerbated by the maid's uniform was essential to its creation, as affirming the status divide between that of the maid and the mistress was the predominant reason behind the uniform, it also acted as a subtle status indication within and between the upper class. This is shown in both the quality of the maid's uniform and in her coordination with the employer's decor. These power dynamics remain at the centre of the history of the uniform of the British

and North American maid, and reveal not just the position of the maid and her place within the social hierarchy, but the people these hierarchies served and their interests in maintaining the divide through the uniform of the maid.

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**Patching, Privation, and Sartorial Innovation during the American Civil War: The Impact of the Union Blockade on the Sartorial Practices of White and Enslaved Women in the Wartime South**

Elsa Levecque

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Over the course of the American Civil War (1861–1865), the sartorial practices of white and Black women in the Confederacy changed due to shortages caused by the Union blockade of the Confederate states and the regulations imposed on imports by the Confederacy. Wartime shortages created a myriad of sartorial opportunities for both white and Black Southern women. While wartime led to obvious hardships and privations, it also fostered a spirit of sartorial innovation. An investigation of the new sartorial practices adopted by women at the beginning of the war illustrates how the conceptualization of the social and political meaning of women’s clothing changed as the war progressed. Additionally, the efforts of white women to stay current with the fashions of the time, despite fabric shortages, often necessitated in-home manufacturing of clothing and mending existing clothing to make it last. Furthermore, the increasing cost of, and difficulty acquiring, clothing impacted the enslaved in a twofold manner; the effort it took to clothe enslaved workforces increased exponentially, while the wartime necessity of patching clothing complemented pre-existing African-American fashions.

Many of the studies that focus on women during the Civil War period, such as the works of George C. Rable and Marilyn Mayer Culpepper, mention very little on women’s dress during



wartime.<sup>1</sup> Anita A. Stamper and Jill Condra's *Clothing Through American History: The Civil War Through the Gilded Age, 1861-1899* provides a more in-depth discussion of sartorial practices during the 1860s; however, it primarily concerns elite white women.<sup>2</sup> Joan E. Cashin offers a more inclusive picture, discussing the sartorial practices of both elite white women and enslaved and newly-freed Black women during wartime.<sup>3</sup> In the respective works of Shaw, White and White, and Knowles, there is a more in-depth discussion of the clothing and textiles of enslaved and newly-freed Black people from the eighteenth century through the antebellum and Civil War period.<sup>4</sup>

Women's clothing in the 1850s and 1860s was quite consistent in silhouette and style across the United States and socio-economic classes. Women of all circumstances were aware of fashion trends, and most tried to follow them.<sup>5</sup> However, the

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<sup>1</sup> George C. Rable, "The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front," in *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (University of Illinois Press, 1989), 92-96; Marilyn Mayer Culpepper, "The Battle Against Privation," in *Trials and Triumphs: The Women of the American Civil War* (Michigan State University Press, 1991), 205-39.

<sup>2</sup> Anita A. Stamper and Jill Condra, *Clothing Through American History: The Civil War Through the Gilded Age, 1861-1899* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010), 79-154, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>3</sup> Joan E. Cashin, "Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks: Fashion, Gender, Race, and Danger in the Wartime South," *Civil War History* 61, no. 4 (2015): 338-61, doi:10.1353/cwh.2015.0066.

<sup>4</sup> Madelyn Shaw, "Slave Cloth and Clothing Slaves: Craftsmanship, Commerce, and Industry," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 33, (2012), <https://www.mesdajournal.org/2012/slave-cloth-clothing-slaves-craftsmanship-commerce-industry/>; Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Past & Present*, no. 148 (1995): 149-86, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651051>; Katie Knowles, "Patches of Resistance on the Badges of Enslavement: Enslaved Southerners, Negro Cloth, and Fashionability in the Cotton South," in *Clothing in Southern History*, ed. Ted Ownby and Becca Walton (University of Mississippi Press, 2020), 3-31.

<sup>5</sup> Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 81.

degree to which women were able to follow these trends depended on many factors, including proximity to materials, access to fashion news, financial means, and the tasks of daily life.<sup>6</sup> The dress was the primary female garment of this period, and its silhouette was the greatest point of consistency. The fashionable silhouette had wide and rounded shoulders, a narrow waist created with a corset, and a wide and voluminous bell-shaped skirt created with hoops, or crinolines, and petticoats. Often, working-class women and frontier settlers would not wear corsets and hoops in factories and fields as a matter of safety and practicality. Even so, many frontier women wrote about trends like tight-lacing and trying to maintain what they thought was a fashionable appearance.<sup>7</sup>

Late antebellum period clothing was part of the rapidly-growing transatlantic market of consumer goods. Elite women in Europe pioneered fashion trends that were then adopted eagerly in the rest of the Western world. For example, the hoop skirt first appeared in the court of the French Empress Eugenie in 1853, and quickly became extremely popular, arguably the defining style of the period. Aniline dyes also appeared in the 1850s, which meant that clothing was now available in brighter and more brilliant colours.<sup>8</sup> In the antebellum South, elite women of the planter class purchased their clothing and textiles, such as expensive muslins and silks,

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<sup>6</sup> Stamper and Condra, 81.

<sup>7</sup> Stamper and Condra, 82, 88, 107-10, 285-86. Tight-lacing was the practice of using a corset to pull the waist in as tightly as possible to achieve—on an extreme level—the ideal feminine shape: a fashionably narrow waist and hourglass figure. Lacing so tightly as to damage one’s body and health in pursuit of the fashionable silhouette was only practiced by a small minority of women. For the majority, the corset was merely an accepted structural undergarment that they would not feel fully dressed without, similar to the modern bras women wear today.

<sup>8</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 341-42.

directly from Europe. The clothing of the planter women was extravagant and represented their families' status and wealth.<sup>9</sup> Upper-class women would decorate their hair with headbands, braids, and flowers and wore flowing sleeves, very large hoop skirts, and headdresses made of tulle, lace, and feathers. Black and white Southerners were able to identify the social status of a woman wearing such attire. Thus, Southern women of all circumstances understood the changes to the antebellum fashions of the elite during the Civil War to be symbolic of the declining power of the planter class and the South's crumbling social hierarchy.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the elite's clothing, the enslaved during this period typically wore a dress of coarse plain-weave cloth made of cotton or wool, often called "negro cloth." Clothing for the enslaved could be bought ready-made or carded, spun, woven, and sewn on the plantation. While durable, negro cloth was meant to be discarded and replaced, rather than mended and cared for like more expensive textiles.<sup>11</sup> This clothing was often simple and ill-fitting; its uniformity of style and size during the production process made it very cheap and simultaneously served to demoralize and oppress those who wore it by preventing individual expression and identity. However, the enslaved still managed to personalize their attire by dyeing, patching, and quilting their clothing, creating for themselves a sense of individuality as well as a distinct African-American sartorial culture.<sup>12</sup> Certain enslaved women also participated in

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<sup>9</sup> Cashin, 340-43.

<sup>10</sup> Cashin, 343-44.

<sup>11</sup> Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 135-36; Knowles, "Patches of Resistance," 9-12; Cashin, "Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks," 345.

<sup>12</sup> Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 136; Knowles, "Patches of Resistance," 13-15, 20; White and White, "Slave Clothing and African-American Culture," 168-72.

some of the same elements of late-antebellum fashion as planter women. Those who worked in the households of their enslavers were better dressed than field workers so that they would display the wealth of their enslaver to other affluent white people. Often given the cast-off clothing of their “mistresses,” these women wore collars, shawls, and full-length skirts that were made of higher quality textiles than negro cloth. Some enslaved women even made their own hoops for their skirts in order to participate in fashionable late-antebellum style.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the Civil War, the South had relatively limited manufacturing capacity. Most of the South’s manufactured goods – including personal items, household goods, textiles, and clothing – were imported. This was due to the South’s preoccupation with the production of cotton, which left Southern industry underdeveloped compared to the North. In fact, most cotton manufacturing occurred outside the South, although a substantial number of textile mills did exist in the southern states prior to the Civil War.<sup>14</sup> However, the South’s underdeveloped industry and reliance on imports became a problem with the imposition of the Union blockade.

At the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, American President Abraham Lincoln was confronted with the secession of several southern states, and ordered a naval blockade of Confederate ports in response.<sup>15</sup> This cut the Confederacy off from obtaining consumer goods, medical supplies, and resources

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<sup>13</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 344-46; Knowles, “Patches of Resistance,” 16-17.

<sup>14</sup> Culpepper, “The Battle Against Privation,” 208; Knowles, “Patches of Resistance,” 11.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Auerbach, “Presidential Proclamations on Blockade and Commercial Trade No. 81, No. 82, And No. 86,” in *Defining Documents in American History: Civil War (1860–1865)*, ed. James M. McPherson and Anna Accetola (Ipswich: Salem Press, 2014), Summary Overview, [online.salempress.com](http://online.salempress.com).

for manufacturing, and resulted in shortages, inflation, speculation, depreciated currency, and high rates of taxation. There was limited access to clothing, textiles, and other sartorial necessities; even pins and sewing needles became virtually inaccessible. Much of the South's manufacturing was diverted for the war effort, which meant locally-manufactured clothing, textiles, shoes, and other goods were increasingly hard to access since factories devoted their production to making uniforms and armaments for the Confederate Army.<sup>16</sup> The Confederate government not only tried to encourage local manufacturing and control speculation, but also tried to limit the importation of goods from abroad with acts against the importation of luxury items and acts to establish price limits for various linen, woolen, and silk textiles.<sup>17</sup>

Many white women in the South initially responded with enthusiasm to the secession crisis that began in late 1860 and the outbreak of war in 1861. Clothing was, and still is, an important means of self-expression through which ideas can be transmitted, and the elite Southern women, who were beneficiaries of the South's slave society, often translated their support for the nascent Southern nation inventively into their sartorial practices.<sup>18</sup> Pro-secession women often wore streamers, cockades, and rosettes in secessionist colours. Others wore a new invention: the secession bonnet. A secession bonnet worn by a South Carolinian

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<sup>16</sup> Culpepper, "The Battle Against Privation," 205, 208; Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 6; Elzey Hay (Eliza Andrews), "Dress Under Difficulties; Or, Passages from the Blockade Experience of Rebel Women," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, July 1866, 33, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000050287>.

<sup>17</sup> Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion as Communication* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1-7, <https://doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.4324/9781315013084>; Rable, "The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front," 30-31.

woman was described as composed of “white and black Georgia cotton, covered with a net-work of black cotton, the streamers ornamented with palmetto trees and lone star, embroidered with gold thread, while the feathers are formed of white and black worsted.”<sup>19</sup> This bonnet, with its trimmings representing various southern states – cotton from Georgia, palmetto from South Carolina, and the lone star for Texas – was a woman’s expression of patriotism and support for secession from the Union. It represented a new and innovative way for women to express political sentiments through their attire.

In the first year of the war, many Southern women also expressed their patriotism by refusing to buy any “new Yankee goods” and giving up “outlandish finery.” Instead, these women turned to local and home manufacturing. Wearing “homespun” garments became the symbol of virtue and patriotism for Southern Confederate women long before it became a necessity due to wartime shortages.<sup>20</sup> In this period, homespun referred to cloth woven “in plantation weave rooms by slave artisans; in homes or small workshops by skilled weavers supplementing their income from farming or another profession; in southern factories and mills by a mix of wage-earning and enslaved, skilled and unskilled men, women, and children; and during the Civil War, in homes by white inhabitants who either re-learned forgotten skills or learned to weave for the emergency.”<sup>21</sup> Southern women proudly began to spin and weave, learning the skills used by their grandmothers, which by the 1860s had become virtually exclusively the tasks of the enslaved and the

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<sup>19</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 347; “Secession Bonnets,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1860,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1860/12/08/archives/personal-gossip.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 32; Culpepper, “The Battle Against Privation,” 187-88.

<sup>21</sup> Shaw, “Slave Cloth and Clothing Slaves,” par. 18.

poor. Women also began using homemade dyes to colour and beautify their coarse homespun, using old techniques like dipping wool in pokeberry juice and enclosing the wool in a pumpkin shell to make a brilliant red. According to Eliza Andrews, a wealthy woman from Georgia, Southern women felt that by taking up these skills, they were following in the footsteps of their revolutionary ancestresses, who had been “mighty at the spinning wheel and knitting needle.”<sup>22</sup> Sewing and knitting were also taken up with new fervour. A handmade pair of gloves or socks was a common gift that women gave soldiers.<sup>23</sup> Women who were not industriously inclined bought homespun or locally made textiles and clothing, and demonstrated their patriotism by wearing homespun in ballrooms and on parade. Writing under the pen name Elzey Hay, Eliza Andrews said that soldiers praised them for showing their devotion to the Confederacy in this way, assuring the women that they “looked prettier in homespun than other women in silk and velvet.”<sup>24</sup> A popular Civil War-era song called “The Southern Girl with the Home-Spun Dress” celebrated this female sartorial patriotism, with lyrics such as, “My home-spun dress is plain; I know my hat’s quite common too; / But then it shows what Southern girls for Southern rights will do.”<sup>25</sup>

White women also enthusiastically adopted military-inspired styles of dress as they were swept up with wartime

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<sup>22</sup> Rable, “The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front,” 94; Knowles, “Patches of Resistance,” 13-14; Eliza Frances Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl: 1864-1865* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1908), 19, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/andrews/andrews.html>; Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 32-33.

<sup>23</sup> Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 32-33; Rable, “The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front,” 93.

<sup>24</sup> Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 32-33.

<sup>25</sup> Rable, “The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front,” 94.

fervour, and this fashion remained popular throughout the war. One military-inspired garment adopted by women was the Zouave jacket. Inspired by the uniforms of European and American armies, the Zouave jacket was cut like a bolero, closed at the neck and curving away at the hem until it reached the waist, and had coat-style sleeves. It was an open garment, always worn with a shirt, like the Garibaldi waist, which also showed military influence, and a separate skirt. Women's Zouave jackets were often embellished with braiding and ruching in imitation of the braiding on officers' uniforms.<sup>26</sup> Eliza Andrews wrote about both the enthusiasm with which white Southern women like herself embraced the Zouave, which she calls a cavalry jacket, and the ingenuity that was required for women to trim these jackets in the proper fashionable style:

Cavalry jackets were in high favour with us, for two reasons: first, because they answered the same purpose as the Garibaldi in helping out bodiless skirts and secondly, because they were military. We ladies were perfectly daft about gold lace and brass buttons and would all but break our necks to get a jacket trimmed with them . . . many a little brother has pouted all day over a Sunday jacket robbed of its brass buttons to decorate the waist of a sister. Gold lace was so scarce, so dear and so highly prized, that we would rip it from old, battle-worn uniforms and rub it with soda, vinegar, alcohol (when we could get it) chalk and ashes, in order to brighten it for further use, and sometimes its tarnished lustre would faintly revive.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 103-4.

<sup>27</sup> Hay, "Dress Under Difficulties," 35.



As mentioned by Andrews, shortages caused by the blockade made access to the proper trimmings for these military-inspired jackets difficult to obtain. The limited quantities of trimmings were needed for officers' uniforms, which were prioritized over the decoration of female civilian attire.<sup>28</sup> Andrews also mentions that skirts outlasted their bodices, and the shortages meant matching bodices could not easily be replaced. However, waists and Zouave jackets helped solve this problem.<sup>29</sup>

Like secession bonnets and cockades, women's military-style garments also served as vigorous political statements of Confederate support. Women often put a lot of effort into creating these political outfits, despite the shortages that began to occur because of the Union blockade. After the arrival of Union forces in Clarksville, Tennessee in 1862, local white women made a political statement by going out wearing "gray dresses with gold trim, gold lace, and buckskin gloves" in imitation of Confederate uniforms to demonstrate their defiance of the blue-uniformed occupying troops.<sup>30</sup>

Enslaved women also used their clothing to display their wartime politics and loyalties. Madison Bruin's mother, Mary, an enslaved woman in Kentucky during the Civil War, wore the "Yankee flag" on top of her dress, in a clear show of Union support. Nevertheless, when Confederate troops raided, she wore the flag under her dress as a petticoat, presumably out of a sense of self-preservation.<sup>31</sup> Other enslaved women expressed

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<sup>28</sup> Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Hay, "Dress Under Difficulties," 33, 35.

<sup>30</sup> Cashin, "Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks," 348.

<sup>31</sup> *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 16, Texas, Part 1, Adams-Duhon*, 1936, manuscript/mixed material, from Library of Congress, *Federal Writers' Project, United States Work Projects Administration (USWPA)*, 169-70, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn161/>; White and White, "Slave Clothing and African-American Culture," 184.

their political sentiments by running away, often stealing clothing from their enslavers to sell or to change into so they were less recognizable. For these runaways, stealing clothing was a way to strike against the “mistress,” the planter class, and the Confederacy.<sup>32</sup> The theft of their clothing would have been even more galling to planter women than it had been before the war, since shortages and inflation made new clothing difficult to obtain and extremely expensive.

As the war progressed, shortages caused by the blockade increased throughout the Confederacy, and the sartorial enthusiasm experienced by white Southern women at the beginning of the war waned. As the blockade cut off imports, shortages led to inflation, and the price of cloth and finished garments rose steadily, reaching outrageous prices. In 1863, Josephine Habersham refused to pay \$195 for a dress that had cost \$9 in 1861.<sup>33</sup> Even the most ordinary cloth, like calico, became prohibitively expensive. In 1862, Margaret Preston thought calico at 75 cents per yard was expensive, but by 1864, calico could cost \$6, \$10, or even \$12 per yard.<sup>34</sup> In 1864, Julia Johnson Fisher remarked in her diary with astonishment and disgust: “Only \$100 for a calico dress – a fine state of things! Confederate money is hardly worth picking up.”<sup>35</sup> Even homespun cloth rose to a price that would have been considered ludicrous before the war. In early 1864, Julia Johnson Fisher wrote that her neighbour, Mrs. Linn, had bought a coarse homespun dress for \$42, but that “now we cannot purchase even

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<sup>32</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 351.

<sup>33</sup> Rable, “The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front,” 93.

<sup>34</sup> Rable, “The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front,” 93-94.

<sup>35</sup> Julia Johnson Fisher, *Diary, 1864*, from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Documenting the American South*, 6, 9, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/fisherjulia/fisher.html>.

at that rate.”<sup>36</sup> In these conditions, more expensive textiles were out of the question for all except the wealthiest planter families and women who had connections with those who ran the blockade, as even a plain dress with no embellishments could cost \$800.<sup>37</sup> Black silk, and black material of all kinds, became particularly difficult to obtain, as so many women were in mourning during wartime.<sup>38</sup> Other sartorial needs also began to fail. Gloves, linen for undergarments, and bonnets became dear. According to Eliza Andrews, during the last year of the war, bonnets became “almost an utter impossibility,” costing upwards of \$1000.<sup>39</sup> Buttons, pins, needles, ribbons, and laces all became increasingly difficult to obtain. Even thread, a sartorial necessity for weaving cloth and sewing, was increasingly difficult to get and expensive to buy. According to Mrs. Warren Akin, a bunch of factory-made thread cost \$56 and a set of sewing needles could cost between \$10 and \$20.<sup>40</sup>

In the face of shortages and prohibitively expensive clothing and fabric caused by the blockade, the spirit of sartorial innovation displayed by white women at the beginning of the war remained present as they attempted to keep up appearances. Women who had begun spinning, weaving, and dyeing cloth at home at the start of the war out of patriotic enthusiasm continued to do so, as it had become a necessity. Thus the widespread wearing of homespun and southern-manufactured

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<sup>36</sup> Rable, “The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front,” 94; Fisher, *Diary*, 1864, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 34; Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 350.

<sup>38</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 350.

<sup>39</sup> Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 32-36.

<sup>40</sup> Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 32-33; Culpepper, “The Battle Against Privation,” 226.

clothing continued.<sup>41</sup> Some women brought out dresses from the previous century that had been kept in attics to make over and wear. One Virginian woman reportedly wore a stomacher from an eighteenth-century dress.<sup>42</sup> Women also used various innovative techniques to make their clothing last as long as possible and try to keep their clothing current with rapidly changing fashionable styles. They would patch skirts and cover the hems with trimmings, such as flounces, puffs, folds, ruffles, and ruches, to hide rents and tears or increase the skirt's length. Waists and sleeves were similarly patched and trimmed. Scallops were cut into the hems of skirts and petticoats to remove "little snags and dingy places."<sup>43</sup> Another technique women adopted was to take two old dresses, dye them both black, and use the pieces of the two old dresses that were still in good condition to make a new one. According to Eliza Andrews, "sometimes the same dress was dyed two or three times, the hue being darkened as stains deepened, and it was not uncommon to see skirts that had been turned inside out, upside down and hind part before."<sup>44</sup> Once a garment could no longer feasibly be worn, it was cut down for handkerchiefs. Women even removed the whalebones from parasols to reinforce their corsets and waists.<sup>45</sup> In truly desperate conditions, some women mended and made clothing from bed sheets and curtains. Many women also put much effort into refashioning hats and bonnets with whatever artificial flowers, ribbons, laces, and pieces of veiling that could be found.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Hay, "Dress Under Difficulties," 32-36; Rable, "The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front," 94-95.

<sup>42</sup> Hay, 33; Cashin, "Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks," 350.

<sup>43</sup> Hay, 34-35.

<sup>44</sup> Hay, 34.

<sup>45</sup> Hay, 34-35.

<sup>46</sup> Fisher, *Diary, 1864*, 2; Hay, "Dress Under Difficulties," 36.

Despite this continuing sartorial ingenuity, Southern white women no longer felt the same enthusiasm about wearing homespun and giving up luxuries as the war progressed. Many women, especially wealthy ones, missed the luxuries they were used to. Eliza Andrews wrote in her diary in March 1865:

Cousin Bessie lent me one of her fine embroidered linen nightgowns, and I was so overpowered at having on a decent piece of underclothing after the coarse Macon Mills homespun I have been wearing for the last two years, that I could hardly go to sleep . . . I can stand patched-up dresses, and even take a pride in wearing Confederate homespun, where it is done open and above board, but I can't help feeling vulgar and common in coarse underclothes.<sup>47</sup>

Compared to her cousin, who had lots of fashionable clothing from beyond the blockade, Eliza repeatedly expressed feeling like a “ragamuffin” and a “plucked peacock.”<sup>48</sup> Several years of making do and mending in increasingly difficult conditions had taken their toll on the initial enthusiasm of the white women, who, at the outset of war, had eagerly made secession bonnets and adopted homespun out of patriotic feeling. Although Eliza still felt some pride in outward displays of patriotism, such as wearing homespun, even though it was often itchy and incredibly hot during the summer, she no longer felt this pride by the last months of the war.<sup>49</sup> Emma LeConte from Columbia, South Carolina similarly expressed her dislike of the sartorial realities caused by wartime shortages and her yearning for prewar times:

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<sup>47</sup> Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl*, 110-11.

