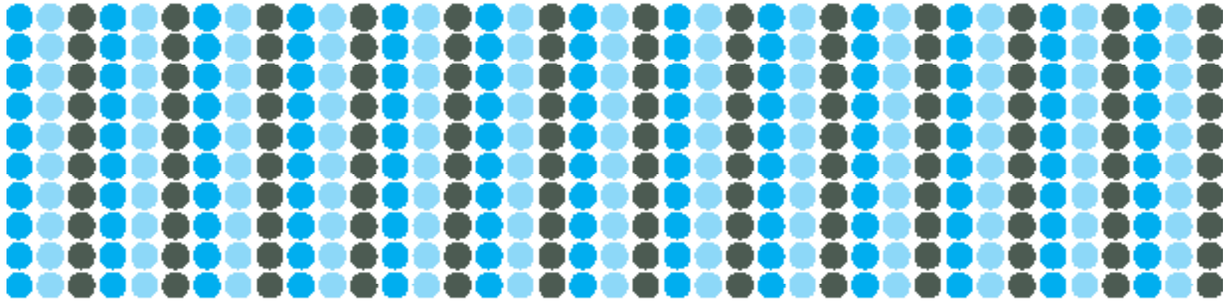

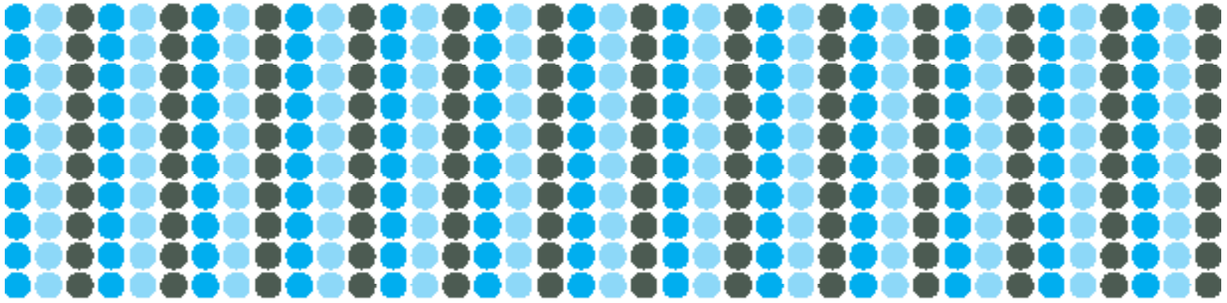

MISSION STATEMENT

Elements, the undergraduate research journal of Boston College, showcases the varied research endeavors of fellow undergraduates to the greater academic community. By fostering intellectual curiosity and discussion, the journal strengthens and affirms the community of undergraduate students at Boston College.

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QUESTIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

If you have any questions, please contact the journal at elements@bc.edu. The next deadline is Tuesday, November, 20, 2012. All submissions can be sent to elements.submissions@gmail.com. Visit our website at www.bc.edu/elements for updates and further information.

COVER

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ELEMENTS STAFF

EDITOR'S NOTE

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Sincerely,

SIGNATURE

EMILY SIMON

Editor-in-chief

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MAKING CORSETS WORK

Victorian Working Women and the Corset

MARIE PELLISSIER

THE CORSET IN THE VICTORIAN ERA IS OFTEN REGARDED AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE OVERPOWERING SOCIAL MORES OF THE ERA. CORSETS, HOWEVER, WERE ALSO SUPPORT GARMENTS, CRITICAL TO A WOMAN FEELING FULLY DRESSED. DESPITE ARGUMENTS TO THE CONTRARY, WEARING A CORSET WAS, FOR MEMBERS OF THE WORKING CLASS, OFTEN OPTIONAL. THIS ARTICLE USES PHOTOGRAPHS AS WELL AS CORSETS TO EXPLORE HOW THE CHOICE TO WEAR OR NOT TO WEAR A CORSET EMPOWERED WORKING CLASS WOMEN, AND ALSO EXAMINES THE CONDITIONS WHICH ENABLED THESE WOMEN TO MAKE THAT CHOICE.

No piece of women's clothing is as emblematic of the Victorian era as the corset. Stiffened with whalebone, wooden strips, or sometimes steel, the corset, in the eyes of many historians, was an instrument of misogynistic torture inflicted upon Victorian women by their husbands and fathers.[1] It forced women's bodies into an unnatural hourglass shape, constricting the waist for the express purpose of emphasizing a woman's bust and hips. Although the corset was essential to the Victorian middle class and the moral systems they constructed for themselves, it was not an exclusively middle-class garment. Indeed, when one considers how working-class women utilized the corset, it takes on a very different meaning.

There has been much discussion of the corset and its place in Victorian society, of its cultural meanings and implications. All too often, however, the discussion of women's clothing in the Victorian era involves only a small segment of the population—that is, upper and middle-class women. And yet, a majority of the population of this period could be classified as "working class," and these women participated in the larger discourse on fashion as much as their social superiors did. While much has been written about the corset and its significance to the rising bourgeoisie,[2] the use of the corset among the other eighty percent of the female population is equally important to an investigation of the history of the corset and of women's body image. In order to explore the ways in which working-class women used the corset, and how the garment in turn shaped their lives, one must turn to the garments and the women themselves. Through photographs of working women, one can discover both how essential the corset was to their perception of themselves as women, and how they refused to allow the inconvenience of the garment to get in the way of their everyday lives. Working-class women, including African-Americans and immigrants, wore their corsets when they wanted to, instead of when they had to. The choice between fashion and functionality in dress meant that these women had more agency in choosing their clothes than middle-class women did. Counterintuitively, the corset helped to liberate these women instead of keeping them oppressed.

"To many members of the middle class, the rigid, structured corset represented a contained woman, one who embodied the middle-class values of restraint and self-discipline."