<sup>48</sup> Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl*, 87, 111.

<sup>49</sup> Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 33.

My underclothing is of coarse unbleached homespun, such as we gave the negroes formerly only much coarser. My stockings I knit myself, and my shoes are of heavy calfskin. My dresses are two calicoes, (the last one bought cost sixteen dollars a yard) a homespun of black and white plaid, and an old delaine of pre-war times that hangs on in a dilapidated condition, a reminiscence of better days.<sup>50</sup>

Naturally, the blockade and ensuing shortages also had implications for the clothing of enslaved women. Since clothing could no longer be imported from the North or Europe, and textile production in southern factories was diverted for the military, clothing manufacturing by and for the enslaved became increasingly necessary on plantations.<sup>51</sup> On the Curry Hill plantation in Georgia, all of the enslaved women had to work at spinning and weaving to produce cloth, with an end result of 264 yards of finished cloth produced over six months, meant primarily for plantation use.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, clothing the enslaved had become increasingly difficult, as can be attested by a petition made by a planter woman to an Alabama court in 1864. The petitioner expressed the great difficulty she was experiencing with providing clothing, shoes, and blankets to enslaved women and children in particular.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, W.W. Lenoir, a lawyer and plantation owner, wrote in a letter in 1864 about difficulty

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<sup>50</sup> Emma LeConte, *Diary, 1864-1865*, from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Documenting the American South*, 10, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/leconteemma/leconte.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Shaw, "Slave Cloth and Clothing Slaves," par. 18, 27.

<sup>52</sup> Shaw, par. 27.

<sup>53</sup> Ryan Jerel Aldridge, "The Responsibility of Clothing Slaves in the United States as Described in Slave Petitions, 1775 to 1867" (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2012), 84, [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_dissertations/468](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/468).

clothing the enslaved women labouring for him as they had not spun enough thread: "Maria and Delia have done very badly about spinning, not having spun filling enough during the year to make a comfortable allowance of clothing for the negroes."<sup>54</sup> Thomas Hill, the overseer of Thomas J. Moore's South Carolina farm, experienced much the same difficulty. Hill knew he would not be able to clothe all of Moore's enslaved labourers with the work produced by the weavers, and needed to hire another weaver.<sup>55</sup> There is no doubt that the need to produce more clothing on the plantation increased the workload of enslaved women.

Not only did enslaved women have to spin and weave, but they were also required to make finished garments. On some plantations during the war, enslaved women who had been field workers were tasked with sewing clothing instead. Due to the need to produce finished garments on plantations, enslaved seamstresses were in high demand during the height of the war. The 1865 pre-surrender Georgia tax laws, which added fifty percent to the taxable value of enslaved people with certain trades, including seamstresses, are a clear representation of the increased demand.<sup>56</sup> The shortages and inflation that made obtaining cloth, thread, and other sartorial necessities difficult

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<sup>54</sup> W.W. Lenoir, *W.W. Lenoir to Dear Mother, January 15, 1864*, letter, from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Documenting the American South*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/lenoir/lenoir.html>; "Memoir of Walter Waightstill Lenoir," *North Carolina University Magazine*, 1890, 245, <http://archive.org/details/northcarolinauni18901891>.

<sup>55</sup> Melissa Walker, "Letters, 1863," in *Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War: Letters of the Anderson, Brockman, and Moore Families, 1853-1865*, ed. Tom Moore Craig (The University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 114, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv6wghkw.11>.

<sup>56</sup> Shaw, "Slave Cloth and Clothing Slaves," par. 26; "Of Interest to Tax-Payers," *Weekly Intelligencer* (Atlanta, GA), April 19, 1865, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn85038500/1865-04-19/ed-1/s-eq-4/>.

and expensive for white women would have had similar implications for enslaved women. The scarcity and cost of extra materials meant that it would have been increasingly difficult for enslaved women to buy or barter for sartorial goods or Sunday clothes, as many did in the antebellum period. According to White and White: “it was very common for slaves to spend the money they managed to accumulate [in underground and internal economies] on clothing or other accessories.”<sup>57</sup> Enslaved women who made clothing for themselves and their families during the war years also had inventive ways of making clothing last as long as possible. Hattie Thompson, born to formerly enslaved parents two years after the surrender of the Confederacy, recalled the stories she had been told about what her mother and other enslaved women did during the war: “when the feet wore out on socks and stockings, they [enslaved women] would unravel them, save the good thread, and reknit the foot or toe or heel.”<sup>58</sup> Many such techniques were likely in use before wartime shortages because, unlike affluent white women, enslaved women did not have the resources to simply discard clothing.

Clothing shortages created difficulties for enslaved women, but the sartorial culture of the Civil War also provided enslaved women with the opportunity to participate to a greater degree in the European-inspired fashion culture of the South. Over the duration of slavery in the British North American colonies – and then the United States – enslaved women had

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<sup>57</sup> Knowles, “Patches of Resistance,” 3, 16; White and White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture,” 160, 178.

<sup>58</sup> *Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 2, Arkansas, Part 6*, Quinn-Tuttle, 1936, manuscript/mixed material, from Library of Congress, *Federal Writers’ Project, United States Work Projects Administration (USWPA)*, 315, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn026/>.



created a unique African-American sartorial culture.<sup>59</sup> This sartorial culture was influenced by textile traditions from Africa, and included the dyeing of thread with a vast variety of natural dyestuffs, the weaving of this dyed thread into homespun cloth with elaborate striped and checked patterns, and the patching and quilting of garments.<sup>60</sup> In antebellum America, African-American sartorial culture was separate from the dominant white sartorial culture because skin colour was part of fashion, and “the black body an unfashionable article of clothing.”<sup>61</sup> However, according to Joan E. Cashin, in addition to this unique sartorial culture, enslaved women enjoyed many of the same elements of fashion as planter women; they too enjoyed the “tactile pleasure” of new designs, expensive fabrics, and vivid colours. There was “much overlap in . . . aesthetic appeal” for white and enslaved women, and “to suggest otherwise is to deny black women their humanity.”<sup>62</sup>

The homespun, dyeing, and patching that was widely adopted by white women, first out of patriotism and then out of necessity, complemented this pre-existing African-American sartorial culture. Homespun, natural dyeing, and visible patching had become part of the mainstream white sartorial culture. Mary, an enslaved runaway from North Carolina took a red, white, and blue plaid gingham dress with her when she ran away in 1864. This gingham was likely dyed with natural dyestuffs and woven on a plantation, then sewn into a finished garment. Rebecca, another enslaved runaway from North Carolina who ran in 1863,

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<sup>59</sup> White and White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture,” 150-51, 165-71.

<sup>60</sup> White and White, 150, 165-71.

<sup>61</sup> Knowles, “Patches of Resistance,” 21.

<sup>62</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 346.

took dresses of homespun and dark calico with her.<sup>63</sup> The dresses that these enslaved women wore would not have been considered unfashionable during the war. In fact, many white women had turned to homespun after desperately searching for any calico they could afford, with little to no results. Furthermore, in the words of formerly enslaved Hattie Thompson, during the Civil War and Reconstruction, “patching and darning was stylish.”<sup>64</sup> As described by Eliza Andrews and others, increasing levels of patching had become a necessity for everyone, even the wealthy. This attitude of greater acceptance, and even appreciation to a degree, of the visible patching that had long been part of the sartorial culture of the enslaved, is seen in an episode recorded by Elizabeth Botume, a northern woman who was a schoolteacher for the enslaved in South Carolina at the end of the war and during the Reconstruction. When she saw the dresses worn by her students, which had been pieced out and patched with various materials by their mothers, Botume described them as looking like a “crazy quilt . . . but really not ugly.”<sup>65</sup>

Wartime shortages had another impact on the antebellum dynamic between white women, particularly those of the planter class, and enslaved women, enflaming certain racial tensions. In the antebellum period, it was the practice of white planter

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<sup>63</sup> Alice Grant, “Runaway Advertisement;” *Daily Journal*, Wilmington: June 8, 1864, from Freedom on the Move, <https://fotm.link/h1Fm53AzPqXgYpBA6cSH9X>; E. B. Drake, “Runaway Advertisement;” *Daily Progress*, Raleigh: November 20, 1863, from Freedom on the Move, <https://fotm.link/Ca3Xyc4Qpiv5FKXtNa1Ze>.

<sup>64</sup> *Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project*, Vol. 2, Arkansas, 316.

<sup>65</sup> White and White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture,” 168-69; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Among the Contrabands* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1893), 236-37, <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/curiosity/women-working-1800-1930/45-990026358500203941>.

women to give discarded dresses from their own wardrobes to enslaved house servants or their favourite enslaved women. Before the war, planter women would give away their dresses as soon as they tired of them, as female fashions changed so quickly. However, as Eliza Andrews wrote, “often, towards the close of the war, have I seen my ‘mammy’ or my maid in cast-off dresses that I fairly grudged, wondering how I could ever have been so foolish as to give away anything so little worn.”<sup>66</sup> Eliza clearly felt resentment towards her enslaved servants, of whose attire she was now envious. This feeling of envy would have been disconcerting to white women, as was the crumbling social hierarchy that was being observed in the South. Wartime shortages meant there was no longer such an extreme difference in the clothing of the enslaver and the enslaved. This, like the prevalence of patching, allowed enslaved women to participate to a greater degree in fashionability during wartime. An incident from 1864, when a hotel clerk refused to believe that the elite and well-known Mary Chesnut was who she claimed to be because her clothing was in such dilapidated condition, illustrates the levelling of society via fashion during wartime.<sup>67</sup>

Wartime shortages forced women to be innovative in making and mending clothing, and also inspired them to use their clothing in new and inventive ways. According to Joan E. Cashin, Confederate women “deployed their enormous dresses for strategic purposes.”<sup>68</sup> White women used the large circumference of the hoop skirts they wore to smuggle goods and run the blockade. Women were particularly effective smugglers,

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<sup>66</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 345; Stamper and Condra, *Clothing Through American History*, 137-38; White and White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture,” 168; Hay, “Dress Under Difficulties,” 32.

<sup>67</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 350.

<sup>68</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 349.

as soldiers did not always search women crossing the lines; they smuggled “under the protection of the petticoat flag,” concealing goods such as medicine, tobacco, money, small arms, boots, and garments under their skirts.<sup>69</sup> Planter women also took advantage of their large skirts when invading Union soldiers searched their homes, hiding valuable possessions under them. Some women even starched their skirts to make them stand out even more, so that more goods could be hidden underneath.<sup>70</sup> While Union soldiers were usually met with apprehension by white and enslaved women alike, the arrival of Union soldiers sometimes provided enslaved women and children with sartorial opportunities. For example, formerly-enslaved Hannah Austin remembered when the “Yankee Army” arrived in her Georgia town, the soldiers told her and her sister, “Little Negroes you are free there are no more masters and mistresses, here help yourselves to these clothes take them home with you.” Hannah and her sister accordingly took home socks, stockings, dresses, and underwear that had been merchandise in their enslaver’s store.<sup>71</sup> Women also used their skirts to conceal people. For example, one woman hid her brother under her skirt when Union soldiers came to her home to arrest Confederate soldiers, and one group of women concealed Confederate sailors with their skirts, allowing the sailors to escape from Union forces.<sup>72</sup> Enslaved women also deployed their skirts for strategic purposes during wartime. For example, in 1864, Mattie Jackson escaped from her enslaver to freedom in Indiana, with all the clothing she

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<sup>69</sup> Cashin, 349; Rable, “The Political Economy of the Southern Home Front,” 101.

<sup>70</sup> Cashin, 349.

<sup>71</sup> *Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1*, Adams-Furr, 1936, manuscript/mixed material, from Library of Congress, *Federal Writers’ Project, United States Work Projects Administration (USWPA)*, 21, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn041/>.

<sup>72</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks,” 349.

owned hidden under her hoop and skirt, tied in a bundle around her waist.<sup>73</sup> It was important for Mattie to bring her clothing with her when she crossed the Union lines because, by 1864, replacement clothing would have been difficult to find and too expensive for the newly freed woman to purchase.

In conclusion, the Union blockade during the Civil War had a significant impact on the sartorial practices of women living in the Confederacy. White women responded with initial enthusiasm to the Secession Crisis and the declaration of war, channeling this enthusiasm into sartorial projects like secession bonnets, the patriotic wearing of homespun, and the adoption of military styles of dress. Enslaved women also found ways to express themselves through their attire, wearing the Union flag or stealing their enslavers' clothes. As shortages worsened due to scarcity and inflation, this sartorial enthusiasm was severely diminished, but the spirit of sartorial innovation from the first years of the war remained. Both white and enslaved Black women found inventive ways of mending their clothing and accessories in order to make them last as long as possible. While wartime shortages made it more difficult for enslaved women to produce the necessary amounts of cloth and clothing, the mainstream wartime sartorial culture of homespun, natural dyeing, and patching complemented pre-existing African-American sartorial culture, giving enslaved women the chance to participate to a greater degree in fashionability. Wartime shortages saw both a relative democratization of fashion, but also racial tensions due to the symbolic dissolution of antebellum hierarchies as seen through clothing. Finally, both white and

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<sup>73</sup> L.S. Thompson (As Given by Mattie), *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson; Her Parentage—Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery—Incidents During the War—Her Escape From Slavery. A True Story* (Lawrence: Sentinel Office, 1866), 21-22, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jacksonm/jackson.html>.

enslaved women found inventive ways, not only to keep up the appearance of their attire during wartime, but also strategic ways to use their clothing to their advantage. Despite the horrors and deprivations caused by the Civil War in the South, necessity was the mother of invention for white and enslaved women alike, whose need for clothing and enthusiasm for fashionable dress combined to create a distinctive sartorial culture of innovation.

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**“The Creative Equivalent of a People:” Tolkien’s Quest for Identity through Mythology**

Wade Douglas Loach

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J.R.R. Tolkien’s world of elves, dwarves, and hobbits featured in his monumental work, *The Lord of the Rings*, may appear to be deeply buried in the fantastical, but the story is intended to be representative of an English nation. Tolkien, a master philologist as well as a scholar of the various mythologies of many European nations, felt a peculiar pang of shame that his countrymen, the English, did not have a proud mythical tradition akin to the Finns, the Germans, or any of the other peoples he had studied. His desire for a national identity had been forged in part by the trenches of the First World War, in which his dearest friends and fellow countrymen had died. His was not a nationalistic exercise as per a twentieth-century definition, but instead the continuation of a renewed interest in folk stories as being representative of cultural identity during this period. Furthermore, Englishmen had previously spent centuries theorizing over an agreed-upon origin myth using pseudo-history, racist ethnic theories, and theology to frame their discussions. With Lord Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, the conception of origin myths took on entirely new implications. Since none of the previous conceptions satisfied him, Tolkien took it upon himself to create a mythology which he regarded as being English. *The Lord of the Rings* would become this mythology, allowing Tolkien to claim a place as the natural successor to an English tradition of discovering nationality through fiction and myth-crafting. This was largely a selfish

exercise, as Tolkien himself could not ultimately define his own nationality.

*The Lord of the Rings* is widely known for laying the foundations for the vast majority of European fantasy tales that came after it. The most obvious of its influence is the revitalisation and popularization of Old English conceptions of orcs, elves, and other fictional creatures.<sup>1</sup> Tolkien's stories of Middle-Earth were, in his own words, "derived from (previously digested) epic, mythology, and fairy-story."<sup>2</sup> This almost makes the work sound unappealing. Yet readers found in Tolkien's work a world of value that remains hard to define. An oft-quoted review of Tolkien's *Silmarillion* from the *Guardian* speaks to this mystery the best: "How, given over half a century of work, did one man become the creative equivalent of a people?"<sup>3</sup> This question is vital. Tolkien, in creating his fantasy, somehow appealed to vast numbers of people and allowed them to think about their own identity in ways they had not before. The implication here is that previous literature did not allow for such an examination. The tradition that Tolkien was a successor to had motives for its creation which were political, religious, and racially guided. This essay outlines the development of these major English conceptions of identity before examining why they fail as an enduring indicator for the nation in comparison to Tolkien's work.

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, rev. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 308.

<sup>2</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* ed. Humphrey Carpenter (London: George Allen & Unwin 1981), 31.

<sup>3</sup> Harper Reach, "The Silmarillion – Harper Reach | HarperCollins International," Accessed December 15, 2021. <https://www.harperreach.com/products/the-silmarillion-j-r-r-tolkien-9780261102736/>. This quotation is widely used and is present as a "review blurb" on the back of many copies of the physical book, yet the complete *Guardian* review cannot be located.

No essay of this nature would be respectful of Tolkien's own beliefs without first addressing the topic of allegory. The exact historical period which inspired the work's settings is ambiguous, which aligns with Tolkien's complex view concerning allegory. Although his work can be and has been connected to a myriad of historical settings, like the First World War, the Second World War, and Anglo-Saxon England, there is no one correct interpretation. Tolkien respected the concept of applicability regarding his work far more than he did allegory.<sup>4</sup> Simply put, parts of the story may indeed resemble the hellish nature of First World War trenches, but such a connection is formed by the reader and is not at all forced upon them by the author. However, Tolkien did believe that mythology as a whole required allegorical language to be truly effective.<sup>5</sup> Finnish myth, for instance, necessarily reflects upon the Finnish and their influences. Tolkien's myth, then, reflects upon English sensibilities. This is made eminently clear through the protagonists of *The Lord of the Rings* and their homeland.

### **The Mythic Origins of the English People**

The Shire, home of the hobbits, is a green and pleasant land full of peace-loving halflings who share a love of large tankards of ale, plates full of hearty food, and the growing of vibrant gardens. Hobbits are a distinctly peaceful people, with no love of exploration, adventuring, or interference in the wider world.<sup>6</sup> Clearly then, this humble countryside cannot be a metaphor for early twentieth century England, but rather a vague rural England of the past. The Shire represents an agrarian community modelled after an English image, in which a family

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<sup>4</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 297-298.

<sup>5</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 145.

<sup>6</sup> Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004), 1-2.

and a garden were a person's only real concerns. This is hardly disguised, with Tolkien himself writing a detailed letter to a Dutch translator of *The Lord of the Rings* explaining that "'The Shire' is based on rural England and not any other country in the world."<sup>7</sup> It is no wonder that in the same letter, he endlessly stressed the importance of keeping place names within his story untranslated in a future Dutch version of the story. To him, translating these names would be as egregious as producing an English translation of *Beowulf* in which the protagonist was named "War Wolf." Tolkien's story was about the English and their values as he perceived them. A keen appreciation for the potential political effects of earlier English mythology will aid in understanding why Tolkien took the subject so seriously.

In the influential twelfth-century text of Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the author popularizes an origin myth for all of the British people. The work begins with the story of Brutus of Troy. Sometime after the Trojan War, Brutus followed a prophecy which led him to settle within the island of Albion, which was inhabited only by giants. Upon slaying the giants, the island is named Britain, after Brutus, and the land is divided into England, Scotland, and Wales for his three sons to rule.<sup>8</sup> The prevalence and importance of this origin myth to English society is best demonstrated in the seventeenth-century Tudor period, in which poets of the age proclaimed the ruling dynasty to be the true descendants of Brutus and therefore more legitimate than pretenders to the throne.<sup>9</sup> This was not a casual exercise, but an earnest attempt to link the present to the

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<sup>7</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 250.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain* trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Classics, 1966), 64-75.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Cattell and Philip Schwyzer, "Introduction: Visions of Britain," *The Seventeenth Century* 33, no. 4 (2018): 385.

past for political gain. Linking myth to contemporary politics was not just a game for poets, either. Until the seventeenth century, serious scholars believed in this Galfridian lore and trusted in its historicity entirely.<sup>10</sup>

In writing their various histories, those influenced by Galfridian lore attempted to do something exceptionally difficult by pinpointing the distinctive values representative of the British nation. This is doubly true for the nations within the island of Great Britain which have experienced many migrations and invasions over the centuries. Which period is representative of Britain? The pre-Roman? The Anglo-Saxon? The Norman? British writers took different approaches and Tolkien is no exception to this. A common way to represent national values is by using mythological scenarios, which often present key figures which become emblematic of the nation as a whole. In the English context, an example of this is linking Robin Hood to national identity in the nineteenth century, a subject taken so seriously that denying Robin Hood's historicity was actually seen as unpatriotic.<sup>11</sup> Robin Hood is the legend of a free and just man, living in equality within the tranquil forest of Sherwood with his loyal compatriots. The Shire might be seen as an agrarian parallel to such a lifestyle. Tales of the outlaw only date back to the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries; this was not a true foundational national myth, equivalent to the Iliad, only a fable representative of English attitudes during that period. *The Lord of the Rings* was intended as a national epic applicable to all times, not as a folktale meant to temporarily amuse. Tolkien, in setting out on

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<sup>10</sup> F.J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (1967; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 132-133.

<sup>11</sup> Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: the Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 125-126.

the task of writing such a work, became only the latest in a long tradition of the English in their quest which sought a foundational myth.

The effect that older English mythology had on Tolkien is made clear through his mid-1930s short story *Farmer Giles of Ham*. This comedic tale referenced and parodied Geoffrey of Monmouth's history and the Arthurian legend to be developed from it. *Farmer Giles* was set in a thinly-veiled England in which politics had no real effect on the common folk.<sup>12</sup> As a precursor to *The Lord of the Rings* and being written around the same time as *The Hobbit*, this work demonstrates how Tolkien was able to navigate his native England within the limits of fiction. Clearly, he desired something beyond Geoffrey, and this was merely a first step in this determination. Yet this was only parody, not an original work which seriously sought to establish its own tradition. In the words of Shippey, *Farmer Giles* seems to be an exercise in dismantling the "pompous pernickety rationalistic scholarship" that studies of works like Geoffrey's had become.<sup>13</sup> *Farmer Giles* allowed for Tolkien to determine that art and literature, rather than academic study, was more effective in this rediscovery of a national identity. Since Tolkien's influences go far beyond Geoffrey, a meaningful discussion of Tolkien will have to pass the Galfridian by as well. In the mid-eighteenth century, the conversation regarding an English origin turned from one focused on noble bloodlines to a more deeply theological and ethnic line of thought.

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<sup>12</sup> Shippey, *Road to Middle Earth*, 98.

<sup>13</sup> Shippey, 98.

### **“Pernicious and Unscientific:” Tolkien and Ethnic Theology**

Proving ethnicity and origin using the Bible became one of the most widely accepted and debated issues of the British Enlightenment period of the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Since the authority of holy scripture was regarded as an ultimate truth, discussions of this nature were framed around it. These theories were developed and explored not by hardline Anglican figures as might be expected, but by the foremost scientific and philosophic minds of the period, like Isaac Newton, who often dominated the discussion.<sup>15</sup> Colonialism and the desire to understand why, how, and when ethnic groups came to inhabit certain areas of the Earth was the reason for this process. Ethnicity became more than physical appearance or even supposed racial traits, it determined ethnic worth through religious definitions. This doctrine of ethnic theology sought to explain differences between the Old World and colonized areas such as the Americas and India. For instance, under this school of thought, religion in the Indian subcontinent and therefore the people as well had been lessened by “pagan corruption,” which stole them away from a proper Trinitarian faith.<sup>16</sup> This was the dawn of the racist ideology which became so consequential in the governance of India, among other places, by the British Empire.