By the time of Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing on both sides of the Atlantic, and the newfound wealth it produced was restructuring society, particularly in Great Britain, where the concept of class had been ingrained for centuries.[3] Class in the Victorian era, however, was related to more than simply bloodline: it was, according to Susie Steinbach, "related to, but not defined by income" as well as a social hierarchy that seemed embedded in the consciousness of everyone in Victorian Britain.[4] Society was split into three layers. The upper class constituted a very small percentage of the population. The middle class and the working class supported the upper class, and they constituted the majority of the population. In this tri-layer system, the middle class was complex and ever changing. In 1815, the middle class accounted for roughly fifteen percent of the population, but by 1871 "the number of solidly middle-class families had doubled."[5] It was the working classes, however, both urban and rural, that constituted the majority of the population.[6] Neither was there a solid boundary between the working class and the middle class—respectable members of the working class, the "labor aristocracy," could make their way into the lower end of the spectrum of middle-class respectability. In order to be considered a member of the middle class, a man had to be able to support a family without doing manual labor.[7] Middle-class women, unlike working-class women, rarely

worked outside the home—the only respectable profession for a middle-class woman was as a governess or a dressmaker. [8]

Despite their class differences, all women had something in common: they had very few political rights. They could not vote in national elections in Great Britain until 1918, and in America they did not gain the right to vote in national elections until 1919. Regardless of whether she belonged to the upper class, bourgeoisie, or working class, once married, a woman lost all right to control her property. Under the doctrine of *coverture*, a husband had the right to regulate how often his spouse saw her children, control any wages she earned, and could use the courts to enforce his right to his wife's bed.[9] Nevertheless, though women did not technically have the right to incur debts in their own names, they were significant participants in the growing consumer economy.

With industrialization came a change in the way goods were sold: now easily replaceable and cheap, many items, such as clothing, came ready-made, and instead of being sold in a market with negotiable prices, were sold in a shop or department store for a fixed cash price.[10] During the third quarter of the nineteenth century, cities began to develop central shopping districts as well as department stores, where mass-produced products, including corsets, were available to anyone who chose to enter the store.[11] The Industrial Revolution, to use the words of costume historian Valerie Steele, had changed the very structure of society, and "the very concept of sartorial display [that had been] associated with the 'aristocratic body' [in the eighteenth century] became transformed into a 'feminine' ideal of beauty that potentially applied to women of all classes."[12] Women of all classes now had access to fashion through stores that contained a selection of fashionable clothes to match any price range.[13] Middle-class women were expected to expend as much effort as possible to make their homes a welcoming place for their husbands. That meant that not only did the home need to be clean and orderly, but also the wife herself had to be a model of femininity, dressing neatly and fashionably.

The clothes that were so broadly available were always changing, just as fashions are today. By 1850, fashionable ladies were wearing crinolines, collapsible cages that expanded skirts to great circumferences, often several meters wide. Crinoline and corset production was industrialized by the mid-1850s, and the ready-to-wear clothes and undergarments were instrumental in creating a unified body shape of late nineteenth-century women.[14] As the nineteenth century progressed, skirts, sleeves, and bodices became narrower, making it necessary for women to wear corsets just to fit into them.[15] Women's gowns became so fitted by the 1880s that a fashionably dressed woman had to wear a restrictive corset, and physical labor in such restrictive garment was nearly impossible. How, then, did working-class women, whose lives required that they participate in physical labor, manage?

The Corset and the Middle-Class Woman

In order for a bourgeois woman to be considered "respectable," particularly in Great Britain but also America and France, she had to wear a corset.[16] To many members of the middle class, the rigid, structured corset represented a contained woman, one who embodied the middle-class values of restraint and self-discipline. Modern historians debate whether the use of corsets, particularly the practice of tight-lacing among middle-class women and girls, was representative of a domineering patriarchal system or whether women were using the corset to stand out in the only way allowed to them by society.[17] None of these historians deny that the social expectations of the time dictated that a bourgeois woman would wear a corset at all times.[18] Indeed, women themselves believed in the necessity of corsets, and persisted in wearing them and following fashion despite numerous attacks on the corset by concerned doctors, husbands, and fathers.[19]

An essential part of the middle-class woman's wardrobe and, indeed, her perception of self, the corset usually made its debut in a young girl's wardrobe around early puberty, when her body was beginning to change. Historian Leigh Summers suggests that the overtly prudish yet deeply sexual Victorians saw the developing young woman as "potentially unruly or dangerous...requir[ing] regulation and surveillance."[20] The corset served that purpose, restricting what the young woman could do physically at the same time as it molded her into a socially acceptable shape. The practice of corseting young girls raised eyebrows; numerous doctors and moralists argued against the use of corsets among adolescent girls, citing impeded development of the breasts and an inability to breastfeed their children because of tight lacing.[21] Other doctors took the opposite tack, arguing that females were more likely to suffer from poor posture and curved spines if they did not begin to use corsets at an early age.[22] Though there was debate about the benefits of corsets for adolescents, there was rarely debate about its use among adult women.

Philippe Perrot writes in *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie* that for the Victorians, the "opulence, softness, and fullness" of a woman "required wearing a corset, essentially for support."[23] The corset was the means by which women of all shapes and sizes achieved a uniformity of shape and adhered to the fashion of the day, which required an exaggerated hourglass silhouette otherwise impossible to achieve. The invention of the metal eyelet in 1828 made it possible for corsets to fit even more tightly to the body, and the invention of the steam-molding process by Edwin Izod in 1868 made mass-production easier and cheaper.[24] In short, by the 1870s, there was no reason why any middle-class woman should be without a corset. An advertising pamphlet from the Thompson's Glove-Fitting Corset Company promotes several corsets, which came in many different incarnations and prices. This pamphlet, misleadingly titled "The Lady and the Dog," goes through Thompson's entire catalogue of corsets in rhyming stanzas. A lady and her dog have entered a shop, and the saleslady, in order to inform the buyer of all of her options, explains the qualities and prices of every one of Thompson's genuine corsets. Almost menacingly, the salesclerk tells the clearly middle-class woman that "the D. at three dollars even, / *That's* [sic] none too expensive for you."[25] The underlying expectation was that the middle-class buyer would be able to imagine herself as the shopper, and in the end purchase a Thompson's Glove-Fitting Corset. Corsets were available on both sides of the Atlantic from a number of companies, each trying to prove that their corsets were more healthful, better fitting, or more likely to bring about beauty than their competitors. Symington in England, the Royal Worcester Company, Warner's, and Thompson's in the United States were some of the major manufacturers, though they were certainly not the only ones.[26] The corsets they produced and advertised became embedded in the consciousness of middle-class women during all stages of their lives.

EVENING DRESS, C. 1887-8, NEW YORK. THE STRUCTURE OF THIS DRESS DEMONSTRATES THE NECESSITY OF THE CORSET TO CREATING AN HOURGLASS SHAPE—NO UNCORSETED WOMAN HAS A WAIST SO DISPROPORTIONATE.