J.R.R. Tolkien was born a British subject in South Africa in 1892, the tail end of the Victorian era. Although his family returned to their native England when their sons were very young, his mother encouraged discussion of the conditions that many non-white South Africans faced.<sup>17</sup> This allowed him to

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<sup>14</sup> Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 34.

<sup>15</sup> Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 43-44.

<sup>16</sup> Kidd, 55.

<sup>17</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 72.



develop a conception of race and nationality that was demonstrably more tolerant and accepting than other Victorian-born Britons. Writing to his son, who had been stationed in South Africa during the Second World War, the elder Tolkien notes that although “the treatment of colour nearly always horrifies anyone going out from Britain,” conditions were regrettably not showing any signs of improvement.<sup>18</sup> When Britons left Africa, they could forget about the discrimination that shocked them. Tolkien, through his birth in Africa and his discussions with his mother, forced him to regard issues of racial mistreatment seriously throughout his life. No more is this true than in the period leading up to the Second World War, when Tolkien was forced to contend with National Socialist ideology.

Of course, the very idea of nationality was forever altered by the events of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a participant in the First World War and an author writing *The Lord of the Rings* during the Second, Tolkien was a witness to a racist and violent doctrine of nationalism which he remained utterly opposed to all of his life. Sufficient proof of this came in 1938, when a German publishing firm, negotiating a potential German release of *The Hobbit*, inquired if Tolkien was of Aryan descent or not. He was absolutely furious, and delivered a few scathing remarks on Nazi ideology in both a letter to his publisher, as well as to the German firm. To his publisher, he called the National Socialist conception of race “pernicious and unscientific.”<sup>19</sup> In a less diplomatic draft of his response to the German firm, he assumed that the true question is if he was Jewish or not, to which he wrote that he “[appears] to have *no* ancestors of that gifted people,” (Emphasis his own).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 72.

<sup>19</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 37.

<sup>20</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 37.

As demonstrated by this exchange, Tolkien believed that determining the value of a human being based on their race alone was absurd. Despite this important recognition, is Tolkien's own work not, at the very least, intrinsically ethnocentric as it functions as a mythology for the English and no-one else? All evidence undeniably points to yes, and Tolkien might have been the first to admit it. Yet, what he defined as being English is not exactly concrete, allowing for a great deal of speculation regarding his intentions. Tolkien's own understanding of the ethnicity of the English was loosely based on folklore and tradition rather than any pseudo-science.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the ethnic theologians, Tolkien was not at all able to produce what he saw as a solid definition of his own nationality or ethnicity as he encountered it. Defining his identity in relation to the racial 'other,' as other Britons and Europeans had done, was not enough for him. Being a well-studied academic deeply interested in mythology, he was much more comfortable in the world of fiction in determining culture. Middle-Earth, then, was his way of tying a great deal of what he viewed as English lore together into one comprehensive tradition. He found it appropriate to create something to which he could dedicate broadly "to England; to my country."<sup>22</sup> Thus far only the "ethnic" side of this ethnic theology has been touched upon, but a discussion of the theological is just as relevant to the deeply Catholic Tolkien.

**"Unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision:"  
Middle-Earth's Implicit Christianity**

The religious conclusions drawn about British identity under methods of ethnic theology were equally as convoluted as

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<sup>21</sup> Hunter, "The Evidence of Things Not Seen: Critical Mythology and 'The Lord of the Rings,'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 29, no. 2 (2006): 139.

<sup>22</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 144.

the pseudoscientific racial categorisations just discussed. Due to the apparently-Christian nature of the traditions of early British druidism, Anglicanism was proclaimed as the natural destiny for the British and the only Christian religion they had ever really known.<sup>23</sup> This mindset continued well into the nineteenth century and would be criticized by poets like William Blake. For various religious groups in Britain, especially Catholics, this was a terrifying notion. The Anglicans were made the protagonists of history, and under this school of thought the split with Rome in the sixteenth century was an indication of the divergent ideology of Roman Catholicism, while the English brand of Christianity had apparently remained consistent since even pre-Christian times. This philosophy was consistent with Tudor justifications for the English Reformation through its constant search for historical precedents.<sup>24</sup> Those less disposed towards Anglicanism or state religion in general challenged this notion even in a prosperous moment of the British experience; the turn of the nineteenth century and the rise of the Industrial Revolution.

It is in the artistic expressions of Romanticist poetry that the most compelling remnants of this ideological dispute are found. William Blake, creating his most notable art at this exact time, paints an image of England as a once-great beacon of spirituality that has been diminished by state religion.<sup>25</sup> Gone was the perfection of the idyllic pastoral countryside, replaced by factory towns and mills which impoverished artisans and practitioners of the ways of the English forefathers since time immemorial. This was certainly a radical view for the time, but Blake's work would still become incredibly popular after his death. William Blake's retreat to the idyllic, best represented

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<sup>23</sup> Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 70-71.

<sup>24</sup> Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, 79.

<sup>25</sup> Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 71-72.

through his famous hymn “Jerusalem,” represents an escape from what he viewed as a satanic present into a more holy realm in the past. Tolkien’s work differs in that it was not intended to be a form of escapism.<sup>26</sup> Whereas Blake framed a portrayal of past holiness in a deliberate attempt to influence the present, Tolkien’s framing of the past is subtle and makes no suppositions about present religion at all. Unlike Blake, his solution to any religious problem in the past or in his own present was to commit the unthinkable and remove all explicit references to God in his work.

The Anglicans had, especially in the seventeenth century and onwards, created a theological foundation upon which they could determine a large part of their identity.<sup>27</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien was a devout Catholic and remained pious all of his life. By virtue of his undertaking to establish mythology, he clearly understood why the Anglicans had sought historical justification. Both Tolkien’s work and the Ethnic theologians address the pre-Christian and an element of the Christian within paganism . Tolkien does this through specific, though never blatant, Christian references in his story. For instance, Frodo and his companions set out on their quest on December 25 and defeat the evil Sauron on March 25. These represent the modern date of the birth of Christ and the Anglo-Saxon date for the Crucifixion, respectively.<sup>28</sup> The two differ in that the theologians of centuries past use their ideology as a method of exclusion and a way to proclaim that only adherents to Anglicanism are honouring those that came before them properly. This was always used to their own advantage. For instance, these theologians denied the Scottish Presbyterians the use of a similar proposition to define

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<sup>26</sup> Shippey, *Road to Middle Earth*, 136.

<sup>27</sup> Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 99-100.

<sup>28</sup> Shippey, *Road to Middle Earth*, 200-201.

themselves by asserting that all Scottish history before the year 500 AD was not genuine.<sup>29</sup> Tolkien, writing after Catholic emancipation, did not have to face such stalwart opposition based on religious grounds. Still, he found no reason to explicitly reference God. Tolkien's story, taken as being a mythical representation of England's history, does not conflate the pagan past with an Anglican or even Catholic present. Its author was confident that the Roman Catholic Church needed no assistance from his simple art to spread a divine truth.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, the idea of a concealed Christian truth was essential to the conception of *The Lord of the Rings* only because Catholicism was essential to Tolkien's own life. Tolkien himself believed that these themes which made his work "fundamentally religious and Catholic" were inserted "unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision."<sup>31</sup> He had to deliberately stop himself from inserting any overt references to the monotheistic God he worshipped. Yet the shadow of the Christian remains through small details such as the aforementioned dates of the journey. These allow readers to accept similarities to the Christian world only if they choose to. There has been a wealth of literature written by scholars who have chosen to do just that. Furthering the theme of Tolkien avoiding escapism, one such scholar suggests that the book actively forces us to confront the influence of evil.<sup>32</sup> It is up to the reader's discretion if they face the evil that Tolkien shows them through religion or through more secular means. The characters in the story, being pre-Christian or at least pre-monotheistic, do not approach their

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<sup>29</sup> Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 119.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph C. Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-Earth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 172.

<sup>32</sup> Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 1.

problems through God directly. They are humble folk who often represent many Christian virtues, but they denote more overtly the ordinary classes of people that Tolkien found so homely and familiar. Tolkien, a Catholic in a majority-Protestant country, was careful not to inject his work with any overt Catholic sentiment. Christian virtue, being familiar to all of the English, was therefore more suitable for a timeless mythology.

### **“There must gardeners be in high honour:” Folklore and Tolkien’s Appraisal of the Ordinary**

The origin myths established in these previous centuries had very clearly drawn upon racialism, ethnocentrism, and theological supremacy. But in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, amid the conditions produced by the French Revolution and the rise and fall of Napoleon, a renewed interest in folklore, especially in the tales of King Arthur and Robin Hood, signalled a new cultural heartbeat within the English nation.<sup>33</sup> This was an inward turn to ancient English heroes of myth (although the Arthurian comes from the Welsh tradition) in order to define the England of the day. The Victorian conception of King Arthur, created by the British Poet Laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson in his *Idylls of the King*, is a more conscious reflection of the values the author found lacking in the Victorian age. Tennyson, as Poet Laureate, was much more popular than William Blake had been during his lifetime. His Arthur serves as a new ideal for the human race to achieve, an evolution of the ordinary into the extraordinary.<sup>34</sup> Tolkien’s strength was recognising that although this was certainly desirable, it was completely fanciful and would not serve as a

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<sup>33</sup> Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity*, 44.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor Driggers, “Modern Medievalism and Myth: Tolkien, Tennyson, and the Quest for a Hero,” *Journal of Inklings Studies* 3, no. 2 (2013): 136.

proper guide moving forward. Despite his basis in the past, Tolkien always thought of the future. There was no better group to speak to than the common people that he placed so much faith in.

King Arthur, in the pages of Tennyson, is male perfection personified. Gone was the old depiction of Arthur as a flawed hero. In Tennyson's Arthur, Victorian society had an ultimate figure of morality to lead them back into the light.<sup>35</sup> The Christ parallels throughout the story are also intentional. Amid the Victorian crisis of faith, then, Tennyson's work seems to be horribly out of date. As previously discussed, *The Lord of the Rings* was able to surpass any such problem through concealing its implicit Christianity. There was no single messiah like Arthur, but many characters each embodying some small virtue amid their own weakness. In Tennyson's time, some must have wondered what lessons a primitive medieval relic could teach to the most powerful and industrialized country the world had ever seen? According to one interpretation, the concepts espoused within *Idylls* can be seen as a precursor to the movement towards modernist ideals, such as greater individual autonomy and progressivism.<sup>36</sup>

It was amid this modernist philosophy and the revival of English folklore that Tolkien emerged with his desire to create a true English mythology. Unlike Tennyson, Tolkien did not draw upon the Arthurian tradition because he believed it to be foreign. About three years before the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien writes that the world of Arthur was "associated with the soil of Britain but not with English; and does not replace what I felt to be missing."<sup>37</sup> Tolkien, who was well acquainted with

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<sup>35</sup> Driggers, "Modern Medievalism," 134.

<sup>36</sup> Driggers, "Modern Medievalism," 137.

<sup>37</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 144.

Arthurian lore and had produced a highly regarded translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, understood that the genre was initially dedicated to the destruction of a native English culture rather than its commemoration.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Tennyson's depiction of Arthur as a perfect man guiding his own path did not reflect England. Frodo Baggins, one of the central protagonists in *The Lord of the Rings*, represents England as his creator understood it to be. Tolkien, at home in rural England, must have seen few 'Arthurs' and a great deal of 'hobbits.' As a participant of the First World War, he certainly saw no flawless men who hoisted the nation to greatness, but simple and fallible folk who rose to meet challenges far beyond their station with little concern regarding the preservation of their own lives. The combatants of the First World War were celebrated when they returned home, but Tolkien sought a balance between lionization and reality. Here, Tolkien drew upon the archetype of the humble British soldier, Tommy Atkins. He suggested through his protagonist that this simplicity begot heroism.

Tolkien's protagonist, Frodo Baggins, contrasts with Arthur in that he is a relatively ordinary fellow thrust into a situation of which he knows little. Furthermore, he is neither young nor even very remarkable. He is 50 years old by the time he departs on his journey and has achieved little beyond his own nose, like any other hobbit.<sup>39</sup> It is exactly his common nature which allows him to succeed in his quest. As Tolkien shows time after time, more powerful individuals in his story are more susceptible to the allure and temptation of the evil One Ring that Frodo chooses to bear.<sup>40</sup> If an 'Arthur' did exist within Tolkien's world, he would have been corrupted by this temptation. The

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<sup>38</sup> Shippey, *Road to Middle Earth*, 38.

<sup>39</sup> Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 44.

<sup>40</sup> Driggers, "Modern Medievalism," 141-142.



closest Tolkien comes to a genuine Arthur is his Aragorn, a simple ranger yet heir to the throne of the mightiest human kingdom, Gondor. Even he, arguably the most highborn of all of Tolkien's human characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, is too base in stature to be considered an equivalent to Arthur.

Aragorn is but one of many central heroes within the story who have some degree of commonness about them. Tolkien demonstrates his appreciation for the humble and the simple again and again within his story demonstrably through the character of Samwise Gamgee, a simple gardener who accompanies Frodo throughout the entirety of his journey. The hobbits in general are not the descendants of a noble people, like the Trojans, but they are still able to impact the world in a meaningful way. Tolkien's belief that "without the simple and ordinary the noble and heroic is meaningless," reflects the hobbits and the English alike because he understood the dependence of the noble upon the common.<sup>41</sup> When the One Ring is destroyed and the world is saved, Frodo and Sam meet their former companion Aragorn, now a mighty king, once more. The two recognise the man's new position, but the king, humbling himself:

[B]owed his knee before them; and taking them by the hand, Frodo upon his right and Sam upon his left, he led them to the throne, and setting them upon it, he turned to the men and captains who stood by and spoke, so that his voice rang over all the host, crying: 'Praise them with great praise!'<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 160.

<sup>42</sup> Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 954.

Aragorn is not the first to regard the hobbits in such a way. When Faramir, an heir to the Stewardship of Gondor, encounters them, he envies the Shire. Upon the revelation that Sam, a mere gardener, has already ventured through so much with no prior experience, he tells them that the Shire “must be a realm of peace and content, and there must gardeners be in high honour.”<sup>43</sup> In Tolkien’s world, even the kingly and the highborn crave the idyllic and the simple.

This is what Tolkien found lacking within the Arthurian that went beyond its foreignness. King Arthur is a flawless man, one who guides his own destiny and upholds principles of chivalry. Arthur does not embody the life or experiences of typical Englishmen. Frodo is an insignificant person from an obscure and inconsequential place who is quickly caught up in events beyond his comprehension. Yet he rises to the occasion and manages to exceed the valour and determination of the legendary heroes of Britain’s past through his actions.<sup>44</sup> Frodo Baggins could not appear further from the independent nature of the famed Arthur; and yet Tolkien still allowed in elements of the Arthurian tradition when creating Frodo. As the famous legend goes, Arthur was mortally wounded and had to depart to the isle of Avalon to recover. He remains destined to return to aid the Britons once again in their hour of need. At the end of Frodo’s journey, he finds himself too grievously wounded both physically and mentally to continue a normal life. Frodo sails off into the land of Valinor, the Undying Lands, to heal and live eternally in paradise. This nod to Arthurian lore was both deliberate and meaningful.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 681.

<sup>44</sup> Verlyn Flieger, *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien’s Mythology* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2005), 44.

<sup>45</sup> Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, 42.

Frodo Baggins is a unique hero in that he is disinclined to the use of violence. The legend of Brutus, which tells of the progenitor of the British slaying all of the original inhabitants of the land, demonstrates the importance and prominence that military might had in determining previous heroes for the English. Robin Hood and King Arthur, too, are both characters which are unquestionably known for their bow and their sword, respectively. None of these men shy away from using martial skills to prove the righteousness of their causes. Yet, in *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo transitions from one eager to deal out death to one expressing fervent pacifism. Before he sets out on his journey, he feels a sense of disdain that the miserable stalking creature Gollum is still alive and wishes that he had been killed. The wise wizard Gandalf imparts a lesson to Frodo, telling him to “not be too eager to deal out death in judgement,” and that pity, rather than wrath, “may rule the fate of many – yours not the least.”<sup>46</sup> This has both Christian and secular implications. Shippey’s interpretation of Frodo paints him as a type of prophet that represents a serene man in a state of nature.

Frodo, unlike Arthur, is not destined to return. He, like the real or imagined simplicity of England’s idyllic past, is gone forever after the trauma of a great change. Remembering Tolkien’s doctrine of applicability over allegory, this is not necessarily indicative of the Industrial Revolution, but instead a reflection of any of the numerous cultural shifts in the history of England. Tolkien’s myth bids farewell to itself in this way in an attempt to convince the reader to move on and embrace the future. Before Frodo’s departure, he finishes writing the story of his ordeals and presents it to his dearest friend and companion: “I have quite finished, Sam,’ said Frodo, ‘The last pages are for

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<sup>46</sup> Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 59.

you.”<sup>47</sup> The passing of the book from Frodo to Sam symbolizes the responsibility of future generations not just to remember their folklore, but to contribute to the tradition amid an ever-changing world as Tolkien himself attempted to do. Frodo entreats Sam to “keep alive the memory of the age that is gone, so that people will remember ... and so love their beloved land all the more.”<sup>48</sup> The message here is to indeed remember these tales and myths, but move on and grow as a people.

### **There and Back Again: Tolkien’s Personal Motivation**

In his schoolboy days, Tolkien formed an intellectual club with his friends known as the T.C.B.S., a deceptively humble little acronym standing for “Tea Club, Barrovian Society,” after “Barrow’s Stores,” a spot the boys enjoyed taking in a cup or two together.<sup>49</sup> The members of the club were inseparable and depended quite heavily on one another in their youth. When the First World War came, all but two of the T.C.B.S. would be killed, largely in the Battle of the Somme. G.B. Smith, one of the many friends who survived, wrote a letter to Tolkien which had a poignant effect on him. It concludes by saying: “May God bless you, my dear John Ronald, and may you say the things I have tried to say long after I am not there to say them, if such be my lot.”<sup>50</sup> Armed with philology, a profound knowledge of European mythologies, and a desperate desire to honour his friends, Tolkien wrote his tales of elves, dwarves, and hobbits. This was not his first avenue of creativity. He had tried, failed, and given up on publishing poems from his mythological

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<sup>47</sup> Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 1027.

<sup>48</sup> Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, 1029.

<sup>49</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 53-54.

<sup>50</sup> Carpenter, *Tolkien: A Biography*, 94.

universe until he had become a fellow at Pembroke College. One day in the early 1930s, amid the tedium and frustration of marking a seemingly endless stack of exams, he jotted down, almost thoughtlessly, "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit," the opening words of what would become *The Hobbit*.<sup>51</sup>

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the sequel to *The Hobbit*, the tale ends with the coming of the "Fourth Age," meant to signal Middle-Earth's transition from fantasy to reality. Yet Tolkien does not write anything of this new age. The reader is left to determine what direction the story takes. Poets of Tolkien's time sought to produce solid definitions of the identities of the peoples within Britain, but Tolkien simply could not conceive of his own.<sup>52</sup> Was this due to his own struggle in determining his identity, as a Catholic with a German name born in South Africa living in rural England? According to his correspondence, this may be the case. In 1955, Tolkien exclaims that he "wrote the Trilogy as a personal satisfaction, driven to it by the scarcity of literature of the sort that I wanted to read."<sup>53</sup> In the face of an inexpressible nation composed of widely different and divergent peoples, is the most valuable definition not the individual?

All of this is to say that although Tolkien became a successor to this English tradition, his immediate reasons for writing his stories remained profoundly personal. Although an English mythology was what his story became, he started out jotting out tales and poems as a creative outlet in times of stress, like the Great War, or in times of monotony, like the marking of university papers. This invented universe reflected his proudest moments, too. His most touching story of love, published as *Beren and Lúthien*, was undoubtedly based on the lifelong passion

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<sup>51</sup> Carpenter, 175.

<sup>52</sup> Hunter, "The Evidence of Things Not Seen," 139-140.

<sup>53</sup> Tolkien, *Letters*, 211.

he had for his wife, Edith. When she passed in 1972, Tolkien was inconsolable, joining her less than two years later. His wish to have *Lúthien* inscribed under her name on their shared tombstone was granted, with Beren appropriately added under his own name after his own passing.<sup>54</sup> In this way, *The Lord of the Rings* and the world of Middle-Earth more generally is a microcosm of the English nation due only to the identity of its author. With his knowledge, Tolkien could have written a mythology of the sort for the Finns, for the Germans, or for a half-dozen other peoples. He did not pursue this only because his quest in writing was largely to determine his own identity. He had little in common with a Brutus, an Arthur, or even with Blake, yet he maintained the work of Geoffrey, Tennyson, Blake, and countless other Englishmen who worked to develop some conception of their own nebulously defined and eternally loved nation. Tolkien's views on applicability reflect the success of the end result. Just as *The Lord of the Rings* may be interpreted in hundreds of distinct and separate ways, so might the English nation be. The only conclusive statement on Tolkien is that he remained an Englishman and a hobbit both.

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<sup>54</sup> Carpenter, *Tolkien: A Biography*, 259.

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## Death by Diet: The Mythical Death of Cass Elliot and Terminal Fatness in 1970s Medicine

Brenna Roblin

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On July 29, 1974, 32-year-old American singer ‘Mama’ Cass Elliot of the Mamas and the Papas was reported to have died from choking on a ham sandwich in her London apartment— a myth which has persisted in popular culture for decades. Dr. Anthony Greenburgh, as the first physician called to the scene, told the *Daily Express* that “From what I saw when I got to the flat, she appeared to be eating a ham sandwich and drinking Coca-Cola while lying down— a very dangerous thing to do. This would be especially dangerous for someone like Cass who was overweight and who might be prone to having a heart attack. She seemed to have choked on a ham sandwich.”<sup>1</sup> Despite Greenburgh’s assumption that asphyxia and fatness caused her ultimate downfall, and the media circulation of this story, Elliot’s autopsy results showed heart failure.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the medical examiner reported that Elliot likely had not eaten in several hours, and that the ham sandwich found by her bed had been untouched.<sup>3</sup> Still, Greenburgh’s spectacular death account held up in popular discourse about Elliot’s death, including the medical conclusions made about the *cause* of her heart attack: fatty myocardial degeneration due to obesity.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Tragic Life and Death of Mama Cass,” Fatlip, December 17, 2019: Apple, Podcast.

<sup>2</sup> “157: Cass Elliot, Carnie Wilson and Fat-Shaming in Rock and Pop (Make Me Over, Episode 6),” *You Must Remember This*, Feb. 25, 2020: Apple, Podcast.

<sup>3</sup> “The Tragic Life and Death of Mama Cass,” Fatlip, December 17, 2019: Apple, Podcast.

Elliot was both praised for her talent and mocked for her “ham sandwich” choking death in news articles immediately post-mortem and decades later. A newsletter published by the National Association to Aid Fat Americans for July and August of 1974 features the criticism of Vanderbilt University heart specialist Dr. George Merman, who contested the coroner’s choice to include “due to obesity” in Elliot’s official cause of death.<sup>4</sup> He argued that no evidence exists proving that obesity is a direct cause of heart attacks— a fact which holds up to this day.<sup>5</sup> Why were American medical authorities convinced of the terminal outcomes of fatness in the 1970s? Why were these fears perpetuated through public health media? What does Cass Elliot’s life and death suggest about the treatment of fat people and the ongoing discrimination in medicine today?<sup>6</sup> Cass Elliot’s premature death “due to obesity” is emblematic of the medical fixation on fatness as a treatable disease reliant on the patient’s cooperation in deliberate weight-loss. The insufficient evidence for the necessity of thinness for health, as well as the role of dieting as a leading cause of eating disorders suggests that medical authorities have circulated health advice with dangerous consequences and a lasting impact on the public consciousness.

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<sup>4</sup> “The Tragic Life and Death of Mama Cass,” Fatlip, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> “The Tragic Life and Death of Mama Cass,” Fatlip, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> I am using the term “fat” in accordance with Aubrey Gordon’s definition in the introduction of *What We Don’t Talk About When We Talk About Fat*: “A neutral descriptor for predominantly plus-size people. While *fat* is frequently used to insult people of all sizes, many fat activists—those of us who are undeniably, indubitably fat by any measure—reclaim the term as an objective adjective to describe our bodies, like tall or short. It is used accordingly in a matter-of-fact way throughout the pages ahead. Fat stands in contrast to an endless parade of euphemisms—*fluffy, curvy, big guy, big girl, zaftig, big boned, husky, voluptuous, thick, heavy set, pleasantly plump, chubby, cuddly, more to love, overweight, obese*—all of which just serve as a reminder of how terrified so many thin people are to see our bodies, name them, have them.”

Furthermore, the coroner report's focus on Elliot's weight neglected other important health information. Most notably, the singer had a history of drug use, including heroin, and extreme dieting. Elliot is reported to have been prescribed an amphetamine called Dexedrine in her early teens, and she used Eskatrol diet pills in her adulthood.<sup>7</sup> In 1969, *Good Housekeeping* published an article written by Cass Elliot, where she describes her experience of losing 110 pounds:

I've invented a fabulous new diet. It costs only \$2000 for each pound you lose... I can't guarantee it, but the Mama Cass Diet can give you acute tonsillitis, hemorrhaging vocal chords, mononucleosis and a dangerous case of hepatitis. At least that's what it did for me. I lost my health— and more than a quarter million dollars in earnings as a singer.<sup>8</sup>

Elliot went from weighing 285 pounds to 175 by fasting four days a week, and eating one steak and vegetable dinner each night of the weekend, with the occasional half-cup of cottage cheese for breakfast.<sup>9</sup> And yet, her history of starvation diets and substance abuse was not wholly addressed at the time of her death by the media nor the medical professionals in charge of her autopsy.

The U.S. Surgeon General's office frequently publishes reports on topical public health issues. In 1979, the report titled "Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention" advocated for obesity prevention through methods that contemporary researchers have

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<sup>7</sup> Eddi Fiegel, *Dream a Little Dream of Me: The Life of Cass Elliot*, 167, Chicago Review Press, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> "The Tragic Life and Death of Mama Cass," Fatlip, December 17, 2019: Apple, Podcast.

<sup>9</sup> "The Tragic Life and Death of Mama Cass," Fatlip, 2019.

since contested. The 1979 report cites that 35% of women and 5% of men living below the poverty level and aged between 45 and 64 were reportedly obese, while 29% of women and 13% of men above the poverty line were also considered obese.<sup>10</sup> The report admits that few adults maintained permanent weight-loss, and advises readers to forgo fad diets in favour of a gradual shift in diet and exercise. No timeline is provided for such a change, and long-term weight-loss is reportedly “somewhat easier to achieve” through food journaling and “avoid[ing] situations that would entice them to overeat.”<sup>11</sup> Today, critics of the mainstream obesity treatment argue that diets do not lead to sustainable weight loss for the majority of people. Cass Elliot was not alone in her struggle to keep off the weight, as an estimated 95 percent of Americans do not maintain weight loss in the long-term. Obesity has not been determined by scientists to be a valid predictor of negative health outcomes, including heart disease, whereas the act of dieting has been shown to be the best indicator for the future development of an eating disorder.<sup>12</sup>

Cass Elliot’s public persona was consistently informed by her physical appearance. In 1970, Elliot was the mystery guest on the TV game show “What’s My Line?” where a blindfolded panel must ask her descriptive questions to uncover her identity; one panelist asked if she was “sort of small,” evoking a burst of laughter from the live audience.<sup>13</sup> During her *Carol Burnett Show* appearance in 1971, numerous jokes were made about Elliot’s

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<sup>10</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health Service, “Healthy People: The Surgeon General’s Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (Chapter 10),” Government report, United States Public Health Service, 1979, 4-10.

<sup>11</sup> “Healthy People,” U.S. Public Health Service, 4-10.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon, *What We Don’t Talk About*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> *What’s My Line?* Season 3, “‘Mama’ Cass Elliot,” hosted by Wally Bruner, CBS, aired August 27, 1970, in broadcast syndication.

size. In the show's toothpaste sketch, Elliot pretended to be a young girl and claimed that she brushes her teeth sixteen times a day— once after every meal.<sup>14</sup> The following year, British interviewer Russell Harty introduced Cass Elliot to his show with, "Now here's a big lady."<sup>15</sup> A 1973 episode of *Scooby-Doo!* featured Cass Elliot making several self-deprecating fat jokes while imprisoned in her haunted candy factory, even going as far as to promise that if she could get out of the tunnel she was stuck in, she would only eat grapefruit "for every meal and snack."<sup>16</sup> Cass Elliot's role in the media, whenever she was not singing, revolved around her size and eating habits. The underlying message throughout her television appearances is that fatness is caused by overeating and lack of exercise, and being fat is laughable.

The attitudes towards Cass Elliot's body are emblematic of the fatphobia that has long existed in American culture and medicine. In *What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Fat*, Aubrey Gordon defines anti-fatness and anti-fat bias as, "umbrella terms that describe the attitudes, behaviors, and social systems that specifically marginalize, exclude, underserve, and oppress fat bodies."<sup>17</sup> Anti-fat bias extends to the institutional level, including health care. Ironically, the system that has raised concern for the health of fat people for decades has been responsible for the disproportionate mistreatment and misdiagnosis of fat patients. Fat people with any range of health

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<sup>14</sup> *Carol Burnett Show*, Season 5, episode 6, "Ken Berry and Cass Elliot," aired October 13, 1971, in broadcast syndication.

<sup>15</sup> *Russell Harty Plus*, episode with guest Cass Elliot, aired October 1972, in broadcast syndication.

<sup>16</sup> *The New Scooby-Doo Movies*, Season 2, episode 7, "The Haunted Candy Factory," aired October 20, 1973, in broadcast syndication.

<sup>17</sup> Aubrey Gordon, *What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Fat*, 171, Beacon Press: 2020.

concerns are often refused testing and told to lose weight. This supposed fix-all strategy is based on inconclusive evidence, and too often results in fat patients going without suitable medical treatment for the true cause(s) of their health issue.<sup>18</sup>

Metropolitan Life, one of the major insurance companies in the U.S., developed an ideal body weight chart for life insurance pricing that became an influential measure of health for average Americans. This was part of a trend in the early twentieth century where insurance companies would fund studies on mortality. These studies found that “after the age of thirty-five, death rates increased steadily and predictably the more people weighed” and that “people actually lived longest when they weighed ten pounds less than average.”<sup>19</sup> In *Fat History*, Peter Stearns explains that in 1942, Metropolitan Life determined the ideal weight for a medium-frame man to be 145-156 pounds.<sup>20</sup> However, this range was lowered in the insurance company’s 1959 table, where the new ideal was set as 138 to 152 pounds. Similarly, the ideal weights of women listed decreased in 1959; a woman of a medium-frame standing five feet four inches was suggested to weigh between 124 and 132 pounds in 1942, and between 113 and 126 pounds just seventeen years later.<sup>21</sup> According to the 1959 Metropolitan Life chart, Cass Elliot, with a height of 5’4 and a large frame, would be advised to weigh 121-138 pounds.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the heaviest a woman should weigh is 173 pounds-- and that is only if she is 6 feet tall.<sup>23</sup> By further restricting weight ranges in 1959, Metropolitan Life could

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<sup>18</sup> Gordon, *What We Don’t Talk About*, 171.

<sup>19</sup> Gordon, 162.

<sup>20</sup> Peter N. Stearns, *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West*, New York: New York University Press, 1997, 111.

<sup>21</sup> Stearns, *Fat History*, 111.

<sup>22</sup> Stearns, 113.

<sup>23</sup> Stearns, 113.

charge higher premiums to more people, citing the supposed terminal nature of obesity.

In *Modern Food, Moral Food*, food historian Helen Zoe Veit analyzes the influence of quantitative health measures on the behaviour of Americans. By paraphrasing the role of metrics on daily life with comparisons between food consumption and body weight, Veit shows how these factors helped fuel weight loss culture. While the late nineteenth-century saw the introduction of men's ready-made clothing, it was not until the boom of ready-made womenswear in the early decades of the twentieth century when bodies were increasingly quantified in America.<sup>24</sup> She indicates that metric assessments of health became more commonplace during the First World War, and later in the century, calorie counting and home scales allowed Americans to self-regulate their weight.<sup>25</sup> Comparative statistics between nations caused American medical authorities to panic, and heightened levels of chronic disease domestically were attributed to fatness.<sup>26</sup> This major shift in American thought towards physicality as a controlled structure contributed to the emergence of modern 'diet culture.'

In 1976, the Frances Stern Nutrition Center in Boston published a 24-minute educational video for medical practitioners titled "The Obesity Problem." Carole Palmer, the host and main contributor of this production, outlines the center's suggested approach for treating overweight patients. Palmer opens the video by expressing her understanding that

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<sup>24</sup> Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013, 159.

<sup>25</sup> Veit, *Modern Food*, 159.

<sup>26</sup> Veit, 159.

this type of doctor-patient relationship can often be frustrating for the physician, and weight loss is seldom achieved:

The patient may lose little if any weight and the physician often gives up in disgust complaining that the patient has no willpower. Now, after attempting to motivate several patients in this manner, all unsuccessfully, the physician may develop a hopeless and negative attitude towards the management of all obese patients.<sup>27</sup>

Palmer argues that the standard practice of telling a fat person to lose weight and prescribing a diet plan to follow at home is not effective. A variety of “complex interactions” cause obesity, she claims, including personality, family life, environmental conditions, and attitude. For diagnosis of “disease,” clinical testing is required, including the measurement of height and weight, specialized laboratory tests, and a review of the patient’s medical history. Once diagnosed with obesity, management is suggested to carry out in two phases: “the proper therapeutic treatment” and “the patient’s cooperation in following the prescribed regime.” This level of patient responsibility, Palmer states, is what leads to problems. To gain the patient’s cooperation, the doctor must hone his understanding of human psychology.<sup>28</sup>

The next segment of the video introduces Neil Freeman, a 24 year-old white man who received a complete physical examination at the medical center, acting as an example for their diagnostic process for obesity. His results show that he is 5’10, 210 lbs/95.45 kg, with high blood pressure, and an elevated level

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<sup>27</sup> Carole Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976; Boston: Frances Stern Nutrition Center, Video,

<https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/catalog/nlm:nlmuid-7801650A-vid>.

<sup>28</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.



of lipids in his blood. At the time of the interview, Neil's weight was 210 lbs, having increased "significantly" in the past two years. Palmer claims that determining one's weight category can be achieved through various means, and, "The easiest and most universal of these methods is to compare the patient's actual weight to tables of ideal weight that were developed by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company."<sup>29</sup> In the video, a yellow table shows the ideal weights for a 5ft 10 man according to his frame: small frame, medium frame, or large frame. By this measurement, Neil falls into the large frame category, and his ideal weight is between 155 and 174 lbs. Men of the same height with a small frame are advised to weigh 140-150 lbs, and medium frame men 146-160 lbs. Palmer goes on to demonstrate a "more accurate way of measuring percentage of overweight," by using a skinfold caliper on the back of the upper arm (tricep region) three times, calculating the average of these measurements. Neil's diagnosis is obese with Type Four Hyperlipidemia, referring to the elevated level of fat in his blood.

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Palmer identifies Neil's family environment as a likely reason his previous diet attempts have been unsuccessful. She conducts an interview with Neil, asking questions about his family history, finding instances of diabetes, heart attacks, and high blood pressure. In his efforts to lose weight while living at home, Neil claims his family members are his 'worst enemies,' as most of them are fat, and his mother regularly encourages him to eat. Palmer asks if Neil is worried about his weight, and he says, "Yeah. I've tried diets off and on for years. Nothing seems to work."<sup>31</sup> He has tried the Air Force diet, the Army diet, the

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<sup>29</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

<sup>30</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

<sup>31</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

Drinking Man's diet, and the Water Closet diet, claiming he even joined the Air Force once to receive aerobics training. Under a previous doctor's supervision, Neil lost 25 lbs, but became so embarrassed about gaining it back that he would not return to the same doctor. Palmer asks Neil if he was "fat as a child," and he responds, "Yeah. When I was 10 years-old, I weighed about 90 lbs. I've always been fat. You know what they say: once fat, always fat."<sup>32</sup> When asked about experiencing weakness or "blacking out" on any of these diets, Neil says that he did black out after fasting for two consecutive days and having two drinks at a bar. In the Surgeon General's Health Report of 1979, it is cited that, "In addition to the physiological problems, obesity may have serious social consequences for the young person growing up in a society which prizes slimness and athletic ability. A genetic component may be involved in some obesity. But the social environment of the family-- eating and exercise habits and a tendency to view food as a "reward"--is of great importance."<sup>33</sup> It is evident that the American medical community found the social and familial environment to be impactful to one's physical appearance, even noting the problems caused by societal pressures to be thin.

The remainder of Palmer's interview is used to determine what a typical day looks like for Neil: what he *really* eats and how much he exercises. Palmer advises that obese patients write a food diary for one week, detailing "all meals, all snacks when they were eaten, the method of preparation and the portion size."

<sup>34</sup> Exact measurements of each ingredient were required. After

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<sup>32</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

<sup>33</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health Service, "Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (Chapter 4)," Government report, United States Public Health Service, 1979, 4-10.

<sup>34</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

examining Neil's food diary, his daily caloric intake is shown to be about 2,100 calories. Palmer is skeptical of his carbohydrate intake, saying it is too much on the normal-low side to be consistent with his high blood sugar. Palmer finds that Neil was once the captain of the high school football team, but has now been unemployed for a year, spending his free time volunteering with a community theatre doing stage construction. He smokes a pack and a half of cigarettes a day, eats lunch at McDonald's, and then visits with friends, often at a local bar in the evening, having about five or six drinks-- a mix of beer and scotch. He goes home for his mother's homemade dinner, typically a big steak with vegetables, or, if he does not like what she is serving, he might order a 12 inch pizza, and eat the whole thing. After dinner, he usually watches television and eats popcorn with salt and butter, as well as some Lifesavers or TicTacs.<sup>35</sup> When asked if he has been drinking more recently than he used to, Neil says his alcohol intake has been higher than usual for the past several months. Overall, he believes that the amount of food he eats is normal, but he does not like how he feels in his body.<sup>36</sup> Palmer must uncover every 'hidden calorie' Neil consumes, as the butter, mints, and alcohol contribute to his daily caloric intake in ways that Neil may not have realized. His intuitive eating habits are treated as ignorance, and this ignorance is behind his weight gain.

After the interview segment, Palmer describes her theory on what has caused Neil's "obesity problem." She again emphasizes the "complex interaction" of "three variables," these

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<sup>35</sup> Carole Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976; Boston: Frances Stern Nutrition Center, Video, <https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/catalog/nlm:nlmuid-7801650A-vid>.

<sup>36</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

being dietary and medical, social, and emotional.<sup>37</sup> Palmer points to Neil's sedentary lifestyle, social and family relationships to food, his caloric intake, sedentary activities, and severe depression as the reasons for him being overweight. Palmer traces Neil's "severe depression" to his "poor social life, his unemployment situation, loneliness, his overweight and, again, his fear of developing the family medical problems."<sup>38</sup> Palmer calculated that his caloric intake should be about 6,000 calories rather than Neil's food diary recording of 2,100.<sup>39</sup> By reducing his calorie consumption, Neil can amend his "poor self image and poor body image."<sup>40</sup> Palmer suggests that by controlling his caloric intake, Neil will lose weight, and if Neil loses weight, then the social and emotional issues he struggles with will heal. Likewise, if Neil's psychological health improves, he will be able to stick to his diet.

The mental ramifications of Neil's relationship to his body is attributed by Palmer to his physical fatness, as though he is caught in a cycle of emotional eating and body dissatisfaction. No attention is given to the internalized fatphobia Neil may have been coping with, and the stigma associated with living in a larger body. As David Crosby tells Cass Elliot's biographer Eddi Fiegel, Elliot was happy performing and partying with friends, but she was also troubled by her appearance. He explains that,

*Inside* she was very beautiful but our society is built on surface not substance. And that's how all the programming was back then and it's worse now... she wanted to be beautiful! She wanted to be loved. I think that was the single greatest driving force in her

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<sup>37</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

<sup>38</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

<sup>39</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

<sup>40</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

character.<sup>41</sup>

The obsessive quality of Cass Elliot's pursuit for beauty is, in a sense, mirrored by Neil's persistent weight loss attempts. Both cases contain symptoms of a potential eating disorder, including ongoing food restrictions and fixations on body-alteration. However, neither Neil nor Cass Elliot received medical attention for these issues; instead, their dieting efforts were encouraged for the sake of 'improved' health. For example, Palmer blames Neil's mother for "sabotag[ing] his efforts to lose weight," and claims that Neil is in denial of his obesity, tending to consume food, alcohol, and cigarettes almost subconsciously. She suggests that Neil needs "a lot of re-education and a lot of support," allowing the physicians watching to develop a diet plan for weight loss, and thus encourage habits associated with disordered eating.

The Frances Stern Nutrition Center's video is an example of best practice for diagnosing and treating "obese" patients recommended to health care professionals in 1976. Interestingly, Palmer describes obesity as a disease, and traces ideal body weight measures to the insurance company Metropolitan Life. The skinfold caliper corroborates the chart's results, however doing so with only a sample from the back of the arm. At 210 lbs, Neil is deemed obese, and to achieve the ideal weight for his height and large-frame he must lose at least 25 lbs. Neil's every activity and meal is scrutinized by Palmer for the purpose of accuracy, seemingly causing Neil to defend himself and his food choices in what Palmer calls evidence of obesity "denial." However, the only lab result which caused concern was the elevated lipid and sugar content in Neil's blood, the latter caused,

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<sup>41</sup> Eddi Fiegel, *Dream a Little Dream of Me: The Life of Cass Elliot*, Chicago Review Press, 2007, prologue.

as Palmer says, by high carbohydrate consumption. The tests were limited to obesity-correlated factors, but none caused Palmer to pursue further testing or fear severe health outcomes for Neil. Weight loss, from the beginning, was to be the prescribed advice.

Furthermore, Neil's lifestyle appears to contain regular socializing, both with friends, fellow volunteers, and family members. He expresses his enjoyment of these activities, but Palmer focuses on the food he eats and the amount of exercise he undertakes when he socializes. When Neil describes his past experiences with dieting, including an instance of fasting for 48 hours and passing out, Palmer laughs at his confession that nothing seems to work. Nor are Neil's feelings of anxiety about his weight and the size of his family members interrogated by Palmer; she attributes these symptoms to his poor self image and fear of developing family health issues, something that is also causing him to eat subconsciously. This video teaches doctors how to diagnose and treat fatness based on insufficient scientific evidence. According to Palmer, the causes of said state-of-being are dietary and medical, social, and emotional-- all of which contribute to the patient's caloric intake and exercise regimen. The doctor's role is to diagnose, conduct a detailed assessment of the patient's food diary to determine every last calorie he consumes, and to develop a management plan. This plan would presumably involve a decrease in caloric intake and an increase in physical exercise. Indeed, at the root of this film is the belief that diet and lack of exercise cause weight gain.

In 1979, The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention detailed its goals to curb childhood obesity as a means to prevent adult obesity:

Today's most prevalent nutritional problems are overeating and ill advised food choices. Obesity—a risk

factor for hypertension, heart disease and diabetes—frequently begins during childhood. About one-third of today's obese adults were overweight as children. An obese child is at least three times more likely than another to be an obese adult. Because obesity is more difficult to correct in adulthood, major preventive efforts are best directed toward children and adolescents. Another cause of concern is the diet of a large proportion of today's children—containing considerably more fat and sugar than a reasonable diet should have. Underscoring the seriousness of that concern: evidence of coronary arteriosclerosis in seemingly healthy young people in their late teens. Limiting fat consumption by children may reduce blood fat levels, and, thus, a risk factor for heart disease.<sup>42</sup>

What kinds of foods might have been suggested to an “obese” patient such as Neil? Overconsumption of fat and sugar are suggested to be factors contributing to obesity, a notion supported by the Swanson Center for Nutrition’s 1979 poster depicting a fat woman reading a menu. The foods listed on the menu are “Fatty Foods,” “Sugar-Sweets,” “Soft-Drinks,” “Candies,” and “Beer.”<sup>43</sup> The poster reads: “Being fat causes... diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure.” Another poster by the same artist exclaims “If you have diabetes... exercise more

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<sup>42</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health Service, “Healthy People: The Surgeon General’s Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (Chapter 4),” Government report, United States Public Health Service, 1979, 4-10.

<sup>43</sup> Chuck Raymond, *Being fat--causes diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure*, 1979, Photomechanical print (poster), 44 x 56 cm, Omaha, Nebraska.

and eat less.”<sup>44</sup> Again, weight-loss through specific limitations in one’s diet is recommended by medical experts to “correct” obesity from an early age.