In order to maintain the image of perfection that was so necessary to the middle-class, women were told to wear corsets at all times. As one mid-nineteenth-century pamphlet stated:

> Perfection in the human body is...rarely met with; and what the artist in dress has to do is... give grace and beauty to the homely and imperfect, that they may approximate nearer to that which they ought to be. In a few rare instances this may be done without corsets, but in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred the well-adapted corset is indispensable.[27]

Madame Roxy A. Caplin, the author of this pamphlet, was a corsetiere of some repute, who had patented a type of health corset. Her book *Health and Beauty, or, Woman and Her Clothing* purported to be an advice book, but was actually a treatise on the necessity of corseting for every woman, at all stages of life, including during pregnancy.[28] Caplin herself had designed a "'self regulating gestation corset'" that supposedly maintained the hourglass shape of the mother without causing harm to the fetus.[29] The existence of maternity corsets and the wide discussions about the effect of corseting on unborn children demonstrates that the corset was embedded in the middle-class social consciousness, to the point where it was normal for women to put themselves through extreme discomfort during pregnancy in order to maintain a set of social values and norms.

A maternity corset from the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum indicates just how far a woman might go to preserve her shape during pregnancy: aside from lacing on the sides that could be loosened as the fetus grew, and gussets to accommodate a changing breast, this corset is still fully boned and does not sacrifice fashion for the sake of the pregnant woman or the unborn child.[30] This refusal on the part of many women to give up fashionable dress even while pregnant generated many criticisms from doctors and dress reformers, who believed that the first duty of a woman was to be a wife and a mother, and so by lacing themselves tightly during pregnancy they were acting against nature itself. As Steele notes, "the mother [became] a scapegoat for anything bad that [happened] to her child" during and after pregnancy.[31] Though this seems completely irrational and contrary to modern sensibilities, it made sense to the Victorian bourgeoisie, who depended on corsetry and clothing to help mark the differences between themselves and the working class in a very class-conscious society.

The difference between the middle class and the working class was demarcated by social behaviors and material culture. The bourgeoisie filled their homes with useless knickknacks, decorating every possible surface. The crowning jewel in the decoration of a middle-class home was a perfectly fashionable and corseted wife. Thorstein Veblen, the economic theorist, argued in his famous 1899 *Theory of the Leisure Class* that for a man to be truly considered middle-class, he must have "dependents [that] perform vicarious leisure for him."[32] In other words, his wife must be free from the necessity of working for pay in order to focus her attentions on beautifying the home and spending her husband's money. The corset, according to Veblen, was a physical demonstration "that the wearer does not and cannot habitually engage in useful work."[33] Veblen acknowledges that the corset may not have prevented work, but the message remains the same: a middle-class woman, through her clothing, helped create and maintain a wall between herself and the working class.[34] Creating this distinction was even more important for members of the lower middle class, because they were so near to being working class themselves.[35] Historian David Kunzle argues that the practice of tight-lacing a corset, that is, lacing waists to unnaturally small (under sixteen inches) measurements, was primarily a practice of a few lower-middle-class women, rather than a practice widespread among Victorian women.[36] These women were closest to being lower class, and may have felt the need to practice tight lacing in order to emphasize their place on the social ladder. It is impossible to know for sure how many women really practiced tight lacing, since most of the literature concerning the practice appears in fetishist and pornographic literature rather than in more reliable sources.[37] Nevertheless, the corset remained, for the middle class, a symbol of respectability and propriety, a shield against the perceived vulgarity of the working classes. By no means, however, did the middle class hold a monopoly on the use of the corset. Working-class women wore them as well, but more than class-consciousness determined their use of the corset. Rather, a number of factors influenced the clothing choices of these women.

Working-Class Women and Corsets

Since the rise of industrial clothing production, it has been possible for people to acquire clothes that match the fashions of the day in a variety of price ranges.[38] This is no less true for Victorian women than it is for women today. Throughout much of Western history, fashion has trickled down from the rich to the poor and had an impact on every strata of society.[39] The nineteenth century in particular was a period when women in the lower social strata, with the help of fashion magazines such as *Godey's Ladies' Book* and improvements in technology such as the sewing machine, easily copied the fashions worn by the rich and elite. However, these working-class women, by definition, had to work in order to earn their daily bread. They had to find a balance between looking fashionable and being practical, and the weight in each pan of the scales depended on each woman's own situation. The corset was one of the most essential garments if one wanted to be fashionable in the nineteenth century—without it, tightly fitted bodices did not fit, and one lacked the right body shape for the clothes. A woman's decision to wear a corset was both a choice made by her and a choice made for her: society dictated that in order to be respectably dressed, she must wear a corset, but the woman herself decided how important it was for her to be respectable in the narrow, middle-class definition of the term.

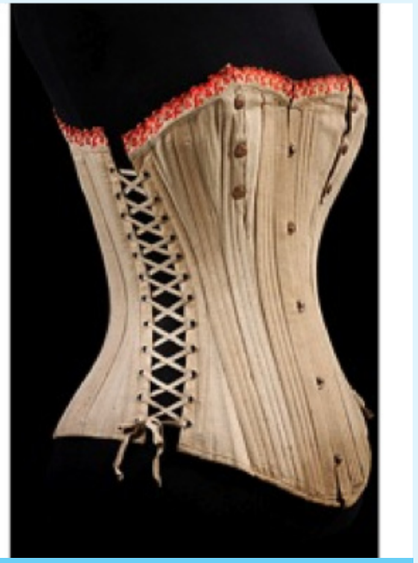
The type of work performed by an individual woman did have a significant impact on her choice of whether or not to wear a corset. In general, women living on farms, especially married women, tended to be more likely not to wear a corset, or to only own one and wear it occasionally.[40] Conversely, women, particularly young women, who lived and worked in cities and towns, were much more likely to follow fashion, wearing corsets and even, on occasion, crinolines.[41] Practicality was an instrumental element in a woman's decision, as was expense. These two factors were key to determining what a woman chose to wear, and how she chose to wear it. In 1850, farmers made up sixty-four percent of the working population of the United States.[42] In Europe, the figures were very similar. Nonetheless, cities were flourishing on both sides of the Atlantic, and many women were working in industrial settings and in service. Indeed, the service sector was growing so rapidly that by 1871, roughly thirty-three percent of working women in Great Britain were domestic servants.[43] Both urban and rural women were faced with the same choices about fashion, and each group responded differently.

For rural women, corsets were not an automatic choice when getting dressed in the morning. Rural women, particularly married women, had more difficulty imitating the clothing of middle and upper-classes than did their husbands.[44] Men's clothing across classes was generally the same; only the quality of the clothing changed. Furthermore, men were more likely to work outside of the home, making fashionable clothes a necessity in order for them to put forth a respectable impression.[45] Fashionable women's clothing, unlike men's clothing, was designed to demonstrate that the wearer had no need to work, with large skirts, tight bodices, and tight corsets. These clothes were both impractical and expensive for rural women.

It seems obvious that a corset would be impractical for farm labor—the garment was designed to be restrictive, and stories of women fainting from shortness of breath were not rare, though they were oftentimes exaggerated.[46] Modern researchers have come to the conclusion, however, that though corsets were indeed restrictive, they by no means incapacitated women. In 1999, Dr. Colleen Gau reproduced studies of corseted women's lung function by two Victorian doctors, using female historical re-enactors who played a variety of roles in the living museums where they worked.[47] Her subjects were a variety of shapes and sizes and were wearing hourglass corsets in the style of the 1870s.[48] Gau observed a definite decrease in lung function after they had donned their corsets, averaging about a nine percent loss.[49] Volunteers observed that they had more difficulty completing chores, though despite heavy farm work, "none of the subjects reported faintness or other alarming symptoms" beyond shortness of breath and lower back pain.[50] Though they were not incapacitated, neither were they comfortable, particularly while doing strenuous work.[51]

Gau's study indicates that modern women perceived corsets to be uncomfortable, but not impossible. It is easier to

understand, then, why farm women did not banish corsets from their wardrobes. Instead, it appears that rural women utilized corsets, if they could afford them, on the days



MATERNITY CORSET FROM VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM ONLINE COLLECTIONS. EXTRA LACING IS PRESENT ON THE SIDES OF THIS CORSET, AND THE CUPS HAVE EXTRA GUSSETS, POSSIBLY FOR ACCOMMODATING CHANGES TO THE BODY DURING PREGNANCY

where it was most necessary to appear "respectable." A rural wife was expected to manage the household, raise the children, maintain a kitchen garden, provide meals, help on the farm when necessary, and be concerned with how she appeared to the rest of the world.[52] Consequently, she had much less access to fashionable clothing than her sisters who lived and worked in cities. In a survey of rural French women from 1850 to 1875, social researcher Frederic Le Play found that only one third of the women owned corsets.[53] Contrarily, nearly all of the photographs of American farmwomen collected by Joan Severa, the major source for my analysis of American working women, show them wearing corsets, though no doubt many of them are wearing their best clothes.[54]

Indeed, farm women were most likely to only wear a corset when it would have been completely unthinkable not to. On Sundays, for example, a rural woman was able to get off of the farm for church and socializing. Consequently, Sunday clothes were, according to Crane, more likely "to be closer to the middle-class ideal than weekday" clothing.[55] Corsets were available via the Sears and Roebuck mail-order catalogue, priced from fifty cents to six dollars.[56] Therefore, though they were impractical for everyday wear, corsets were present in the "best" wardrobes of many rural farmwomen. For example, a photograph of a young California wife standing in front of a bleak little farmhouse is clearly wearing her best clothes, and only posing with a hoe for the photographer.[57] Beneath the fancy dress is a corset that creates the shape necessary for this young woman to appear fashionable. Though this particular woman is evidently not dressed to perform labor, another photograph, this one from a California fruit farm in 1887, captures a man and a woman who have just come from work. The woman in this photograph, holding pruning shears, is wearing a corset as part of her no-nonsense ensemble.[58] Clearly, a corset was not a completely impractical option for work on a farm. From another photograph, however, it is equally clear that some women felt no inhibitions about going out in public sans corset. A young Norwegian immigrant woman in La Crosse, Wisconsin, is wearing no corset as she strides down the street on her way to a fair.[59] The fact that this woman clearly felt that there was nothing wrong with appearing in public without a corset indicates that she, at least, chose to ignore society's respectability requirements in favor of her own comfort. Her behavior, though most likely not the norm among women on farms, also demonstrates the effect that a rural environment had on women's clothing choices. On farms or in small towns, far away from large manufacturing centers, women were less likely to be bombarded with the sort of advertising that created the perceived need for corsets. They were also, for most of the week, away from the prying eyes of neighbors, those who would judge a family's respectability by their neat and up-to-date clothing, or lack thereof. But for women who lived and worked in the up-and-coming urban centers, interactions with people of a higher social class happened every day, and every day presented an opportunity to demonstrate to the world their prosperity and respectability through dress.

As the world industrialized, urban centers became more important. Within these cities, women of all ages worked to make a living, often as shopkeepers, factory workers, assistants in the new department stores, or, most frequently, as domestic servants. Unlike the women living and working on farms or in rural areas, women in the cities had ample access to fashionable clothing, and corsets were essential to the fashionable shape. For these women, corsets were part of their everyday attire, whether they worked in factories or as domestic servants. As Crane notes, "Clothing was the principal consumer good that was available to working-class female employees, and they spent substantial proportions of their income on it."[60] For female factory workers, corsets and full skirts in the workplace were a way of demonstrating that though they were laboring at a menial task, that task did not define their entire lives. Instead, the wearing of corsets in the workplace was meant to show that these women aspired to middle-class life and fashion.

"As part of the American middle-class identity to which they aspired, the corset became a part of the immigrant's wardrobe, and represented both assimilation and prosperity."

A photograph of two female telephone operators demonstrates clearly the importance young working women put on dressing nicely for the workplace (see Fig. 9). Though they are not necessarily engaged in a menial task, neither are they idle. Both young women are dressed in an up-to-date style, corseted and wearing full bustles. The only concession to the workplace is the apron that the seated woman wears.[61] These women were expressing their concern for their position in society—clearly they hoped to move up in the world—and they were utilizing their clothes to demonstrate that fact. Another example of the female worker following fashion is a photograph of two mill girls posing in front of a painted backdrop with their shuttles, symbols of their occupation (see Fig. 10). These women are clearly wearing corsets beneath their dresses, and have made attempts to "dress up" their workaday clothes by adding elements such as fashionable collars.[62] Incredible as it may seem, the corsets these women wore may have provided back support during their long day standing and working on the factory floor. They may have chosen to wear corsets to work for the back support rather than to create a fashionable shape, or perhaps for both reasons. These women, like their sisters who worked in domestic service, were expected to present a respectable image to the world.