In contrast to the widely-accepted causality between fatness and certain diseases throughout the 1970s and today, many contemporary scientists and activists doubt the significance of these links. Barbara Leone Silva and Jacobina Rivas Cantisani explain that:

Many studies, however, question the causal relationship between high BMI and the risk of cardiovascular diseases and chronic noncommunicable diseases. Some of these studies also point to obesity (according to the standard established by BMI) as a possible protective factor against mortality, emphasizing the need to develop and use other methods of risk prediction to replace BMI. In addition, reports of patients considered obese indicate that health professionals are an important source of prejudice. International studies found negative attitudes to obesity among physicians, nurses, psychologists, physical educators and nutritionists. There was evidence of significant implicit prejudice, including by obesity specialists.<sup>45</sup>

In short, assumptions about fat people, or fat bias, is causing medical professionals to overlook other possible causes for fat

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<sup>44</sup> Chuck Raymond, *If you have diabetes-- exercise more and eat less*, 1979, Photomechanical print (poster), 43 x 56 cm, Omaha, Nebraska. In both images, the subjects are fat, Indigenous Americans. This likely speaks to the racially-charged history of fatphobia.

<sup>45</sup> Barbara Leone Silva and Jacobina Rivas Cantisani, “Interfaces Between Fatphobia and the Professionalization in Nutrition: An Essential Debate,” *Demetra: Alimentação, Nutrição e Saúde* 13, no. 2 (2018): 367, <https://doi.org/10.12957/demetra.2018.33311>.



patients' health problems. Fat, as studies show, is also correlated to positive health outcomes, such as protection against illness and injury. A person's weight falling outside of BMI standards for their age, height, and sex is not as clear a predictor for cardiovascular disease as experts have claimed historically. Palmer's plan is presented as a divergence from typical obesity interventions in which the patient is simply prescribed a diet plan to follow to the best of his ability.<sup>46</sup> Ironically, Palmer does just that, and with an additional scrutiny of Neil's behaviours. With this, it becomes evident that the Frances Stern Nutrition Center believes that weight loss garners health, and the achievement of such health is ultimately up to the individual's interest in "doing something about his problem."<sup>47</sup>

When compared to medical doctrines of the 1970s, the treatment of Cass Elliot in popular culture during and after her life appears to be consistent with the advice given to other fat people. Weight-loss through diet and exercise was deemed to be the appropriate method for improved health by medical authorities such as the Surgeon General, even when patients developed troubling eating behaviours. Thinness— a status inaccessible, at least in the long-term, for the majority of adults— has been the standard for health and social acceptance for more than a century, with mass fear of fat-induced mortality promoted by medical literature throughout the twentieth century.<sup>48</sup> The moral implications of fatness have brought about the harassment and discrimination of fat people in both the public eye and in private medical settings. Cass Elliot faced extreme pressure as a public figure to lose weight, and when she did in 1969, she

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<sup>46</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

<sup>47</sup> Palmer, *The Obesity Problem*, 1976.

<sup>48</sup> Gordon, *What We Don't Talk About*, 171.

admittedly lost her health, and eventually her life. Just as the myth of Elliot's choking on a ham sandwich lives on, so too does the fat-bias prevalent in American medicine and society at large.

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## Shifting Iconography of the Savage: A Critical Analysis of American Frontier Art from 1841-1893

Maia St. Lawrence

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In the early nineteenth century, the United States remained confined to a slice of territory abutting the Eastern Seaboard. Craving more land and resources for their young nation to reach its full potential, nation builders began to look west. Contemporary texts often described the American West as empty, but this land was inhabited by an extensive network of Native American tribes. To settle and develop this frontier, it became imperative to transform the Native American population into 'savages' to justify the taking of their land and the violence perpetrated against them.

The ambition of this essay is to explore how American artists conjoined the tropes of 'wilderness' and 'savage' during the initial phase of Western settlement. Paintings were one of the key mediums through which an image of savagery could be cultivated in the contemporary consciousness. Most of the audience for frontier art had never gone west before, nor had they seen a Native American in person. Accordingly, their perceptions were shaped by the artists who had experienced the frontier.<sup>1</sup> It stands to reason that in an age before electronic communication where literacy was rising but still far from universal, paintings served as a key medium to cultivate American ideas about the Native American as a 'savage.' When it

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<sup>1</sup> Stephanie Mayer Heydt, "Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier: Art of the West before 1900," in *Art of the American Frontier: from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, Stephanie Mayer Heydt, Mindy N. Besaw, Emma I. Hansen, and Peter H. Hassrick (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2013), 15.

came to imagining the frontier, however, these beliefs intersected with the dichotomy between 'wilderness' and 'civilization.' Western myths about the frontier were ambivalent; on one hand, the American West represented economic opportunity, but it was also dangerous and removed from the comforts and security of civilization. In late-nineteenth century frontier art, Native Americans became the key conceptual bridge linking these two conflictual understandings of nature. The presence of 'savages' in Western art served to denote the frontier as 'wilderness' while the removal of Native Americans symbolized the triumph of civilization.

Previous research has established that from approximately 1841 until 1869, Western artists tended to depict Native Americans as violent savages. Francis Flavin, a historian whose expertise lies in the study of Native American images, noted the creation of the 'savage' was an integral part of imperial expansion.<sup>2</sup> Stephanie Mayer Heydt, a curator of American art, wrote a survey article that examines the seminal paintings that created the myth of the wild frontier and shows how paintings galvanized the image of the 'savage' in the American consciousness. Mindy Besaw, a curator at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, examines how artistic depictions of the frontier experienced a dramatic reversal once Native Americans were pacified.<sup>3</sup> Instead of the frontier being depicted as a frightening and wild place, it was increasingly imbued with romantic ideals and portrayed as a serene realm of nature that offered refuge from the pressures of civilization.

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Flavin, "The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century and the Image of the American Indian," *Indiana Magazine of History* 98, no. 1 (2002).

<sup>3</sup> Mindy N. Besaw, "The End of the Frontier and the Birth of Nostalgia," in *Art of the American Frontier: from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, Stephanie Mayer Heydt, Mindy N. Besaw, Emma I. Hansen, and Peter H. Hassrick (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2013).

Although there were thousands of paintings depicting the frontier during the nineteenth century, this essay will focus on closely analyzing nine paintings that had a relatively wide audience: one from the pre-settlement phase (pre-1841), six from the period spanning from the opening of the Oregon Trail to the unofficial ‘closing’ of the American frontier (1841-1893), and two from the period after the closing of the frontier (post-1893). While these paintings represent only a fraction of the total put to canvas, they highlight the key mentalities of the artists and give particular focus to Native Americans.

### **Settling the West and American Ideas about the Frontier**

The frontier has long played a defining role in American identity and culture. As America expanded west, conquest of the ‘frontier’ assumed special significance in the collective psyche of Americans. Frederick Jackson Turner was the first to hypothesize the frontier’s central importance. In a famous 1893 essay, he argued that the ‘frontier’ was the agent that made America ‘American.’<sup>4</sup> He argued that European heritage only accounted for the similarities between Europe and America, and that their cultural differences resulted from the unique environment of the New World.<sup>5</sup> Turner theorized that as Americans moved westwards, their culture and institutions adapted to fit this frontier environment.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, following the War of 1812, the young American republic sought to achieve cultural independence from Europe, and did so by celebrating their differences—namely, the frontier, the wilderness, and the

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<sup>4</sup> Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*. 6th ed., an abridgment (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Billington and Ridge, *Westward Expansion*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Billington and Ridge, 3.

‘Indians.’<sup>7</sup> However, while Americans felt the need to accentuate their cultural differences from Europe, they simultaneously wanted to affirm their vision of building a Caucasian nation.<sup>8</sup> The tension between these conflictual desires often surfaced in frontier art.

Artists similarly accentuated the differences between European and American landscape.<sup>9</sup> For many American artists, ‘nature’ was not merely background scenery, but captured the spirit of the frontier. In 1803, the Americans bought much of the Trans-Appalachian West from the French during the Louisiana Purchase.<sup>10</sup> Through this one treaty, America doubled in size.<sup>11</sup> At the time, the Americans in the East had very little notion of this vast territory. Expeditions explored this realm and assessed its potential for settlement.<sup>12</sup> The government hoped their acquisition would yield land with an abundance of resources. The report from the Lewis and Clark expedition crushed such hopes.<sup>13</sup> Although vast, much of the new territory was too arid for cultivation and bands of mountains separated the country from the Pacific.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Lewis and Clark reported that the Blackfoot Indians resisted their attempts to use waterways to traverse out west.<sup>15</sup> In summation, settling the West would prove

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<sup>7</sup> Francis Flavin, “The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century and the Image of the American Indian,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 98, no. 1 (2002): 1.

<sup>8</sup> Laura Goldblatt and Richard Handler, “Toward a New National Iconography: Native Americans on United States Postage Stamps, 1863-1922,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 51, no. 1 (2017): 57.

<sup>9</sup> Flavin, “The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century and the Image of the American Indian,” 1.

<sup>10</sup> Billington and Ridge, *Westward Expansion*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> Heydt, “Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier,” 15.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 16.

<sup>13</sup> Heydt, “Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier,” 16.

<sup>14</sup> Heydt, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Virgin Land*, 17.



to be a challenge. Several artists also explored the lands to the west and similarly brought back depictions of an unforgiving landscape. One example of this phenomenon is George Catlin's *Wild Horses at Play* (figure 2), which depicts a vast and harsh landscape occupied only by wild horses.<sup>16</sup>

The United States' decision to settle the West was also an imperial project, with the Native Americans and the arid geography representing obstacles to manifest destiny. Western artists often infused their canvas with this ideological principle, and liberally invoked contemporary racial tropes about 'primitive' peoples lacking clothes and technology, with little interest in improving the land. Illustrating the Native American as 'savage' provided a rationale for manifest destiny, and also served as a barometer for civilization. For the nation to reach its potential and stretch from sea to sea, the frontier needed to be tamed and its wilderness transformed into civilization. All these ideas about nature, providence, and nationalism intersected in the frontier West. Settlers needed to push west, develop the land, and 'pacify the Indian.' American artists were immersed in contemporary ideologies of nationalism, race, and cultural superiority. Every painter of the frontier had their own take on how to iconographically depict the 'savage' and their dialectical relationship to Western civilization.

One common motif among contemporary American artists was the use of natural scenery around native subjects to imbue them with wildness. Native Americans were most often shown as primitive, bare-chested, often on horseback, and wielding a bow and arrow. They became symbols of resistance to the American dreams of nation. Their 'savagery' was also

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<sup>16</sup> George Catlin, *Wild Horses at Play*, 1834-1837, Oil on Canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/wild-horses-play-4466>.

iconographically established by their surroundings. Native Americans were depicted as living in nature, with paintings rarely showing villages or cultivated fields. This established Native Americans as primitives, living in harmony with nature rather than trying to tame it and improve the land like a 'civilized' person. Additionally, Native Americans were also often depicted as violent, aggressive, faceless, or captured in the throngs of battle. These visual hallmarks recurrent in the works of various artists signified to the American viewing audience their lack of civility. Like beasts in the field, they acted on instinct rather than reason. In essence, the caricature of the 'savage' in art perpetuated social stereotypes, reinforced settler hostility, and justified state appropriation of Native American land.

### **Deconstructing the Savage in the Art of the Western Frontier**

Alfred Jacob Miller's 1837 *Sioux's Indian Lodge* (figure 3) depicts a Native American family standing on the outskirts of their village.<sup>17</sup> Their faces are visible, and the use of soft color and light paints a peaceful scene of what seems like a regular family. Miller's painting differs from the violence, aggression, and facelessness that Native Americans were characterized by in most paintings of the following decade. It is also rare in showing a Native American baby, a distinctly humanizing characteristic that artists tended to avoid. Miller's paintings were immensely popular with their audiences.<sup>18</sup> Westerners were fascinated by Native Americans as they imagined them as noble savages living in a state of nature. Paintings such as Miller's normalized the Native American way of life and made it relatable to that of Europeans. However, Miller's painting still contributed to the

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<sup>17</sup> Alfred Jacob Miller, *Sioux's Indian Lodge*, 1837, Watercolor on paper, <https://www.alfredjacobmiller.com/artworks/sioux-indians-lodge/>.

<sup>18</sup> Heydt, "Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier," 17.

ideological project to construct the savage, as it strikes a visual allegory with the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve. As seen in Thomas Cole's painting, *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (figure 4), the Garden of Eden is depicted as a vast wilderness untouched by any form of civilization or technology.<sup>19</sup> The painting depicts Adam and Eve being forced out of this pristine land due to eating the fruit of knowledge. Thus, depictions of Native Americans living in a land untouched by civilization connected them back to Genesis and the mythic time before knowledge: a time of primitivity and nakedness. While this represents a much more subtle rendering of the iconography of the savage, it is no less prejudiced.

The next six paintings that will be examined come from the settlement phase of the frontier. After the opening of the Oregon Trail in 1841, artistic depictions of Native Americans shifted from 'noble' to 'violent' savages. Westward migration had been facilitated by the forceful removal of Native Americans to make way for settlers.<sup>20</sup> Post-1841 paintings paid heavy attention to frontier violence, especially between pioneer wagons and Native American horsemen. While this reflected a contemporary reality of American settlement, these paintings projected an image that every Native American encounter was mayhem.

Karl Bodmer's *Scalp Dance of the Minnetarees* (figure 5) captured a Native American scalp dance ceremony.<sup>21</sup> Karl Bodmer is widely recognized as one of the greatest

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas Cole, *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, 1828, Oil on Canvas,, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Cole\\_Thomas\\_Expulsion\\_from\\_the\\_Garden\\_of\\_Eden\\_1828.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Cole_Thomas_Expulsion_from_the_Garden_of_Eden_1828.jpg).

<sup>20</sup> Billington and Ridge, *Westward Expansion*, 112.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Bodmer, *Scalp Dance of the Minnetarees*, 1843, Aquatint, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/5gGsL6TfuKy-CO>.

adventurer-artists of the era.<sup>22</sup> His work is detailed, accurate, and comprehensive, and continues to be used for ethnographic studies of Native Americans since he aimed to capture the Native Americans and their way of life before they disappeared.<sup>23</sup> The issue with this particular painting is its display of Native Americans participating in a ceremony that celebrates scalping settlers. Although Bodmer's goal was to accurately capture this ceremony for posterity, it would have surely contributed to the fear of violence against settlers. Americans were fearful of attacks upon their wagon trains, and scalping was evidently one of the horrific outcomes they feared. This brutal practice implicitly legitimized the American claim to the frontier, reinforcing the trope that they were Christians claiming pagan land. The juxtaposition of Christian ceremonies with vastly different Native American rites contributed to the idea of savagery. Additionally, within the painting itself, there is no individuality amongst the ritualists; they are rendered as caricatures lacking distinct features. Finally, the rising smoke in the painting's background suggests that a battle had been fought, elucidating that Native Americans embodied the resistance to America's territorial expansion and civilizing mission.

George Catlin's *Buffalo Hunt, Chase* (figure 6) illustrates Native Americans hunters,<sup>24</sup> as his artistic philosophy was to capture the Plains Indians before they "suffered the consequences" of Western influence.<sup>25</sup> To live up to this ideal,

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<sup>22</sup> Flavin, "The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century and the Image of the American Indian," 6.

<sup>23</sup> Flavin, "Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century," 9.

<sup>24</sup> George Catlin, *Buffalo Hunt, Chase*, 1844, Colored lithograph, Plate 6 from the "North American Indian Portfolio," Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/122200>.

<sup>25</sup> Flavin, "The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century and the Image of the American Indian," 6.

Catlin spent eight years travelling and living amongst the natives, and eventually lobbied for them to be given a vast tract of land to live on.<sup>26</sup> Although his painting is an accurate portrayal of the people he painted, there are some interesting details about the iconography of the savage within it. The first is the link between the buffalo and the Native Americans of the Plains. In the eastern United States and Europe, they did not have animals this large, so the buffalo represented a potent symbol of the wild frontier. Subsequent artists would similarly invoke the buffalo as a motif of the frontier.<sup>27</sup> Second, the Native Americans are depicted as hunting with spears; they did not have firearms like the civilized Americans. This differentiated them and suggested that they were primitives stuck in a state before technology and firearms.

Another painting key in the American iconography of the savage is Carl Wimar's *The Attack on an Emigrant Train* (figure 7).<sup>28</sup> The violence in the painting is startlingly clear, as settlers fend off attacking Native Americans in a violent struggle.<sup>29</sup> This painting was one of Wimar's most popular works and went on exhibition in both Boston and New York.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, many prints of this painting were "distributed nationwide."<sup>31</sup> Its popularity in American parlors contributed to the myth that Native American attacks on pioneers were motivated by

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<sup>26</sup> Heydt, "Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier," 17.

<sup>27</sup> Stephanie Mayer Heydt, "Into the Wilderness," in *Art of the American Frontier: from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, Stephanie Mayer Heydt, Mindy N. Besaw, Emma I. Hansen, and Peter H. Hassrick (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2013), 46.

<sup>28</sup> Carl Wimar, *Attack on an Emigrant Train*, 1856, Oil on Canvas, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI, [https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/musart/x-1895.80/1895.80\\_\\_jpg](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/musart/x-1895.80/1895.80__jpg).

<sup>29</sup> Heydt, "Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier," 20.

<sup>30</sup> Flavin, "The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century," 15.

<sup>31</sup> Flavin, 15.

savagery, rather than the reality that Europeans were encroaching upon their hunting grounds.<sup>32</sup> Shrouding the faces of the native attackers gave them the air of demonic figures lacking any outward form of humanity.

There are two other elements to take note of in this painting. The first is the symbol of the white horse. As can be seen in the background of the painting, a Native American man is riding a white horse and wielding a weapon. The symbol of the white horse is one that is commonly used in Christian artwork to denote Death itself. As stated in Revelation: "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him."<sup>33</sup> Already decades before, Western painters had started to depict Death riding a white steed. This can be seen in an 1817 painting by Benjamin West depicting the coming of the fourth horseman (figure 8).<sup>34</sup> In Wimar's canvas, he iconographically ties the Native American rider to Death itself, a motif that would evolve into a racist trope in other frontier paintings.

Secondly, Wimar's painting also reveals a deep-rooted American fear of rape. The painting depicts a Native American man trying to grab one of the white female passengers from the wagon before getting shot. During the frontier expansion in the nineteenth century, fear of being kidnapped by Native Americans was exacerbated by the kidnapping of Daniel Boone's daughter Jemima, an event that was the subject of an 1862

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<sup>32</sup> Flavin, "The Adventurer-Artists of the Nineteenth Century," 15.

<sup>33</sup> Rev. 6:8.

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin West, *Death on the Pale Horse*, 1817, Oil on Canvas, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA, <https://www.pafa.org/museum/collection/item/death-pale-horse>.

painting by Charles Wimar (figure 9).<sup>35</sup> Jemima is painted in virgin white, implying that she was chaste and innocent. Contemporary fears about miscegenation were reflected in many other texts, like Arthur de Gobineau's essays on race. De Gobineau's widely read book argued that humanity was split into three great races of "negroes, yellows, and whites" that he placed into a hierarchy predicated upon inherent qualities.<sup>36</sup> He also argued that the mixing of races, particularly that of Caucasian people with those of 'lesser blood,' debased their race.<sup>37</sup> De Gobineau's racial theories put the iconography of the savage in a fuller context in frontier art. While kidnapping was an occasional event, its focus in frontier art was mirroring contemporary fears of miscegenation.

While some artists were painting Native Americans as attackers, others were feeding the myth of their racial decline. *Last of Their Race*, by John Mix Stanley (figure 10), is a manifestation of that idea.<sup>38</sup> *Last of their Race* depicts tired Native Americans against a setting sun that symbolically announces that their time on the frontier has passed. The painting's mood is one of somber loss; their home has been taken from them and their way of life has disappeared.<sup>39</sup> The subjects have been pressed to the far edge of the continent and are immobile as the rising tide

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<sup>35</sup> Charles Ferdinand Wimar, *The Abduction of Daniel Boone's Daughter by the Indians*, 1862, Oil on Canvas, The Kemper Art Museum, St Louis, MO, <https://www.kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/collection/explore/artwork/1479>.

<sup>36</sup> Arthur De Gobineau, *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 205-207.

<sup>37</sup> De Gobineau, *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, 209.

<sup>38</sup> John Mix Stanley, *Last of their Race*, 1857, Oil on Canvas, Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, Cody, Wyoming. <https://centerofthewest.org/2015/05/13/painted-journeys-the-art-of-john-mix-stanley/>.

<sup>39</sup> Heydt, "Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier," 19.

threatens to engulf them.<sup>40</sup> Potently, the white horse, the steed of Death itself, no longer has its rider and is itself dying, suggesting that the once potent threat of Native American resistance has evaporated. For the first time since the pre-settlement era, more vulnerable populations— a native woman holding her child and an elderly man—are depicted. Clearly, the human traits of the subjects undermine the cultural motif of savagery. And yet, the child is dying, demonstrating the belief there would be no future generations. The painting suggests that the Native Americans were gracefully fading off into the sunset. In reality, Native Americans were fighting back against the advancement of settlers.<sup>41</sup> This idea was not beneficial to the Americans. If the natives were fighting for their land, they were clearly not equivalent to animals being pushed off. Rather, they would be seen as a people with a deep and spiritual connection to their land, fighting to retain that right. Art such as *Last of their Race* sought to counterattack this potent reality.

As the frontier was conquered through a combination of railways, rifles, and ploughs, Western artists from 1869 to 1893 linked the closing of the frontier to the symbolic death of Native Americans. In 1869, completion of the transcontinental railroad signalled the beginning of the closing of the frontier. The train was a symbol of western civilization conquering the land and providing settlement direction and control.<sup>42</sup> The railway provided the ability to traverse the frontier rapidly, which was central to its settlement.<sup>43</sup> As the frontier was no longer ungovernable, the wilderness was on the decline. The

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<sup>40</sup> Heydt, "Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier," 19.

<sup>41</sup> Heydt, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Leslie R. Heathcote, "Pioneer Landscape Paintings in Australia and the United States," *Great Plains Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (1983): 140.

<sup>43</sup> Heathcote, "Pioneer Landscape Paintings in Australia and the United States," 140.



iconography of the post-1870 period started to emphasize Native Americans as physically sick or haggard, suggesting that they had not only been pushed off of their land, but now also invoking a racial Darwinist trope that they had reached their final destination along the evolutionary road towards their foreordained extinction.

An example of this phenomenon is found in John Gast's famous painting, *American Progress* (figure 11).<sup>44</sup> In this painting, Lady America enters the American West, bringing civilization with her. This is shown through the presence of the symbols of civilization: railroads, telegraph lines, and American pioneers. In the bottom right corner, an American farmer works his land. Fleeing into the darkness are all examples of the wilderness, including bears, buffalo, and the Native Americans. The symbol of the farmers speaks to deeper Western beliefs. This theory is explained by Benjamin Hopkins, who argues that by the nineteenth century, those who were deemed to be civilized were those who recognized the ownership of land, whereas those who recognized communal property were labelled as savages.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, the 'civilized' were ones who maximized the productivity of their privately owned land – such as farmers.<sup>46</sup> Those who did not maximize productivity, like the Native Americans, lost the right to the land. Therefore, Gast is speaking to this rhetoric within his artwork, as his painting shows the 'civilized' coming in to claim the land from those they deemed

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<sup>44</sup> John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872, Oil on Canvas, Autry Museum of the American West, Los Angeles, CA, <http://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record:id=M545330:type=101>.