As the bourgeoisie grew, so did the number of women working as domestic servants. Service was an occupation, for many young women, between childhood and marriage, with a high turnover rate.[63] How much control these women had over their clothing depended on their employer—many found themselves wearing uniforms, while others had the freedom to choose what they wore during the workday. Young women entering service were often expected to provide their own clothing for the first year, after which point they would be able to purchase more with their wages.[64] Though their wages were not large, there were affordable corsets being produced specifically for housemaids. The Pretty Housemaid Corset, produced and guaranteed by the Symington Company in England, is one such example (see Fig. 11).[65] This corset creates the same shape as every other 1890s corset. However, this one has minimal boning (whalebones inserted into slots in the cor-

set to give it stiffness), which gives it more flexibility, and a busk protector (a piece of covered steel stitched to the underside of the busk for more support), making it a corset well suited for a woman doing manual labor.[66] The embroidery and lace on this corset, though they serve no practical purpose, indicate that the women who purchased the Pretty Housemaid corset wanted to feel pretty, even if they could not show it. Hundreds of thousands of Pretty Housemaid corsets were sold, and the idea that the corset marked the difference between a middle-class woman and a working-class one was dispelled.[67] Four housemaids, posing together with a cat around 1889, are all wearing corsets, demonstrating how important keeping up with fashion was for women of all classes.[68] Upper servants, such as lady's maids, often had access to their mistress' cast-off clothes, and took full advantage of them to dress in a fashionable manner. Fashion created a way for these women, whose lives were so often filled with drudgery, to participate in the larger "community outside the employer's household."[69]

The corset was an essential part of many servants' wardrobes, especially those who worked in positions where they would be seen, such as nursemaids or housemaids. Interestingly, even some house slaves in the American South wore corsets.[70] Though most slaves wore the cast-off clothing of their masters or new clothes made of the cheapest cloth available, there is evidence that some house slaves wore corsets, albeit under simple dresses provided by their masters in order to keep them in their place.[71] In one photo, a younger slave woman is clearly wearing a corset beneath her simple dress. As a house slave, she would have been seen by visitors and the family for whom she worked every day, and therefore would have been required to conform to their standards of respectability.[72] On the other hand, her sisters working in the fields would not have worn corsets, because they were provided with only the cheapest and most practical pieces of clothing.[73] After the Civil War, free blacks, many of them former slaves, made it a point to embrace fashion, including the corset, such as Josephine Beasley. In a photo from the 1890s, she is dressed in "an elegant and fashionable gown," though her occupation, according to the census records, was as a domestic servant.[74] Just like other members of the working class after the Civil War, African-American women made the effort to dress fashionably. Indeed, for African-Americans it was probably particularly important to demonstrate their status through their clothing, since they were fighting against racial prejudice as well. And yet, they were not the only group that chose to use clothing to demonstrate their ability to assimilate into American culture and society.

For many immigrants during the latter half of the nineteenth century, a change in clothing was part of the transition from the Old World to the New World. Immigrants who arrived in cities were confronted with pressure to be American, to conform to a standard of dress often very different from the traditional clothing they had worn in Europe. According to Margareta Matovic, "clothing helped turn a peasant maid into a city woman."[75] For Polish immigrant women in Chicago, one of their first goals was to acquire a new wardrobe, including a corset, whether or not they had worn one in the old country.[76] For immigrants, regardless of their original culture, clothing was key to fitting in, to looking American--that is, middle class. Immigrant women made a point of dressing themselves, and their daughters, in American fashions as quickly as possible. Take, for example, a photograph of a Norwegian family. All of the women in the family are wearing corsets, and although the mother's dress is a few years out of date, the young girls are dressed in up-to-the-minute dresses, demonstrating the family's pride in their success in America.[77] As part of the American middle-class identity to which they aspired, the corset became a part of the immigrant's wardrobe, and represented both assimilation and prosperity. Indeed, for any woman who wanted to fit into respectable society, and possibly move up the Victorian social ladder, a corset was a necessity anytime other people could see her.

The corset was an essential part of Victorian material culture. Nearly every woman, whether she was the Princess of Wales or a kitchen maid, wore a corset at some point in her life, if not throughout her whole life. Women of all classes participated in the culture of the era, which classified the corset as essential to feminine respectability. While trying to determine how the working-class woman's use of the corset differed from the middle class woman's, it is important to not only examine the values of Victorian society, but also to look at the corsets themselves and the shapes they created underneath clothing.

Jules David Prown suggests that there is "a high correlation between clothing and personal identity and values."[78] The choices working women made about their clothing, specifically their decision to wear corsets or not, indicated that they wanted to make an effort to keep up with current fashions, even though they had to do so on a budget. They wore corsets in the manner that best suited their needs, whether that was only on Sundays, when they were going to town, or everyday. Through their fashion decisions, working-class women demonstrated the agency they had over their own lives to society at large. Unlike middle-class women, whose use of the corset was determined and enforced by a rigid set of social norms, working-class women tended to have more control over their decisions, because they had to balance their ability to work with their desire to stay fashionable. Instead of being passive consumers of corset culture, these women took advantage of the corset when they needed to, and occasionally, were able to leave it off altogether if it suited them. Their use of the corset made them the most "modern," and certainly the most liberated, of all the women of the Victorian era.

ENDNOTES

1 Roberts (554-569)
2 Davidoff (406-428)
3. Steinbach (xiv)
4 Steinbach (115)
5 Steinbach (118)
6 Ibid.
7 Steinbach (124)
8 Steinbach (125)
9 Steinbach (136)
10 Steinbach (99)
11 Steinbach (102)
12 Steele (36)
13 Sears & Roebuck Co. Catalogue 1893 (191)
14 Ginsberg (39)
15 Summers (20)
16 Steele (35)
17 Kunzle (574); Roberts (556)
18 Kunzle (575)
19 Steele (51)
20 Summers (81)
21 Perrot (154)
22 Perrot (155)
23 Perrot (156)
24 Steele (44, 47)
25 Thompson's Glove-Fitting Corset pamphlet
26 Steele (41)
27 Caplin (83)
28 Caplin (103)
29 Summers (46)
30 Maternity corset
31 Steele (76)
32 Veblen (80)
33 Veblen (179)
34 Perrot (89)
35 Perrot (8)
36 Kunzle (573)
37 Steele (92)
38 Sears & Roebuck Co. Catalogue 1893 (191)
39 Perrot (25)
40 Crane (55)
41 Crane (57)
42 Growing A Nation: The Story of American Agriculture
43 Steinbach (91)
44 Crane (29)
45 Crane (49)
46 Summers (99)
47 Gau (63)
48 Gau (64)
49 Gau (66)
50 Gau (67)
51 Ibid.
52 Crane (49)
53 Crane (51)
54 Severa (xvi)
55 Crane (50)
56 Sears & Roebuck Co. Catalogue 1896

57 Severa (494)
58 Severa (423)
59 Severa (513)
60 Crane (60)
61 Severa (404-5)
62 Severa (370)
63 Davidoff (408)
64 Rose (81)
65 Salen (59)
66 Ibid.
67 Steele (49)
68 Severa (451)
69 Crane (59)
70 Severa (61)
71 Severa (60); White and White (154)
72 Severa (61)
73 Group of Slaves outside a Cabin, Cumberland, VA
74 Severa (479)
75 Matovic (280)
76 Knothe (330)
77 Severa (345)
78 Prown (89)

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"JES' NEXT TO JESUS CHRIST"

Slave Attitudes Towards Abraham Lincoln

JAMES NEWHOUSE

BETWEEN 1936 AND 1938, WRITERS FROM THE WORKS AND PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS OF OVER 2,000 EX-SLAVES THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH. THIS ESSAY EXAMINES SLAVE RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT FORMER PRESIDENTS ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JEFFERSON DAVIS. INDEED, THE RESPONSES OF EX-SLAVES TO THE QUESTIONS WERE AS SURPRISING AS THE EXISTENCE OF THE QUESTION ITSELF. GIVEN THE HERO STATUS OF DAVIS AND THE SOUTH'S GENERAL CONTEMPT FOR LINCOLN, THE INTERVIEWERS' INTEREST IN SLAVE OPINIONS ON THE TWO IS NOTABLE. EVEN MORE REMARKABLE WERE THE WIDE VARIETY OF RESPONSES GIVEN BY EX-SLAVES; THEY MADE VEILED CRITICISMS OF THE SOUTHERN CULTURE THAT OPPRESSED THEM. EX-SLAVES CHOSE UNIQUE, SUBTLE METHODS OF CRITICISM SINCE BLATANT CRITICISMS OF DIXIE, A COLLOQUIAL TERM FOR THE SOUTH, OFTEN ENDED IN RACIAL VIOLENCE.

In 1936, one hundred and twelve year old ex-slave Phil Town discussed with a Works and Progress Administration (WPA) interviewer his version of how the Civil War had begun.[1] According to Town, Abraham Lincoln met with Jefferson Davis and tried to convince Davis that slavery was morally unacceptable according to the Bible. Davis refused to listen, so Lincoln pulled out a gun and a Bible and instructed Davis to choose one. When Davis chose the gun, Lincoln left with the Bible and the Civil War began. Town's response refuted the common Southern notion at the time that the Civil War was the war of Northern aggression and that "Jeff Davis was the Christian martyr," implicitly criticizing the accepted Southern war narrative.[2] In Town's account, Davis was not only the aggressor, but also appeared unchristian, choosing the gun and ignoring the moral truth of the Bible.

Town's story serves as a safe yet stinging assault on slavery on a number of levels. First, Town indicates that Lincoln, not Davis, "had God on his side."[3] Second, in choosing the gun over the Bible, Davis acts as the aggressor, suggesting that southern greed was the impetus for the Civil War. Furthermore, Davis's inability to accept the morality and logic behind Lincoln's plea depicts southerners as close-minded and irrational.[4] Because Town used a fictional narrative to carry out his assault on Southern collective memory, Southern whites were less likely to seek repercussions for Town's transgressions. In choosing to criticize slavery through folklore, Town addressed the interviewer's question without endangering himself.

Town was not the only freedman to give such an untraditional response to questions about slave perceptions of Lincoln and Davis. Slaves often relied on folklore and religious anecdotes in answering the loaded, potentially dangerous questions of the interviewers. Because the freedmen of the 1930s lived in a Jim Crow South in which slavery was considered "a God-ordained, spiritual institution," any statement contrary to that assumption could only serve to endanger them.[5] Many whites in the Jim Crow South were nostalgic for the Antebellum South and attributed utopian features to their slaveholding past. Folklore, subtle criticism, and religious allusion allowed the ex-slaves to answer loaded questions about Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln in a safe manner.[6]

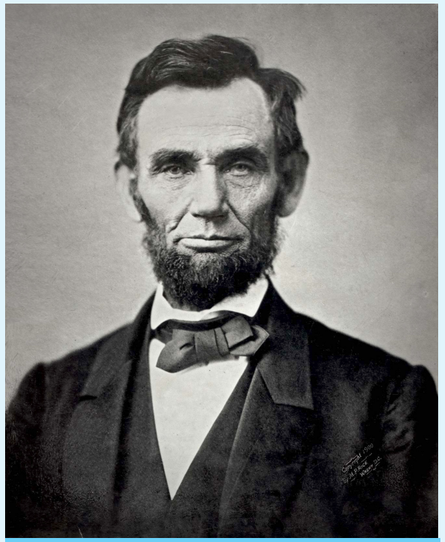
A survey of ex-slave responses to stock questions about Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln reveals much about not only antebellum but also Jim Crow race relations. Ex-slaves attached religious significance to Lincoln. Their embrace of the martyred President was caused by, and in direct proportion to, their masters' hatred of Lincoln. The racial hierarchy of the Jim Crow South meant that former slaves—they were critical of all of the Confederacy—had to be subtle.

This essay relies solely on the WPA narratives as primary evidence to determine slaves' perceptions of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. While the WPA slave narratives today remain the most extensive and encompassing insights into slave life, historians have debated the viability of the narratives as a historical source. Considering that the interviews were conducted more than seventy years after emancipation, were occasionally edited by the WPA, and contain instances in which the ex-slaves lied to protect their safety, concerns about the validity of the WPA sources are justified.[7] David Bailey asserts that the time gap between emancipation and the time the interviews were conducted presents a major dilemma for historians intending to use the interviews as a source.[8] Slave children often were exempt from fieldwork, and many acted as playmates or house pets to the young white children. WPA interviewees, who had been children while enslaved, had happier recollections of slavery than runaway slaves who wrote autobiographies.[9] The WPA interviewee then, held a unique (and not completely representative) view of the peculiar institution.

Race relations in the 1930s South further limit the accuracy of the interviews. Many ex-slaves could legitimately worry about their safety if they gave an unfavorable account of slavery. John Blassingame notes that it was safest for slaves to "conceal their feelings towards Whites as a matter of self-preservation."[10] Since Blacks often lived in the same county in which they had been enslaved, they risked upsetting their former masters' children and grandchildren if they criticized the institution of slavery.[11] While

the inherent existence of racial tension in the interviews limits the historical accuracy of the accounts, the racial tension reveals much about race relations in the 1930s South.