<sup>45</sup> Benjamin D. Hopkins, *Ruling the Savage Periphery: Frontier Governance and the Making of the Modern State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 94.

<sup>46</sup> Hopkins, *Ruling the Savage Periphery*, 94.

savage. This painting is reflective of the time, where the frontier was seen as being part of a fight between barbarism and imperial potential.<sup>47</sup> *American Progress* shows how the industrial potential, the symbolic light in the painting, is winning against the darkness. Part of this is the symbol of the railroad, which symbolized the subjugation of the frontier to civilization. This painting is also a potent visualization of manifest destiny, as it displays the achievement of the American goal to expand.

Albert Bierstadt's famous *Last of the Buffalo* (figure 12) is another example of artwork from this period.<sup>48</sup> This painting represents a metaphor for the passing away of the American frontier.<sup>49</sup> The 1880s were a time of drastic change in the West; the frontier was facing a rapid decline, and this painting reflected that sentiment.<sup>50</sup> Native Americans had been forced onto reservations and lost their land to American ambition.<sup>51</sup> In this painting, the buffalo hunt dominates the centre.<sup>52</sup> The Native American hunter's body, half-naked and strong, recalls the familiar savage trope.<sup>53</sup> It calls back to the Garden of Eden: a time before knowledge, marked by nakedness. The Native American

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (Middleton, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 12.

<sup>48</sup> Albert Bierstadt, *The Last of the Buffalo*, 1888, Oil on Canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.124525.html#provenance>.

<sup>49</sup> Dawn Glanz, *How the West Was Drawn: American Art and the Settling of the Frontier*, (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982), 106.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Hassrick, "Foreword: Bierstadt, Bison, and the Birth of a Western Concept," in *Art of the American Frontier: from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, Stephanie Mayer Heydt, Mindy N. Besaw, Emma I. Hansen, and Peter H. Hassrick (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2013), 13.

<sup>51</sup> Hassrick, "Foreword: Bierstadt, Bison, and the Birth of a Western Concept," 13.

<sup>52</sup> Glanz, *How the West Was Drawn*, 106.

<sup>53</sup> Heydt, "Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier," 24.

and the buffalo form a compact unit, expressive of their close relationship, as the two were inextricably linked due to the dependency of the native on the buffalo as his food supply. His fate was linked to that of the buffalo; thus, the extinction of the buffalo displayed in the painting meant the mutual decline of the Native American people.<sup>54</sup> This relationship is reiterated elsewhere in the artwork. Among the buffalo corpses, there lies a body of a Native American hunter who himself has also died. This represents how the predator shares in the fate of his prey, mutually going extinct.<sup>55</sup> This is interesting, as the Native Americans were not going extinct as a people; rather, their way of life was dying due to the state policy of reservations.<sup>56</sup> The painting also shows the body of an albino calf. In Native American culture, the albino calf was considered a gift from the creator and a symbol of the renewal of life. By depicting a dead albino calf, this indicates extinction rather than rebirth and reinforces the extinction of the Native Americans.<sup>57</sup>

By 1890, following the Wounded Knee Massacre, American fears of Native Americans were ebbing.<sup>58</sup> Since Native Americans were no longer a tangible threat to settlement, the West had been effectively tamed.<sup>59</sup> Most artists did not depict the West as 'civilized' so much as frozen in time. The West was still graphically depicted as a realm of nature, but the artists often invoked nostalgia for the wilderness that was lost.<sup>60</sup> Artists

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<sup>54</sup> Glanz, *How the West Was Drawn*, 106.

<sup>55</sup> Glanz, 107.

<sup>56</sup> Heydt, "Go West! Forging the Image of the American Frontier," 25.

<sup>57</sup> Glanz, *How the West Was Drawn*, 107.

<sup>58</sup> Mindy N. Besaw, "The End of the Frontier and the Birth of Nostalgia," in *Art of the American Frontier: from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, Stephanie Mayer Heydt, Mindy N. Besaw, Emma I. Hansen, and Peter H. Hassrick (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2013), 27.

<sup>59</sup> Besaw, "The End of the Frontier and the Birth of Nostalgia," 27.

<sup>60</sup> Besaw, 27.

sought to preserve the 'Old West' on canvas before it completely faded to oblivion. Native Americans were often portrayed as an extinct or dying race, long dead alongside the frontier.

This phenomenon can be seen in the artwork of Charles Russell, who was interested in painting Native Americans, saying they were the "most picturesque man in the world."<sup>61</sup> In his paintings, the Native Americans are situated in the Montana landscape, but are imagined recreations of the past.<sup>62</sup> While he strove to be as accurate as possible, he was reimagining and recreating an extinct way of life that he yearned to experience first hand. Since he was recreating Native Americans based off of earlier paintings, elements of savagery made their way into his artwork. This can be seen in his painting *Waterhole* (figure 13), where he painted a wolf following the group.<sup>63</sup> This was unlike paintings of Americans which commonly featured farm dogs, such as sheep or cattle dogs. The symbol of the wolf reiterated that they did not recognize the ownership of land and that unlike the 'civilized,' they did not farm. In essence, Russell was showing that nature followed the Native Americans and depicted them existing in one of the few remaining pockets of the Garden of Eden—land that they were allowed to keep as it was deemed unfarmable.

Additionally, there were depictions at this time—and extending well into the twentieth century—that showed the Native Americans as a mighty people brought low. Displayed through depictions of emaciated horses and riders, the Native American people were depicted as haggard, riding towards death. This is primarily seen in Charles Russell's *Stolen Horses*

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<sup>61</sup> Besaw, "The End of the Frontier and the Birth of Nostalgia," 29.

<sup>62</sup> Besaw, 29.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Marion Russell, *Waterhole*, 1906, Oil on Canvas, <https://www.cowboysindians.com/tag/waterhole/>.

(figure 14).<sup>64</sup> The idea of a race heading towards extinction recalls the social Darwinist racial theory. This theory argued that some races were higher on the evolutionary ladder than others. Notably, they argued that white races were of higher evolutionary stock than colored races.<sup>65</sup> Those of 'lesser races' were seen as inferior, headed on the path towards extinction.<sup>66</sup> This theory was often used as an instrument to justify the policies against 'lesser races,' such as the Native Americans, and reinforce arguments of their savagery.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, the rider is still using a spear and has not yet adapted to using firearms, a symbol of technology and progress. Further, he is bare-chested, recalling the Garden of Eden trope of nakedness, and wears a headdress. Frontier Native Americans were commonly painted wearing feathers, despite this not being a uniform characteristic amongst different tribes. Using this common element created an unidentifiable homogenous mass, and ignored the complexities and individuality of Native American tribes. It served to reinforce the false notion that Native American culture was simple and inferior.

## Conclusion

Earlier research has established how artists facilitated the conquest and settlement of the American West by promoting the trope of Native Americans as 'savages.' Although there were many artists painting the frontier during the mid-to-late

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<sup>64</sup> Charles Marion Russell, *Stolen Horses*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, <https://pixels.com/featured/stolen-horses-charles-marion-russell.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Jeffrey R. Dafler, "Social Darwinism and the Language of Racial Oppression: Australia's Stolen Generations," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 62, no. 2 (2005): 142.

<sup>66</sup> Dafler, "Social Darwinism and the Language of Racial Oppression: Australia's Stolen Generations," 142.

<sup>67</sup> Dafler, 142.

nineteenth century, they were consistent in depicting Native Americans as half-clothed and living in nature; vengeful warriors on horseback rather than the problematic reality that they lived in peaceful villages of men, women, children, and elderly people. Although early-nineteenth century European artists had sometimes depicted Native Americans as 'noble' savages, after 1841 'Indians' were increasingly depicted as barbarians, warriors, and scalp-takers that represented an existential threat to the project for Western settlement. Before the railroad made the West accessible, paintings were one of the most powerful mediums for portraying Native Americans on the frontier. For those living in the East, the iconography of the savage gave implicit justification for their brutal pacification. As the buffalo were hunted to near extinction, and the Native Americans were shuttled to reservations, Americans increasingly worried that the frontier was closing. This led some artists to turn the savage motif on its head, depicting the Native Americans as a tragic race moving towards extinction.

The shift in iconography is rooted in a Western ambivalence about wilderness. Savagery was a necessary motif for the success of American nation building, as it justified the brutal treatment and pacification of the native people in order for the land to be redeemed and civilized. Their savageness represented a threat to pioneers and a land of opportunity that could be reclaimed for civilization. Although post-1880 graphic depictions of Native Americans seem more sympathetic, the savage trope is only recycled to churn an allegory about their extinction paving the way for civilization. While the notion of the 'savage' originated in seventeenth-century Enlightenment thinking about the state of nature, the dehumanization of Native Americans during the process of frontier settlement was not particularly exceptional during a high imperial age. Racial

stereotyping and dehumanization were part and parcel of an imperial policy where non-western peoples were brutally subjugated to the rule of distant Western metropolises. The powerful influence of paintings to justify conquest cannot be understated, given that, in many ways, this iconography continues to echo in contemporary culture.

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Appendix

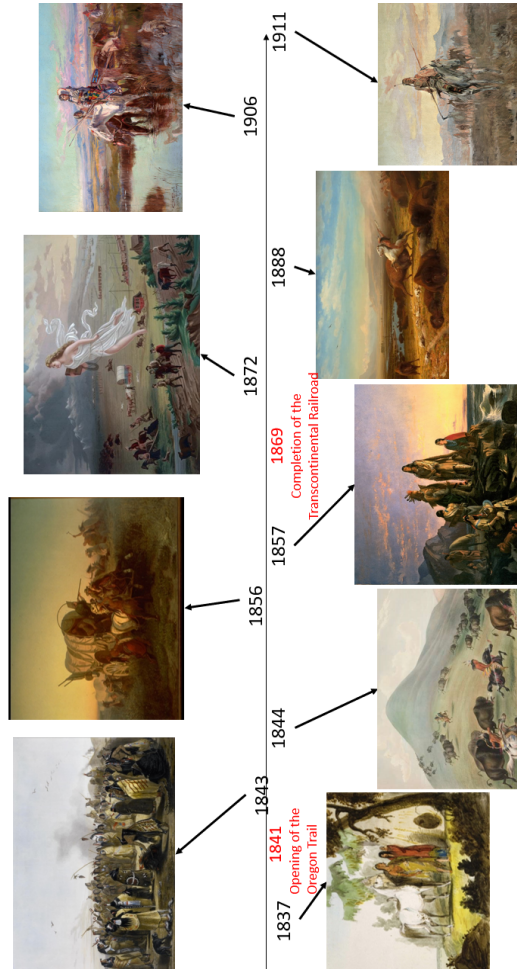


Figure 1. In chronological order: Alfred Jacob Miller's *Sioux's Indian Lodge*, Karl Bodmer's *Scalp Dance of the Minnetarees*, George Catlin's *Buffalo Hunt, Chase*, Charles Wimar's *Attack on an Emigrant Train*, John Mix Stanley's *Last of their Race*, John Gast's *American Progress*, Alfred Bierstadt's *The Last of the Buffalo*, Charles Russell's *Waterhole*, and Charles Russell's *Stolen Horses*. By Maia St. Lawrence.



Figure 2. George Catlin, *Wild Horses at Play*, 1834-1837, Oil on Canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/wild-horses-play-4466>.



Figure 3. Alfred Jacob Miller, *Sioux's Indian Lodge*, 1837, Watercolor on paper, <https://www.alfredjacobmiller.com/artworks/sioux-indians-lodge/>.



Figure 4. Thomas Cole, *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, 1828, Oil on Canvas,, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA,  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Cole\\_Thomas\\_Expulsion\\_from\\_the\\_Garden\\_of\\_Eden\\_1828.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Cole_Thomas_Expulsion_from_the_Garden_of_Eden_1828.jpg).



Figure 5. Karl Bodmer, *Scalp Dance of the Minnetarees*, 1843, Aquatint, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX,  
<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/5gGsL6TfuKy-CQ>.





Figure 6. George Catlin, *Buffalo Hunt, Chase*, 1844, Colored lithograph, Plate 6 from the "North American Indian Portfolio," Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/122200>.



Figure 7. Carl Wimar, *Attack on an Emigrant Train*, 1856, Oil on Canvas, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/musart/x-1895.80/1895.80.jpg>.



Figure 8. Benjamin West, *Death on the Pale Horse*, 1817, Oil on Canvas, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA, <https://www.pafa.org/museum/collection/item/death-pale-horse>.



Figure 9. Charles Ferdinand Wimar, *The Abduction of Daniel Boone's Daughter by the Indians*, 1862, Oil on Canvas, The Kemper Art Museum, St Louis, MO, <https://www.kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/collection/explore/artwork/1479>.



Figure 10. John Mix Stanley, *Last of their Race*, 1857, Oil on Canvas, Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, Cody, Wyoming.

<https://centerofthewest.org/2015/05/13/painted-journeys-the-art-of-john-mix-stanley/>.



Figure 11. John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872, Oil on Canvas, Autry Museum of the American West, Los Angeles, CA,

<http://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M545330;type=101>.





Figure 12. Albert Bierstadt, *The Last of the Buffalo*, 1888, Oil on Canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.124525.html#provenance>.



Figure 13. Charles Marion Russell, *Waterhole*, 1906, Oil on Canvas, <https://www.cowboysindians.com/tag/waterhole/>.



Figure 14. Charles Marion Russell, *Stolen Horses*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, <https://pixels.com/featured/stolen-horses-charles-marion-russell.html>.

**Voices of the Voiceless: The Historical Importance of Russian Serf Accounts**

Natasha White

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The voices of Russian peasants have often been confined to the margins of history by twentieth-century historians. Rather than searching for first-person accounts written by serfs, scholars have tried to piece together their lives by studying noble or foreign accounts, thus gaining a distorted and patriarchal view of peasant life which reflected the Russian imperial elite's stereotyped conceptions of peasants. One obstacle has been that while serfs comprised more than one third of Russia's population according to the 1857 census, due to the low levels of literacy in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russia, very little documentation exists produced by serfs themselves. However, in recent years excellent historical work has begun to analyze the few serf accounts that do exist and, in doing so, provide historians with a new view into the everyday lives of Russia peasants. This study will seek to further our growing understanding of the importance and value of the few nineteenth-century serf accounts which exist. While relying on the increasing amount of scholarly research which focuses on these accounts, this paper will seek to examine how peasants lived and how they became exposed to and interacted with nineteenth-century ideas, members from other estates as well as other peasants.

Excellent scholarly work has been produced which uses microhistory to study ego-documents, such as memoirs and diaries, and to redefine our understanding of serfs in Russia. Among such works are those of Tracy Dennison who directly

challenges the peasant myth which originated from the nineteenth-century Romantics. As Dennison explains, the peasant myth is a “hydra headed monster” according to which historians have portrayed Russian serfs and peasants as an isolated and self-sufficient part of Russian society which relied on the commune rather than the market and other estates to survive.<sup>1</sup> Dennison also discusses the peasant economy. Her work, along with that of Edgar Melton and David Moon, has broadened our understanding of the diversity of the peasant economy. These authors have shown that serfs were not merely reliant on agriculture but also engaged in other forms of economic activities, such as trading, contract work, and piloting barges, in order to make money. In fact, it was common for families to engage in multiple economic activities to supplement the earnings provided by agriculture and be able to live comfortably.<sup>2</sup> As this research is excellent and very thorough, peasant economy will not be directly discussed in this study.

By studying sources produced by peasants, Dennison is also able to show that the commune was situated in a “broader context” of rich institutional interconnection between peasants and members of other estates.<sup>3</sup> In their respective works, Dennison and Alison Smith explore the way in which estates could intermix in nineteenth-century Russia and how peasants were not merely confined to their estate as claimed by the peasant myth. Instead, peasants were able to interact with members of other estates, including the noble landowning class and members of the higher nobility in Moscow and St.

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<sup>1</sup> Tracy Dennison, *The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar Melton, “Household Economies and Communal Conflicts on a Russian Serf Estate, 1800-1917,” *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 3 (1993): 563-564.

<sup>3</sup> Dennison, *The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom*, 8.

Petersburg. This analysis and its findings are directly supported by the peasant accounts which will be discussed in this study.

Other historians such as Martyn Lyons, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and David L. Ransel have also contributed to our growing understanding of the use of microhistory and ego-documents for the study of history. Particularly, Ransel's work on the diary of Ivan Alekseevich Tolchënov, a Russian merchant of the eighteenth century, has shown how the memoirs of Russian peoples can challenge our understanding of certain aspects of Russian society.<sup>4</sup> Lyons's works on the writings of European peasants also provide valuable insight as to how the writings of ordinary people can be used to enrich historical research. He explains that these sources provide a direct view of the lives of peasants as opposed to the oblique view which is gained by reading outside sources, such as those written by nobles.<sup>5</sup>

The memories examined herein were written by Alexander Vasilyevich Nikitenko, Nikolai Smirnov, Nikolai Shipov, M. E. Vasilieva, and Savva Purlevskii. Although all these authors were serfs, they had access to some form of education, whether formal or informal, which accounts for their exceptional literacy. While their level of literacy removes them slightly from the experiences of the majority of peasants, their writings still provide important descriptions of peasant life and the functioning of the serf estate. These sources cover the period from the early 1770s to the late 1840s, but they are all written after the events recounted took place. While all these sources are dependent on hindsight and have varying degrees of

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<sup>4</sup> David L. Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale: The Life and Adventures of Ivan Alekseevich Tolchënov, Based on His Diary Book* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), xiii-xix.

<sup>5</sup> Martyn Lyons, *The Writing Culture of Ordinary People in Europe, c.1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 2.

embellishment or storytelling, they reveal how peasants at the time understood and explained their daily lives as well as their fate.

While the serfs who wrote these memoirs were not typical and these sources have certain limits, they are still crucial to our understanding of Russian serfs as they challenge preconceived notions of serfs as a uniform and isolated culture. Rather, these sources present the richness of the interconnection of serfs with society in nineteenth-century Russia as well as the plurality of serf experiences. Through their descriptions of the circulation of ideas between estates; serfs's evolving views of power, freedom, and status; and their perceptions of morality and sentiment in the realm of religion and illness pose significant challenges to the peasant myth.

### **Circulation of Ideas**

Elite ideas were introduced to serfs in a variety of ways, including by contact with the nobility, education, and literature. Through contact with nobles and patronage, serfs were exposed to ideas which had been imported from Western Europe during the eighteenth century. The most common contact between serfs and nobles was through administrative positions. Serfs could be hired by nobles to perform administrative duties in the commune. As Dennison explains, the commune was not an autonomous institution which ran the estates in lieu of absentee landlords; rather, the commune was an instrument of the nobility which applied the landlords wishes at a local level while giving serfs the freedom to elect local representatives who could decide how these orders were to be carried out. Thus, serf communes served both the interests of the landlord and that of the serfs,

interests which were often diametrically opposed.<sup>6</sup> To ensure that their interests were met while still appeasing the demands of peasants, nobles could hire serfs to help with estate management in jobs such as that of bailiff or estate manager. These positions were intermediary powers between the serf-elected commune officials and the landowner's officials. These positions gave serfs immense power within the estate and direct contact with the nobility.<sup>7</sup>

This form of contact with nobles can be seen in the memoirs of Nikolai Smirnov and Alexander Nikitenko. Smirnov was a serf belonging to Prince Andrei Mikhailovich Golitsyn who, upon his death, passed on his estate to his three young sons. During his childhood, Smirnov's father was "the manager of all the estates and property" owned first by Prince Golitsyn and then by his sons.<sup>8</sup> This position was, naturally, one of great power and importance. Smirnov's father was charged with ensuring the functioning of the entire Golitsyn estate in the absence of his masters. This was no easy task and ensured that his father would come in direct contact with many members of the noble estate. His position brought him in contact with influential members of the University of Moscow such as its general director, Professor Desnitskii, a prominent professor of jurisprudence and critic of serfdom as well as a Mr. Blank, presumably Karl Blank, an architect who designed parts of the Golitsyns's and Dolgorukovs's houses.<sup>9</sup> These three educated nobles played an important role in Nikolai Smirnov's education.

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<sup>6</sup> Dennison, *The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom*, 127-129.

<sup>7</sup> Dennison, 41; Stephen Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia: Petrovskoe, a Village in Tambov* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 4-7 & 9-11

<sup>8</sup> Nikolai Smirnov, "Autobiography," in *Four Russian Serf Narratives*, John MacKay (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 24.

<sup>9</sup> John MacKay, *Four Russian Serf Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 25.

A similar situation is outlined in the memoir of Alexander Nikitenko. Nikitenko senior also held important positions on noble estates. From the age of 17, he held clerical positions in the estate of Count Sheremetev and became chief clerk of Alekseyeva, a small village near the modern-day border with Ukraine. He later became a teacher for four noble children at the request of their mother, mistress Avdotya Borisovna Aleksandrova, a noblewoman from Udarovka. Moreover, during his exile from Alekseyeva, Nikitenko's father was able to become friends with many of the *pomeshchiki* in Gzhatsk and, notably, Senator Alekseyev, the guardian of one of the noble boys whom Nikitenko's father had tutored while in exile. Finally, Nikitenko's father, like Smirnov's, became the estate manager for a noble woman, Marya Fyodorovna Bedryga. In the three years that they spent on mistress Bedryga's estate, Nikitenko and his father came in contact with many nobles such as the noblewoman's brother, Grigory Fyodorovich Tatarchuov, a liberal-minded man with whom Nikitenko's father had many conversations on Enlightenment topics. Therefore, Nikitenko's memoir also clearly shows how serfs were hired by nobles, and could thus come into close contact with and be integrated into noble circles. Through these relationships, serfs could become exposed to elite ideas.

Furthermore, as of the mid-eighteenth century, nobles began to foster and promote talented serfs, particularly in the arts such as theater, opera, and ballet. Nobles brought serfs into their households or created lavish estate theatres in order to present their talented serfs to other nobles. Important noble families, such as the Sheremetevs and the Shepelevs, even had special schools on their estates to educate these remarkable serfs.



<sup>10</sup> As Priscilla Roosevelt and Laurence Senelick explain, nobles would show off these serfs, whether talented, or simply exceptionally beautiful, as a means to increase their status amongst other nobles. Serfs were paraded as commodities to present evidence of their landowner's power and wealth.<sup>11</sup> As a result, serfs were exposed to noble life and the ideas which landowners had assimilated from the time of Peter the Great, westernization, and under the cultural tutelage of Catherine the Great.<sup>12</sup>

This facet of noble-serf relations can be seen in Nikitenko's memoir. As a boy, Nikitenko's father had been recruited for the count's choir. Count Sheremetev had schools for talented serfs and Nikitenko's father was enrolled in one of these choir schools where he learned to read and write and "acquired all sorts of knowledge, far above his station in life."<sup>13</sup> His intelligence and popularity amongst the choirboys brought him to the attention of important people such as a famous serf musician, Degtirayov, and Nikolai Petrovich who was at the time Count Sheremetev. Through patronage, Nikitenko's father was able to gain an education which far exceeded that of a regular serf and also came in contact with important noblemen.