It was standard practice for the WPA interviewers to ask subjects their views on Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. Despite the wealth of material such questions elicited, historians have yet to analyze ex-slave responses on the matter. Though historians have addressed the slaves' embrace of Lincoln, no analysis exists of freedmen's opinions of Confederate leaders.[12]



ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 16TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, 1863.

In order to understand why ex-slaves held such reverence for Lincoln, it is important to discern what factors had influence on their opinions of Lincoln. While slaves believed Lincoln intended to abolish slavery and end their bondage, Lincoln initially told slaveholders that he had no intention of doing so. Indeed, in his inaugural address of 1861, Lincoln assured states that the federal government had no power to abolish slavery. However, as Stephanie Oates points out, "in Dixie, orators and editors alike derided Lincoln as a black-hearted radical." Harold Holzer also noted that the southern practice of "assailing" the President's character was commonplace. Slave reverence for Lincoln, then, was likely born of knowledge of their masters' contempt for him.[13]

Even though Lincoln did not intend to abolish slavery upon taking office, in retrospect, ex-slaves held Lincoln in reverence as a great figure in American history. Instead of focusing on Lincoln's motives for ending slavery, African-Americans of the Depression years focused on the effects of Lincoln's presidency, and celebrated him as a hero for African-American liberty. In *A Nation Under Our Feet*, Stephen Hahn offers another reason for ex-slaves' exaggerated reverence for Lincoln.[14] Hahn argues that slaves sought a "messianic" figure to end their bondage.[15] Indeed, many antebellum black churches eagerly awaited a savior who showed "the marks of several Biblical characters, most notably Moses and Jesus."[16] In many slaves' minds, Lincoln became this figure.[17]

If Lincoln was veiled by misconceptions, then former slaves had very different concerns when responding to questions about Jefferson Davis. Immediately following their defeat, southern whites had developed what Charles Reagen Wilson views as a civil religion centered on the sanctity of the southern people. Central to this religion was the Lost Cause, a concept that claimed Confederates had fought for a morally superior social order and only lost because of the North's superior numbers. Nostalgia for slavery and the notion that masters were benevolent to their slaves were central tenets of the Lost Cause. Also central to the idea of the Lost Cause was the deification of Confederate heroes such as Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jefferson Davis. Despite the cautions that ex-slaves had to take when speaking about Lincoln and Davis, ex-slave responses to questions about Civil War leaders provide an abundance of information and insights about folklore, race relations in the Depression, and freedmen's political worldviews.

Because religion was central to African-American life in the nineteen and early twentieth century, Lincoln's holy status in the slave mind comes as no surprise.[18] Ex-slaves viewed their emancipator through the lens of Afro-Christianity and used their religion to protest their treatment at the hands of the white community. Because of the importance of religion in the African-American community, ex-slaves used Christianity as a means of illustrating the righteousness of Lincoln and the wickedness of slavery. Ex-slaves depicted Lincoln as a "man of God" and claimed Lincoln had Biblical justification for freeing the slaves.[19] Many slaves believed the Civil War represented the "divine intervention that would end their collective oppression."[20] Because freeing the slaves was a religious act endorsed by God, Lincoln was a messianic, Moses-like figure for many slaves.[21]

Depictions of Lincoln as a religious liberator are common in narratives. Mattie Lee proclaimed that because "Christ died for to save de world and Lincoln died to save de United States...Lincoln died more Christ like den any man dat ever lived."[22] Lee's observation represents a common belief among slaves: Lincoln's sacrifice for the slaves was comparable to the sacrifice Jesus made for mankind. Sarah Waggoner of Kentucky further sanctified Lincoln's image by claiming: "Abe Lincoln was jes' next to Jesus Christ!"[23] For many slaves, the distinction between Lincoln and Jesus was nonexistent. Even slave children, when asked about Jesus Christ, responded that Jesus was "massa' Linkum!"[24] Ruby Pickens Tart confirmed that slaves frequently depicted Lincoln as God-like in stating that because of "what dey tole me 'bout him, I thought he was partly God."[25] Lincoln, then, assumed Christ-like characteristics and the role of redeemer in slave representations of him.[26]

Other slaves drew the religious analogy wider. Charles H. Anderson told his interviewer that "Lincoln was a natural born man for the job he completed. Just check it back to Pharaoh's time: there was Moses born to deliver the children of Israel."[27] The comparison of Lincoln to Moses accomplishes more than simply demonstrating the holiness for slaves of emancipation. By connecting Lincoln to Moses and the slaves to Israel, Anderson compared southern slave owners to the Pharaoh and the South to Egypt. This veiled criticism of the antebellum South is even more stinging considering that many Southern Whites in the 1930s compared the defeated South to the Israelites.[28] By claiming the slaves—not their masters—were the Israelites, Anderson inverted the image Southerners had of themselves and recast it so that ex-slaves were the chosen people and whites were the wicked oppressors.[29]

Reuben Rosborough furthered the religious metaphor by incorporating Franklin Roosevelt. Rosborough, like Anderson, likened Lincoln to Moses by claiming that "Mr. Lincoln was raised up de be Lord, just like Moses, to fee a 'culiar people."[30] Rosborough then took Anderson's Moses allusion a step further by arguing, "Mr. Roosevelt is de Joshua dat come after him."[31] Rosborough's analogy also compared African-Americans to the Israelites by claiming the two great saviors of the African American people were equivalent to Moses and Joshua. Rosborough ended his testimony with a nod to Roosevelt, imploring God to "bless

JEFFERSON DAVIS, PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA.

him and 'stain him in his visions and work to bring de kingdom of heaven into and upon earth."[32] By depicting those who help African-Americans as holy men, Rosborough implored racist southerners to end their practices of hate and inequality, which would contribute towards creating heaven on earth.[33]

Some slaves believed that instead of inspiring Lincoln, God had acted *through* him to free the slaves. Easter Wells claimed, "God worked through Abraham Lincoln and answered de prayers of dem dat was wearing de burden of slavery."[34] Again, Wells' interpretation creates a parallel between the struggles of the Israelites in the land of Egypt and the struggles of the slaves. The black slaves cried out for freedom just as their Hebrew brothers had prayed for freedom centuries before. Wells ended his response with a defensive question: "We cullud folks all love and honor Abraham Lincoln's memory and don't you think we ought to?"[35]