Nikitenko had similar experiences with noble patronage in his youth. Nikitenko's contact with nobles allowed him to become exposed to the ideas circulating in noble society at the time. This contact came about due to two factors: his intellect and position as a teacher as well as his involvement in the Bible

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<sup>10</sup> Priscilla Roosevelt, "Emerald Throne and Living Statues: Theater and Theatricality on the Russian Estate," *The Russian Review* 50, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 1-4.

<sup>11</sup> Laurence Senelick, "The Erotic Bondage of Serf Theatre," *The Russian Review* 50, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 30.

<sup>12</sup> Roosevelt, "Emerald Throne and Living Statues," 5.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Nikitenko, *Up from Serfdom: My Childhood and Youth in Russia 1804-1824* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 7.

Society of Ostrogozhsk.<sup>14</sup> The early education provided by his father allowed Nikitenko to teach the children of wealthy merchants in Ostrogozhsk and attract the attention of prominent noblemen, much as his father before him. As a result, he became good friends with noble staff officers who had returned to Russia after the Napoleonic Wars, bringing with them Western ideas. Notably, he became friends with Major-General Dmitry Mikhailovich Yuzefovich. The Major-General's sympathy towards Nikitenko propelled him directly into noble circles.<sup>15</sup> His sympathy likely came from the opinion that Nikitenko served as the perfect example of self-improvement through knowledge and education. This was a tenet of Enlightenment thinking which explained that through reason and knowledge, even people from the lowest stations in life could become "Enlightened". By becoming "Enlightened", Nikitenko could access the ranks of other "Enlightened" individuals such as General Yuzefovich regardless of his status as a serf. Thus, because he served as an example of the "Enlightened" man and the potential for the self-betterment of serfs, Nikitenko was able to become exposed to noble circles and their discussions of nineteenth-century ideas.

Moreover, after spending time with Major-General Yuzefovich in Elets, Nikitenko returned to Ostrogozhsk and was elected secretary to the new Bible Society which had been established there. During the reign of Alexander I, Bible societies became popular in Russia, particularly in large, westernized cities such as St. Petersburg and Moscow. The main goal of these societies was to translate and disseminate the Holy Scriptures in all languages of the Russian Empire in order to emphasize moral self-improvement and self-improvement through knowledge, an

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<sup>14</sup> Nikitenko, *Up from Serfdom*, 179.

<sup>15</sup> Nikitenko, 140-143.

important part of Enlightenment belief. Members of these societies often had meetings in which they “read, translated and disseminated classical works belonging to the hermetic tradition, seventeenth-century mystic texts and contemporary German theosophy.”<sup>16</sup> Other Bible societies based on this model began to appear in provincial towns as well, such as the one in Ostrogozhsk. Through his involvement in this society, Nikitenko caught the attention of Prince Alexander Nikolayevich Golitsyn, the chief founder of the Bible Society of St. Petersburg and the minister of ecclesiastical affairs and education. Like with General Yuzefovich, Nikitenko was favoured by Golitsyn as he was an example of the “Enlightened” man, a man who, through education and knowledge, could rise above his station. Golitsyn brought Nikitenko to St. Petersburg where he was paraded amongst nobles, much like talented serfs. Hence, through noble patronage, Nikitenko was exposed to the educated nobility and the ideas which circulated among them.

Education was another means through which serfs could interact with nineteenth-century ideas as well as a tool which serfs could use to disseminate knowledge in the countryside. Under Alexander I, the educational reforms, which had begun under his grandmother, Catherine the Great, started to take shape. Alexander I oversaw the creation of the Ministry of Public Education in 1802 and the division of education into four different institutions, each leading to the next: parish schools (primary), district schools (intermediate), gymnasiums (secondary), and universities. His reforms allowed for the creation of parish and district schools in villages and towns.

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<sup>16</sup> Raffaella Faggionato, “From a Society of the Enlightened to the Enlightenment of Society: the Russian Bible Society and Rosicrucianism in the Age of Alexander I,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 79, no.3 (Jul. 2001): 463.

Although few schools were built in the countryside during his reign as the decision to build them was left to the landowners, peasants did have more access to education than under his predecessors. In these schools, peasants and serfs could be taught to read and write, basic arithmetic, the Bible, and theories on agriculture and nature in an effort to provide them with the “relevant information” which was required for their labour.<sup>17</sup>

This increase in access to education is reflected in the memoirs of Nikitenko and Smirnov. Nikitenko’s education is described in detail in his memoir. As a child, he was educated in the parish school run by his father along with the children of rich townfolk. At his father’s school Nikitenko was able to learn to read and write thus already placing his education miles above that of ordinary serfs. At the age of eleven, Nikitenko was sent to a district school in Voronezh. This was very uncommon as, due to the lack of free public education, few serfs had the means to send their children to school. Here, Nikitenko was introduced to the works of Greek and Roman philosophers, such as Plato, Plutarch, and Aristotle, in addition to the writing of European authors like Ann Radcliffe and La Fontaine. His education, while basic (as peasants had no access to gymnasiums or universities) allowed him to become exposed to the philosophy and ideas of the Enlightenment in addition to other nineteenth-century intellectuals such as the Romantics.

Another interesting aspect of Nikitenko’s memoir is his and his father’s roles as teachers. They both held teaching positions in an official or unofficial capacity in the countryside. The erudition that they had been able to gain in school, Nikitenko’s father through Count Sheremetev’s choir school and

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<sup>17</sup> Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1914* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 23-24.

Nikitenko through public education, made it possible for them to bring the ideas they had learned back into the village. In fact, it was not uncommon for soldiers who had received basic education through the military to set up schools in their villages when they were off duty, thus contributing to the spread of education in the countryside.<sup>18</sup> Although Nikitenko and his father primarily taught the children of nobles or wealthy merchants, it is possible that teaching was a way through which educated serfs during the nineteenth century contributed to the Enlightenment of the countryside. For example, due to his education in the choir school, Nikitenko's father was able to teach his son how to read and write along with his other pupils, an opportunity which was not normally given to serfs.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, due to his study of herbs and medicine, Nikitenko's father was able to set up a private pharmacy in his village with which he helped members of his family and other villagers.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Nikitenko's memoirs show how education exposed peasants to elite nineteenth-century ideas and concepts and how they could cycle these ideas back into the villages as teachers.

As was the case for Smirnov, serfs could also be educated privately. Smirnov's father's contacts within the educated elite of Moscow allowed his son to have a level of education which was barred to serfs as they were prohibited from accessing secondary and post-secondary education. Like Nikitenko, Smirnov learned to read and write as a boy; but unlike Nikitenko, Smirnov was able to study privately at the University of Moscow at the discretion of the general director, one of his father's acquaintances. At university, Smirnov studied languages, such as Russian, English, French, and Italian. He also learned "Russian

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<sup>18</sup> Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Nikitenko, *Up from Serfdom*, 29.

<sup>20</sup> Nikitenko, 46.

rhetoric, [...] history, geography, mythology, iconology, [...] the rudiments of physics and chemistry [in addition to] draftsmanship, painting, architecture, geodesics, and the fundamentals of mathematics.”<sup>21</sup> Naturally, these were not topics which were normally available to serfs. However, a large portion of these topics, particularly the sciences, were a product of Western European intellectual traditions and Enlightenment thought. Therefore, through private education, serfs could also become exposed to nineteenth-century ideas.

Finally, more literate serfs, like those in this study, could be exposed to knowledge through literature, be it Russian or otherwise. In fact, Nikitenko and Purlevskii often wrote about the works they read. Other than the books he read while at school, Nikitenko was often supplied with books by his noble friends. Nikitenko’s level of literacy and connections allowed him to read books pertaining to philosophy, naturalism, law, metaphysics, mysticism, rationalism, and sensibility. He also studied works which came from the centers of Enlightened Europe, notably France and Germany. For example, Nikitenko read works written by Rousseau and Montesquieu, including *Émile*, *La nouvelle Héloïse*, and *The Spirit of Laws*. These three works in particular show that Nikitenko was exposed to liberal ideas of the eighteenth century such as the corrupting nature of society and natural law as well as the concept of constitutional government, the separation of powers, and human rights, particularly in relation to forced labour. By reading many important works published in eighteenth-century Europe, Nikitenko became exposed to the ideas they espoused.

While Nikitenko mostly read works from Western Europe, Savva Purlevskii and his father focused their study on

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<sup>21</sup> Smirnov, “Autobiography,” 25.

Russian and religious works. During his childhood, Purlevskii was not allowed to read secular works and his education consisted of books such as “*Church History, The Lives of the Saints, and The Catechism.*”<sup>22</sup> His father, on the other hand, owned many secular works which came into Purlevskii’s possession after his father’s death. These works included liberal and philosophical periodicals inspired by Western European thought. Amongst these were *Vestnik Evropy*, published by Nikolai Karamzin, and *Zhivopisets* which were known for their liberal and, often, satirical political opinions. He also owned other works by Karamzin and works from members of the Russian Enlightenment such as Mikhail Kheraskov and Denis Fonvizin. It was only after his wedding that Purlevskii began to follow in his father’s footsteps and read what he referred to as “real literature.”<sup>23</sup> This type of literature included poetry and novels of the age, though Purlevskii does not name any. However, according to the way Purlevskii described the knowledge contained within these works as overcoming his peasant ignorance, one can assume that these were works which also espoused liberal, eighteenth-century ideas. Through contact with nobles, education, and nineteenth-century literature, the peasants in these memoirs became exposed to enlightenment and elite ideas.

### **Power, Freedom, and Status**

Peasant’s views of power, freedom, and status were strongly influenced by two factors: the circulation of Enlightenment ideas and conceptions of morality. The influence of the former will be discussed in detail in this section, while the

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<sup>22</sup> Savva Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom: The Memoirs of Savva Dmitrievich Purlevskii, 1800-1868*, Boris B. Gorshkov (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), 57.

<sup>23</sup> Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom*, 95.

impact of the latter will be examined later. By becoming increasingly exposed to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century elite ideas, some serfs could question their position in society and seek to improve their situation. Moreover, these ideas greatly influenced their views of power, freedom, and their status as serfs. The power structures within society are often discussed in these memoirs, such as the power of the nobles and that of the peasant commune. The power of the nobles and merchants over peasants was seen as ever-changing, varying between benevolent and oppressive.

In Nikitenko's memoirs, the power of nobles is seen as generally positive with few exceptions. As Nikitenko often enjoys the benefits of noble patronage, he mostly describes members from higher estates in a positive light. Due to his father's position, and later, his own, Nikitenko was often thrust into noble circles and made many friends among them. Particularly, he speaks very warmly of General Yuzefovich as well as his time with his entourage in Elets. On the topic of General Yuzefovich Nikitenko said:

Dimitry Mikhailovich was the hero of my dreams. To me he was the personification of valor. I had faith in him and trusted him. How wonderfully kind he was to me then! With the move to Elets, I lived in his home and was treated like a member of the family. The atmosphere of contentment, warmth, and elegance was conducive to my moral and physical development. [...] No wonder that I flourished, grew bolder and brasher.<sup>24</sup>

Nikitenko attributed much of his growth and success to Yuzefovich. Yuzefovich's favour allowed Nikitenko to improve

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<sup>24</sup> Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom*, 153.



himself through knowledge, but the kindness and compassion shown by the General – two important values of Russian Orthodoxy stressed by noble circles during this period – also led to his moral development. Even when he lost Yuzefovich's favour, Nikitenko continued to speak highly of him and credited his compassion as he continued to take care of Nikitenko's mother. He spoke the same way about many of his other friends, always emphasizing their noble and enlightened characteristics and actions.

But, Nikitenko also described some nobles as oppressive of their serfs, especially large landowners. He portrays the way that large landowners would take advantage of serfs, like him, and refuse to free them from service in order to abuse their labour or talents. One example of this is Marya Fyodorovna Bedryaga, whom Nikitenko describes as a “wealthy pomeschitsa, the owner of two thousand souls.”<sup>25</sup> Mistress Bedryaga had hired Nikitenko's father to manage her estate, but when the job was done and Nikitenko's father asked to be released from service, mistress Bedryaga imprisoned the whole family in their house and, during the court proceeding which followed, claimed that Nikitenko's father had ruined her estate. Nikitenko claims that she had thus persecuted her father as “she still needed [him]” and was a “power-hungry lady” who “couldn't bear to have anyone in her entourage acting on his own.”<sup>26</sup> Nikitenko attributes the noblewoman's abuses to moral failings, a point which will be discussed later.

Purlevskii also writes about members from higher estates and how they are perceived by serfs. However, as Purlevskii did not have the same direct connection to nobles as Nikitenko he

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<sup>25</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> Nikitenko, 96.

mostly recounts rumours and stories told by peasants which reveal their attitudes towards nobles. These rumours often, but not always, portrayed these men as careless or cruel. For example, Purlevskii describes Prince Peter Ivanovich Repnin, a former landlord of the village of Pleshcheevo. Even though Repnin was kind to his peasants and did not ask much of them, he was careless and “did not care about the estate economy at all.”<sup>27</sup> As a result of this carelessness, the village suffered from drunkenness and poverty until it was eventually sold to a wealthy merchant. In this passage, Purlevskii seems to accept that peasants required discipline and moral guidance from their landlord else they succumb to moral failings. Careless landlords were thus dangerous to peasant society.

Purlevskii also presents cruel noble landowners in his memoir. He recounts the story of a young peasant boy who had accidentally wounded one of his master’s dogs and as a result was stripped naked and made to run as he was chased by a pack of hunting dogs. Purlevskii also speaks of a so-called I\* T-skie who killed many people in order to get his way. For example, when the Kasimov Tartars would not sell him their land, “I\* took it upon himself to cut down and set fire the trees, and wound up killing many people.”<sup>28</sup> He also murdered drunk guests with whom he had made economic transactions in order to reclaim his money and keep the land he had gained. Therefore, nobles could also be ascribed moral failings such as cruelty and mercilessness in these memoirs.

Another serf who emphasized the potential for cruelty of noble landlords was M. E. Vasilieva, an orphan who lived on the estate of landlord Petr Georgievich Bolotin in Dubovoe. Despite

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<sup>27</sup> Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom*, 28.

<sup>28</sup> Purlevskii, 84.

being rather well treated by Bolotin and his eldest daughter, his son, and his wife took joy in the sufferings of their serfs. Bolotin's son, Egor, enjoyed tormenting the domestic serfs, often pricking them with needles and even setting the steward's hair on fire. The mistress of the house, on the other hand, was described as horribly cruel to the serfs, especially the children. She would often beat Vasilieva for her own daughter's mistakes. In fact, Vasilieva wrote that the mistress "beat [her] because she passionately loved beating children."<sup>29</sup> She also describes one instance of her mistress's cruelty in great detail. A young orphan boy living on the estate, Seriozhka, was caught stealing a piece of bread from his mistress. As a result, she ordered the other serfs to catch him. The young boy was so terrified of the punishment that he would receive that he fell into a well and drowned. Vasilieva describes that due to her mistress's cruelty a boy had "died for a few crumbs of bread."<sup>30</sup> Hence nobles could be benevolent but also exceptionally cruel to their serfs.

The next level of power explored by serfs in these memoirs is that of the peasant commune. The power of the commune was a means through which serfs could both better their situation, or abuse other serfs. The commune on Russian estates was a peasant elected council which acted as an intermediary between the villagers and the local government authorities as well as the landlord's representatives. The commune was composed of elected male officials whose responsibilities varied from the distribution of land allotments and of tiaglo obligations to the administration of justice, discipline, and determining who would be sent into military

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<sup>29</sup> M. E. Vasilieva, "Notes of a Serf Woman," in *Four Russian Serf Narratives*, John MacKay (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 211.

<sup>30</sup> Vasilieva, "Notes of a Serf Woman," 212.

service, among other responsibilities.<sup>31</sup> As a result, members of the peasant commune and administration had great powers and could either improve commune life. However, others could use this power to favor their friends and sabotage their enemies.<sup>32</sup> Both of these uses of commune powers are well illustrated in the memoirs of Purlevskii, Nikitenko, and Shipov.

In Purlevskii's memoir, the commune is portrayed as a tool with which peasants could better the situation of their village and the lives of the peasants therein. Both Purlevskii and his grandfather served as town bailiff and used their position to help their fellow villagers. Purlevskii's grandfather was bailiff of their town between 1794 and 1802. He explains that he began his tenure as bailiff while the village was plagued with laziness and division and, as a result, the peasants were extremely poor. Purlevskii's grandfather completely reorganized the village, introducing a communal fund and bookkeeping. As a result, the village was able to flourish. Villagers opened shops, smithies, and oil mills. They also began to trade goods within the village and in "distant markets."<sup>33</sup> Thus, using his power as bailiff, Purlevskii's grandfather was able to turn his poor village into one with a growing economical market which interacted with those of other villages. Like his grandfather, during his time as bailiff, Purlevskii also improved living conditions within his village. Purlevskii built on the communal organization established by his grandfather and saw to the establishment of a local school and a medical facility. He also helped improve the village's cottage industry in order to produce high-quality crafts rather than cheap ones and thus ensure better trade prices. Both Purlevskii and his grandfather used their position within the

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<sup>31</sup> Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia*, 133-134.

<sup>32</sup> Hoch, 176.

<sup>33</sup> Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom*, 46.

village commune to better their town.

As the memoirs of Nikitenko and Shipov show, serfs could also use these positions to make the lives of their fellow villagers miserable. For example, Nikitenko's father, who, like Purlevskii, tried to improve life in the village through his position as head clerk, was exiled and had all his belongings confiscated through the actions of members of the commune. As head clerk, Nikitenko's father had tried to stop a young boy, the sole provider for his mother, to be sent into military service. As a result, he was jailed. Even after he was freed and lost his position, the commune officials wanted to "get rid of him" as he had been "witness to their lawlessness."<sup>34</sup> In order to do so, they sent a complaint containing false charges to Count Sheremetev, who had all of their family's possessions taken and Nikitenko's father, along with Nikitenko and his mother, sent into exile. Despite the fact that Nikitenko's father was able to prove his innocence later, this incident still shows how the commune could use its power to target specific individuals in the village and it served as Nikitenko's awakening to the cruelties of arbitrary power.

Likewise, Shipov and his family were also persecuted by their commune. Shipov's father held the job of bailiff and was frequently met with jealousy from other wealthy serfs who were envious of his position and its power. Notably, a peasant called Tarkhov constantly attempted to sabotage Shipov and his father by spreading rumours and hindering their trade. After the death of Shipov's father, Tarkhov was appointed bailiff but continued to persecute Shipov, even putting him under house arrest for one month. When Tarkhov was ordered to free Shipov, the latter found that most of his goods had been stolen. Hence, like Nikitenko's father, Shipov and his father were persecuted by

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<sup>34</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 32.

members of the commune to whom they posed a threat. Therefore, the power of the commune was another form of control which peasants described in their memoirs as a potential force for positive change, but also for cruelty.

Armed with nineteenth-century ideas, serfs could question these power dynamics as they gained an increased awareness of their status as serfs and sought their freedom. Enlightenment ideas and reading often pushed peasants to re-examine their status as serfs or to seek freedom. In the memoirs, peasants became disenchanted with their position in society for two reasons: (1) because of their desire for knowledge, such as in the memoirs of Nikitenko and Smirnov. Or, (2) because of their desire for stability, as was the case for Shipov and Purlevskii. In the first instance, education and literature could cause serfs to wish to seek higher education and become frustrated with the fact that this pursuit was barred to them.

In his memoirs, Nikitenko discusses this struggle for knowledge and the way that it shaped his perceptions of status and freedom. Nikitenko had had access to education and a variety of books which fashioned his understanding of Western ideas. However, due to his lack of higher education, some of the works he studied, such as Galich's *History of Philosophical Systems*, eluded him. No matter how hard he tried, he could not grasp the concepts explained within this book.<sup>35</sup> This struggle with Galich's work completely disheartened Nikitenko. He realized at this point "the ugly, unvarnished unjustness" of his status as a serf which made the pursuit of higher knowledge and education impossible for him.<sup>36</sup> This realization so disturbed him that Nikitenko contemplated suicide in order to free himself from the

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<sup>35</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 128.

<sup>36</sup> Nikitenko, 128.

chains of serfdom. This is the first time that Nikitenko evaluates the fairness of his status and finds it lacking.

Later in his memoir, Nikitenko's thirst for knowledge once again brings him face to face with his status as a serf. While serving as a teacher in Ostrogozhsk, his role as an educator was questioned by another teacher who discredited him due to his status as a self-appointed teacher without true education. This incident and the threat it posed to the stability of his life and of his family's once again brings Nikitenko to think of freedom, of his precarious status as a serf and of his yearning for higher education. In fact, it was at this moment that Nikitenko became aware of the "two yokes" which "weighed heavily" upon him: the "burden" of his status and his poverty.<sup>37</sup> Rather than resorting to suicidal thoughts as he had earlier, Nikitenko resolved to ask for his freedom from Count Sheremetev. Despite being rebuked on many occasions, this request was the first in a series of actions which led to his emancipation.

A similar occurrence takes place in Smirnov's autobiography. Following his private education by members of the University of Moscow, Smirnov was forced to continue his education independently as he began to take a larger role in the management of their estate and household. The constant interruptions of his studies because of his new duties frequently frustrated Smirnov and he became increasingly aware that the "ongoing vexations and the barriers continually placed" in front of him were the result of his status as a "slave."<sup>38</sup> This realization pushed him to ask his father to petition their master on the subject of his release, a petition which was denied on multiple occasions. The denial of his petitions "deepened [his] detestation

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<sup>37</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 170.

<sup>38</sup> Smirnov, "Autobiography," 27.

of bondage” and pushed him to flee in order to join his young masters in Europe and there continue his education, a dream that was closed off to him in Russia.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Smirnov, like Nikitenko, became aware of their cruel status as serfs due to education and sought freedom in order to pursue higher education, this time in other European countries, such as Italy. Therefore, education, literature, and the quest for higher education could make serfs re-evaluate their status and seek freedom from those who had power over them, sometimes through illegal means.

In the Purlevskii’s and Shipov’s memoirs, their view of serf status and of freedom evolved as a result of their increasing desire for stability which was threatened by the two levels of power: that of the nobles and that of the commune. Purlevskii struggled against the former in his memoir. The first time he “tasted the sorrow of [his] status as a serf” was when his landlord raised the annual dues of his village from twenty-thousand rubles to fifty-thousand rubles.<sup>40</sup> It is at this instant that Purlevskii first questioned his status as a serf and the seemingly “unlawful” power that landlords had over him.<sup>41</sup> He also reflected on the complete lack of power that he possessed, being unable to petition the authorities, or complain about his landlord’s treatment. Moreover, if he and the other serfs chose not to pay, he would have been immediately sent into military service and the village would have been punished harshly. Hence, Purlevskii first became aware of his cruel status due to the overwhelming and crushing power of landlords and especially due to the arbitrary application of this power.

This preliminary questioning of his way of life was later set ablaze by literature, much like in the case of Nikitenko and

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<sup>39</sup> Smirnov, “Autobiography,” 27.

<sup>40</sup> Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom*, 77.

<sup>41</sup> Purlevskii, 77.



Smirnov. While Purlevskii's education was much less involved than those of Nikitenko and Smirnov and, as a result, he had difficulty fully understanding the arguments brought forth by the works he read. These still "burdened his mind with thoughts about [his] serf status" and pushed him to think of ways to free himself and his family from their "slave-like condition."<sup>42</sup> It was at this point that Purlevskii began to think of ways to free himself from serfdom and began to save money to pay for his freedom. He continued to think of his freedom for a long time, particularly after the rumours of the cruel treatment of fellow serfs in neighbouring villages at the hands of their German landlord reached his ears. Therefore, the cruel and arbitrary abuse of serfs by their landlords when combined with ideas from nineteenth-century literature, such as self-improvement through knowledge, pushed Purlevskii to re-evaluate his status as a serf and seek his freedom.

Like Purlevskii, Shipov became conscious of the unfairness of his status due to his utter lack of power. However, unlike Purlevskii, Shipov was the victim of the abuses of the peasant commune. While Shipov's father was bailiff, other wealthy serfs began to plot against him, especially Tarkhov. As a result of his sabotage and the rumours he spread about Shipov and his father, their business began to incur "significant losses."<sup>43</sup> When their attempt to free Shipov in order to improve their situation failed, Shipov began to think of fleeing his village and "try [his] luck in some alien land."<sup>44</sup> He even attempted to leave but decided to return to his home to take care of his ailing father. Shipov continued to gain a growing distaste for the instability of

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<sup>42</sup> Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom*, 96.

<sup>43</sup> Nikolai Shipov, "The Story of My Life and Wanderings," in *Four Russian Serf Narratives*, John MacKay (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009): 138.

<sup>44</sup> Shipov, "The Story of My Life and Wanderings," 138.

his position as a serf and, particularly, the dangerous trade he had to undertake in the mountains of the Caucasus in order to be comfortable. His discontent grew to the point where he was voluntarily captured by “mountain plunderers” so that he could abuse a loophole in the *Code of Law* which declared that all serfs captured by such plunderers and who escaped would be freed from serfdom.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the abuses of members of the commune towards other peasants led Shipov to hate his status as a serf and seek to escape it by dangerous and desperate means. In summary, education, literature, and the powers of others over serfs could push serfs to re-evaluate their status, become disenchanted with their position, and seek to gain their freedom by any means.

### **Morality and Sentiment**

Conceptions of morality also influenced these peasants’ perceptions of power, freedom, and status. These memoirists’ views of morality, particularly that of the woman, were greatly inspired by religious virtues. In their memoirs, peasants often made use of religious virtues in order to make themselves appear superior to others or to explain misfortune. These factors are often shown through the dichotomies of labour and sloth as well as compassion and cruelty in the memoirs. In Russian Orthodoxy, sloth is one of the seven deadly sins. In the Proverbs of Solomon, Orthodox Christians are warned against laziness and its consequences. This passage instructs believers to follow the example of the ant or the honeybee who work diligently and, as a result of their labour, they are rewarded with wealth and independence. Laziness, on the other hand, leads only to poverty

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<sup>45</sup> Shipov, “The Story of My Life and Wanderings,” 165.

and neediness.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, cruelty, or wickedness, as it is often called in the Bible, is seen as a moral wrong in the Orthodox faith. The wicked, those who abuse others, would not be granted salvation, while the righteous, those who are compassionate and godly, would be saved. These dichotomies are shown in serf memoirs as laziness and cruelty are portrayed as evils while hard work and compassion are portrayed as good.

In Purlevskii's memoir, laziness and cruelty are used to explain misfortune and the treatment of peasants by their masters. In this account, cruelty and laziness are often associated with the nobility, but the latter could also be transferred to serfs and thus cause misfortune. The power of the nobles was often seen as perverse. This was the case because of the cruel or lazy nature of the nobles. Noble landowners such as Repnin, the owner of Purlevskii's village under Catherine the Great, and General D. D. Sh., believed to be D. D. Shepelev, could be kind but extremely lazy. Others, such as I\* B., believed to be Ivan Batashov, or the old nobleman who had set his hounds on a young peasant boy who had accidentally injured one, could be exceptionally cruel.<sup>47</sup>

In either case, peasants in these memoirs believed that due to such landlords, villages faced economic strife. Cruel peasants would often beat peasants and request exorbitant amounts of money from them. For example, despite the opposition of the villagers who explained to their landlord that they could not pay more than the twenty-thousand rubles they were already paying, Purlevskii's landlord mortgaged the property and put the weight of the loan on the peasants. In one fell swoop, their annual dues were raised from twenty-thousand

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<sup>46</sup> Prov. 6:2-16 OSB.

<sup>47</sup> Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom*, 83-85.

to fifty-thousand rubles a year, a sum that even wealthy serfs like Purlevskii struggled to pay.<sup>48</sup> This decision, and the cruel punishments which would follow should the serfs fail to pay their dues, is one example of how cruel landlords could cause financial strife on their estates.

Moreover, peasants living on estates run by lazy landlords did not fare much better. Lazy landlords did not see to the conservation of wealth and productivity within the village and, thus, allowed laziness to fester amongst peasants. These peasants, like those who lived at the time of Purlevskii's grandfather, did "not bother to learn how to make money" which led to poverty and drunkenness in the village.<sup>49</sup> Thus, laziness on the part of the landlord could lead to laziness amongst peasants. The poverty which ensued was seen by peasants as the wrath of God which had been brought upon by their sloth.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the only way that the peasants were able to escape their poverty was through compassion and hard work. When Purlevskii's grandfather helped set up a community fund and establish trade in their town, the village's economy began to flourish. Through diligent work and compassion for those who were too poor to escape their situations on their own, Purlevskii's grandfather and the other villagers were able to break free of sloth and poverty, thus becoming morally superior to their sinful landlords.

In the nineteenth century, many apocryphal accounts of Mary's life were published in Russia and sold in villages by travelling merchants. Russian women looked to these accounts to provide guidance on how to live their lives in accordance with

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<sup>48</sup> Purlevskii, *A Life under Russian Serfdom*, 76-77.

<sup>49</sup> Purlevskii, 28-29.

<sup>50</sup> Purlevskii, 32.

the Marian model.<sup>51</sup> The imitation of Mary was encouraged by the parish clergy and women looked to her “as a teacher and missionary following Jesus’ death and resurrection.”<sup>52</sup> This image portrays Mary as struggling between her role as a mother and her divine role as the Mother of God and a vessel of morality. Thus, women in nineteenth-century Russia were encouraged to, like Mary, become bastions of morality and symbols of virtue within the household.

This example is most evident in Nikitenko’s memoirs. The women in Nikitenko’s life, particularly his mother, are described in accordance with the Marian model. Nikitenko’s female family members are often described as exceptionally virtuous. For example, both of his grandmothers, Stepanova and Emelyanova, as well as his aunt, Yelizabeta, were exceptionally loving towards Nikitenko when he was a boy. During the time he spent with them, he described that “the riches of their hearts” were always directed towards him.<sup>53</sup> His maternal grandmother, Emelyanova, is also further described as modest and simple-hearted and as having a kitchen garden and orchard which served as Nikitenko’s personal garden of Eden. Nikitenko wrote very fondly of his time there recalling that he “felt more relaxed and free in her home than anywhere else” and that the moments spent there were some of “utterly carefree happiness.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, Nikitenko describes his grandmothers and his aunt as kind and loving, the ideal Marian model of women in Russia at the time.

The clearest example of women living according to the

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<sup>51</sup> Vera Shevzov, “Mary and Woman in Late Imperial Russian Orthodoxy,” in *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture*, Wendy Rosslyn and Alessandra Tosi (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 65.

<sup>52</sup> Shevzov, “Mary and Woman in Late Imperial Russian Orthodoxy,” 87

<sup>53</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 83.

<sup>54</sup> Nikitenko, 44-45.

Marian model is Nikitenko's mother. When the reader is first introduced to his mother she is described thus: "Life gave her nothing but suffering. Yet, with a rare dignity, she trod her hard path and went to her grave with the halo of a righteous woman."

<sup>55</sup> Like Mary, Nikitenko's mother was often torn between the burdens of suffering and poverty laid upon her and her love and devotion to her family. Despite this suffering she bore these burdens with dignity speaking only of her sorrows with God and remaining a "fine" and "noble" soul.<sup>56</sup>

Most of the burdens faced by Nikitenko's mother were caused by her husband. Nikitenko's father was prone to extravagance and adultery and the long voyages he took to St. Petersburg and elsewhere made Nikitenko's mother fill the role of primary breadwinner as well as mother to three children. When Nikitenko was 14, his mother took up the traditional role of the father and began earning a living. She took employment as a broker in the village and served as a middleman for the sale and purchase of second-hand goods. For a substantial period, the earnings she won from this labour were the primary source of the family's income. Nikitenko explains that were it not for his mother's "courage and her magnanimity toward her despondent husband", their family would not have survived.<sup>57</sup>

Despite occupying the traditional male role of breadwinner, Nikitenko's mother is also described using virtues which were normally attributed to righteous women. She was very compassionate and kind, even consoling her husband "with rare selflessness" when he was tormented by his unrequited love for another woman, Yuliya Tatarchukova.<sup>58</sup> She never

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<sup>55</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 14.

<sup>56</sup> Nikitenko, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Nikitenko, 114.

<sup>58</sup> Nikitenko, 114.

complained or made reproaches towards her husband for his infidelity with the young widow. She remained a dutiful wife and found “solace in the execution of the duties.”<sup>59</sup> She was also an excellent mother and saw to the wellbeing and moral education of her children. Therefore, Nikitenko’s mother is the perfect example of a woman living in accordance with the Marian model as she bore her burdens in silence and remained compassionate, kind, dutiful and righteous.

Other than in the realm of morality, sentiment was also important in association with medicine and illness in serf memoirs. In fact, peasant understanding of medicine and illnesses was deeply influenced by sentiment. Medicine during the nineteenth century emphasized the link between emotion and illness. Deeply influenced by the Sentimentalism and Romanticism, medicine in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sought to study the influence on the mind and soul on the body. This led to the creation of psychiatry, the definition of mental illnesses and the redefinition of diseases such as lunacy and hysteria. During this medical revolution, the idea of nostalgia, also called homesickness or soul sickness, was discussed by German philosophers and authors such as Schlegel, Hegel, and Eichendorff. This idea also became widespread in high Romanticism.<sup>60</sup> The peasants in these memoirs often express illness in relation to nostalgia. The presence of nostalgia in these memoirs suggests that the influence of the medical revolution of the nineteenth century, which was expressed in sentimentalist and romantic literature and philosophy, was echoed by literate peasants in Russia.

The peasants in these memoirs often created a link

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<sup>59</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 52.

<sup>60</sup> Helmut Illbruck, *Nostalgia: Origins and Ends of an Unenlightened Disease* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 143-149.

between soul sickness and physical sickness which was likely influenced by the importance of morality and sentiment in the nineteenth century. In the memoirs of Nikitenko and Smirnov, emotional distress often causes serfs to fall ill and, sometimes, die. In Nikitenko's memoirs, when he or his father would leave home, they would fall ill. During his frequent trips to St. Petersburg and his exile in Churilovka, Nikitenko's father frequently fell ill. In fact, on one such occasion, when he travelled to Piryatin, his homesickness led to his death.<sup>61</sup> Nikitenko explains the cause of these illnesses as the emotional torment that his father faced upon being torn from his native village and forced to travel to St. Petersburg in order to plead his case to their landlord. The remedy for his sickness was always to "return home, to his native soil, as quickly as possible."<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Nikitenko himself also fell ill when he left home for the first time in order to attend school in Voronezh. He attributed this illness to "homesickness" and explained that "all Little Russians in foreign lands suffer some degree of homesickness, and some even die of it."<sup>63</sup> His homesickness manifested physically, causing a fever, intense suffering, and turned Nikitenko "into a real skeleton."<sup>64</sup> Hence, the emotional anguish caused by homesickness could manifest physically in peasants.

Moreover, though it is never identified as the cause, Nikitenko's father seems to fall deathly ill every time he is separated from his son. When Nikitenko first leaves for school, his father also becomes "hopelessly ill."<sup>65</sup> His illness is so severe that a priest was called to the house in order to perform the

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<sup>61</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 148.

<sup>62</sup> Nikitenko, 46-47

<sup>63</sup> Nikitenko, 79.

<sup>64</sup> Nikitenko, 79.

<sup>65</sup> Nikitenko, 82.



extreme unction and his last rites. However, despite the fact that he seemed to be beyond saving, the presence of his son, who had arrived home the day before, appeared to have cured him of his illness. In fact, the following morning after Nikitenko's arrival, his father "awoke refreshed and [...] rapidly made a complete recovery."<sup>66</sup> Thus, emotional despair caused by the separation of a father from his son seems to be another reason for which literate peasants linked soul sickness with physical illnesses.

In Smirnov's memoir, the same link between soul sickness and physical illnesses is observed. Smirnov describes that emotional distress caused by his status as a serf and the shame sparked by his flight makes him become physically ill. Smirnov first becomes dangerously ill due to his master's refusal to free him from serfdom. As mentioned, Smirnov despised his status as a serf and frequently sought his freedom. When this request was denied, he was afflicted with an illness that "brought [him] to the very portal of the grave."<sup>67</sup> He explicitly claims that this illness was brought upon by the grief of his status as a serf which consumed him with despair. He stayed in this condition for three months before recovering. However, the illness constantly threatened to return as he was not free of his status and thus, as he explains, for fear of his life he chose to flee.<sup>66</sup> Hence, Smirnov was emotionally tormented by his status as a serf and claims to have become physically ill as a result.

Smirnov also falls ill as he is trying to flee, an illness which he sees as divine punishment for his crimes. While attempting to flee Russia, Smirnov frequently forged papers and even impersonated military personnel, a very serious crime. While in St. Petersburg, Smirnov once again became severely ill

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<sup>66</sup> Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom*, 83.

<sup>67</sup> Smirnov, "Autobiography," 27.

and was forced to remain in bed.<sup>68</sup> His illness continued to worsen after he was captured and sent to prison. It became so severe that he was sent to a city hospital to recover. Smirnov attributed this illness to the wrath of God whom he believed was punishing him for his crimes. However, this illness can also be attributed to the intense guilt that he felt in retrospect while reflecting on the “terrible labyrinth [his] temper and youthful inexperience had led [him] into.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, Smirnov’s illness was also exacerbated by the emotional distress caused by his mistakes. Therefore, soul sickness, or nostalgia – hallmarks of nineteenth-century literature and numerous elite memoirs – are often portrayed in serf narratives.<sup>70</sup>

The reason for which it appears in these accounts is less clear. It is evident that serfs created links between emotional anguish and physical illnesses, but the reason for this link is unknown. One can make a few hypotheses which would benefit from further research. It is possible that these are real symptoms caused by acute mental illnesses like depression. This theory does seem to explain how strong and often overpowering emotions could lead to physical symptoms. However, it is highly unlikely that peasants in the early nineteenth century would have been aware of depression and mental illness and attributed their symptoms to these illnesses. Instead, they would have created a link between emotion and illness due to their exposure to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romantic literature or due to their exposure to noble circles.

It is also possible that these ideas could have been

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<sup>68</sup> Smirnov, “Autobiography,” 32.

<sup>69</sup> Smirnov, 32.

<sup>70</sup> For further readings concerning soul sickness and elite memoirs see Anna Lazina, *Days of a Russian Noblewoman: The Memoirs of Anna Labzina, 1758-1821*, Gary Marker and Rachel May (trans. and ed.), DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001.

influenced by the Bible as seen in Smirnov's account as he believes that the wrath of God caused his illness to resurface. Another possibility is that these symptoms may be psychosomatic. Whether peasants were exposed to the idea of soul sickness and its link to physical sickness through Romanticism, noble influence, or religion, it is possible that strong emotions could trigger a subconscious psychosomatic response which led to illness. This theory seems more unlikely as some peasants, like in Nikitenko's account, are said to have died from such emotional illnesses.

It is unclear why peasants created a link between emotional distress and physical illnesses, but the answer could be found by conducting further research. For example, if we were to gain a better understanding of what peasants read, especially in relation to Sentimentalism and Romanticism, and the effects of these readings on them, how they encountered the theory of nostalgia might become clearer. The same can be said for the study of noble-peasant relations. Through further research on these relations, we would be able to identify whether this link was caused by top-down influence or circular influence. Lastly, further research in the realm of the idea of the sick soul in Orthodoxy and if and how peasants responded to it might be able to help us identify whether this link was influenced by secular ideas or religious ones. Therefore, the link between soul sickness and physical sickness which is presented in peasant memoirs would benefit from future research.

## **Conclusion**

The memoirs of Nikitenko, Smirnov, Shipov, Vasilieva, and Purlevskii provide a window into peasant life in nineteenth-century Russia. Even though these serfs were not typical given their level of education, these sources show us how

the circulation of ideas between estates and peasant's views of morality influenced their perceptions of power, status, and freedom. Through contact with nobles, education, and literacy, these peasants were able to become exposed to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas and philosophies such as those of the Enlightenment and the Romantics. These ideas would allow them to re-evaluate their positions in society, leading some to desire stability, further education, and freedom from serfdom.

Through the lens of morality, peasants coloured their everyday interactions. Central values and sins of the Christian Orthodox faith, such as diligent labour, sloth, compassion, and wickedness, allowed them to evaluate the way they were treated and explain misfortune while also placing the virtuous peasants above the sinful landlords. Moreover, morality, its values, and its reliance on emotion was an example for women and a means through which to explain illness. Serf women in nineteenth-century Russia relied on morality and sentiment to become symbols of virtue in accordance with the Marian model. Sentiment, especially very strong emotions such as despair, guilt, and homesickness, was also a means through which peasants could explain illness. In fact, they frequently created links between soul sickness, or nostalgia, and physical sickness, a link which would merit future research.

These sources provide a plethora of insight into the lives of peasants and the ways they interpreted and interacted with society, an approach which cannot be achieved by merely studying noble or foreign narratives. In these memoirs, the plurality of serf experiences is presented, and serfs are shown as deeply interconnected with the rest of Russian society, including members of higher estates. These findings directly challenge the peasant myth upheld by historians of the twentieth century and instead, are in accordance with those of Dennison, Smith, Moon,

Melton, Lyons, and Ransel, to name a few. In future research, the circulation of elite ideas back into serf villages through teaching as well as the causes of the link between soul sickness and physical sickness would merit deeper study.

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Maia is a fourth year undergraduate student pursuing my Honours Bachelor of Arts in History. Throughout her undergraduate degree, she has taken courses and written research papers that focused on the untold stories of women and other marginalized communities. She thinks it is vitally important to remember histories that have been systematically forgotten and as students, lend our voices to those who have not been heard. In pursuance of that goal, Maia wrote this paper under the guidance of Dr. Thomas Boogaart, who mentored her through this process and provided his support as she learnt how to analyze paintings. Because she enjoyed the use of paintings as primary sources so much, she has continued to use them in other research papers.

Despite enjoying studying history so deeply, Maia has decided that for her Master's degree, she wants to be in a program that will allow her to advocate for the advancement of gender equality. Although she remains undecided on which offer to accept, she is looking forward to this next chapter and is grateful for the honour of being published in *Clio*.

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Ontario history to whoever will listen. Outside of their academic interests, Rowan enjoys baking obscene amounts of cookies, playing Dungeons & Dragons, and playing video games like Deep Rock Galactic, Moonglow Bay, and Frog Detective.

**Bo Pickett**, *Co-Director* (he/they)

Bo Pickett is a fourth-year student at the University of Ottawa, currently working towards finishing their Honours Bachelor of Arts in History. They specialize in film, photographic, and media history, particularly what they can say about communities like his hometown of Peterborough, Ontario. Through COOP, Bo works at the Peterborough Museum and Archives, allowing him to work with the fascinating and historic Roy Studio photographic collection. After graduating, Bo intends on pursuing a Master's in archiving to pursue their passion of preserving historic material and sharing it with the public. Off campus, he loves playing Dungeons & Dragons, collecting records, and watching far, far too many movies.

**Kenneth Robert G. Sasan**, *Editor* (he/him)

Sasan is a member of the Clio editorial team and first year liaison in the History Students association (HSA). A first-year student studying a BA joint honours in History and Political Science at the University of Ottawa, Kenneth is motivated and driven, participating in volunteer work and various activities throughout his highschool and university career. In his spare time he likes to read, swim, and express his artistic abilities by drawing, painting, or writing. With an interest in historiography and religious/theological history, Kenneth is an aspiring university

student hoping to one day further his academic career by attending professional school, particularly law school. While striving within his discipline Kenneth is a rigorous learner willing to overcome anything that is placed within his path.

**Alana Tomas**, *Éditrice* (elle/she/they)

Alana Tomas est étudiante de quatrième année en histoire et science politique. Au cours de ses études à l'Université d'Ottawa, elle développa particulièrement un intérêt pour les études de genre, qu'elle poursuivra à la maîtrise où elle espère approfondir ses intérêts de recherche en études queer et en politique sociale. En attendant, vous pouvez la retrouver investie dans un roman, en train de contempler le prochain livre qu'elle veut lire, lisant furieusement la page Wikipédia d'un personnage historique queer (probablement Anne Lister) ou en train de parler d'astrologie à qui veut l'entendre.

**Michael Wang**, *Editor* (he/him)

Michael Wang is a fourth-year Joint Honours in History and Political Science student. He was a publisher for CLIO VIII and now an editor. In the field of history, Michael's specialization is in European social and military history and the history of the Cold War. Michael is soon to be working for the Department of National Defence and upon his graduation he plans to pursue further education in history and international relations.

**Andie Zuk**, *Editor* (she/her)

Andie Zuk is currently a student at the University of Ottawa. At the moment, she is in her fourth year pursuing an Honours degree in History with a Minor in English. Her interests include Medieval Studies and linguistic history, as well as Celtic literature. Through her editorial work at the *Clio*, she has also discovered her passion for editing, and she hopes to pursue more opportunities within that field. After finishing her final year at the University of Ottawa, Andie hopes to pursue a graduate degree and ultimately a PhD, as she is always aiming to further her education.