Sallie Paul of South Carolina gave God even more credit. Paul declared, "God set de slaves free. De Lord do it," and Lincoln simply was "de one what present de speech."[36] Paul made it clear that emancipation was God's deed and God's will. In crediting Lincoln's emancipation proclamation to the Lord, Paul discredited the common southern notion that slavery provided the moral and social discipline necessary for blacks to attain salvation.[37]

Ex-slaves' use of religion as a tool to critique Dixie stood in perfect contrast to the southern justification of slavery. Southern plantation owners rationalized their bondage of an entire race of people through selective interpretation of the Bible. Indeed, ministers "leaned more heavily on the sanction of the Bible than on anything else" and often "quoted Old Testament approvals of slavery" in their defense of slavery.[38] In their interviews, ex-slaves challenged the notion that the Bible legitimized slavery. Instead, many slaves took it upon themselves to demonstrate that Lincoln had Biblical backing for his actions. Elisha Doc Garey claimed that Lincoln had used John 8:36, which read, "'My son, therefore shall ye be free indeed,'" to decide that he ought "to wuk to sot us free."[39] Just as Charles H. Anderson inverted the image of Southerners as the chosen people, Garey claimed it was Lincoln, not the Confederates, who had Biblical support for his actions.

Green Willbanks also cited John 8:36 in his justification for abolition. Willbanks thought "Abraham Lincoln was a all right man; God so intended that we should be sot free."[40] When asked about whether he preferred freedom to bondage, Willbanks exclaimed "Sho! Give me freedom all the time. Jesus said: 'If my Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed.'"[41] Unlike Garey, Willbanks used John 8:36 to connect Lincoln with Jesus. Since Lincoln set the slaves free, and Willbanks' biblical justification for his abolition was that God allowed his son to free his people, Lincoln was simply mirroring the actions of Jesus in emancipating the slaves. By claiming Lincoln acted as Jesus had, Willbanks skillfully debunked the southern notion that slavery was a holy institution.

Many former slaves also cited Micah 4:4 to show God's abhorrence of slavery. Jim Allen stated matter-of-fact that Lincoln "worked by 'pinions of de Bible. He got his meanin's from de Bible." Allen then cited Micah 4:4, "'Every man should live under his own vine and fig tree'" as the primary verse that inspired Lincoln to believe that "'no one man should work for another."[42] In order to emphasize the point, Allen contrasted Lincoln's interpretation of the passage with Jefferson Davis, who "wanted po' man to work for rich man." Davis was "wrong in one 'pinion."[43] Jim Allen's' comparison of Biblical interpretations made his point clear: the slaves, not the confederates, interpreted the Bible correctly.[44]

Despite their portrayal of Lincoln as a religious figure, slave exaltation for Lincoln appears largely misplaced. Lincoln only freed the slaves reluctantly, and had no religious justification for doing so.[45] Lincoln's policy involved preventing the spread of slavery to the frontier states and he claimed no constitutional power to abolish slavery in the South. Indeed, only after he decided emancipation was a military necessity did Lincoln opt to free the slaves.[46] Oates reminds us that Lincoln initially made a concerted effort to establish that he was not the passionate abolitionist many Southerners believed him to be. Indeed, Lincoln "conceded that slavery was a thoroughly entrenched institution, that it was protected by the Constitution and could not be molested by the national government."[47] In fact, Lincoln was prepared to ratify an 1861 amendment that would have ensured that slavery would be left untouched by the federal government.[48] Despite Lincoln's support for the Constitutional amendment that protected slavery, religious depictions of Lincoln continued because slaves based their perceptions of Lincoln not on his actual policies but on the Lincoln to whom they were exposed.

One reason that slaves idolized Lincoln was that their masters despised him. Gabe Emanuel noted that he "don't recolle' much 'bout 'im 'ceptin what I hear'd in de Big House 'bout Lincoln doin' dis an' Lincoln doin' dat."[49] Since the majority of slaves were illiterate or only had a limited vocabulary, they depended on their masters for information. Pauline Worth also remembered hearing her mistress "readin de paper speak bout Abraham Lincoln en Jefferson Davis."[50] Since southern newspapers maligned and lampooned Lincoln, Worth likely only received negative depictions of Lincoln and positive ones of Davis.[51] Moreover, "the worries of one slaveholder could influence the expectations of slaves in an entire neighborhood."[52] Only one misconceived slave master could shape the opinions of hundreds of slaves in the region.

Charity Austen's interview confirms that slaves took their masters' hateful depictions of Lincoln and recreated him in a way that they preferred. Austen observed that "from what de white folks, marster and missus tole us we thought Lincoln wus terrible. By what mother and father tole me I thought he wus all right."[53] Clearly Austen and her parents heard much about Lincoln through their masters and created a Lincoln that fit their expectations. The first thing ex-slave George Wamble remembered about the war was his master Enoch Wombly's boast that he would "join the army and bring Abe Lincoln's head back for a soap dish."[54] Enoch Wombly's staunch anti-abolitionist stance was solidified through his promise that he would "wade in blood up to his neck to keep the slaves from being freed."[55] Both Austen's and Wombly's narratives illustrate the intense hatred for Lincoln to which slaves were exposed on a daily basis. Since their masters' hatred stemmed from the perception that Lincoln wanted to free the slaves, Austen and Wombly retained a positive and benevolent image of the Great Emancipator.

Often, slaves had no choice but to be exposed to the hateful, anti-Lincoln actions of southern whites. Esther King Casey and her father saw confederate soldiers hang and shoot at an effigy of Lincoln.[56] The *Charleston Daily Courier* predicted that "the initials C.S.A. would eventually come to signify 'Couldn't Stand Abe.'"[57] Slaves witnessed the violent opposition to Lincoln and hateful rhetoric of white southerners and inferred that Lincoln must be the religious savior for whom they had prayed. Indeed, slaves and slaveholders alike interpreted political events in similar ways.[58] Both assumed "the Republican party was actively hostile to the institution of slavery" despite Lincoln's efforts to prove the contrary.[59] Slaves took the information they were exposed to and created their own construct of the Yankee President, recreating him in a way that suited their cultural needs.

Many interviewees reported having heard about Lincoln through a short song that their masters sang repeatedly. George Wood of South Carolina claimed that all he knew about Lincoln was that his mistress used to sing: "Jeff Davis rides a big gray horse, Lincoln rides a mule; Jeff Davis is a fine old man, and Lincoln is a fool."[60] Wood is one of many slaves who responded that their perception of Lincoln stemmed from the popular Dixie song that lampooned him.

Other slaves took Dixie's favorite Lincoln song and altered the lyrics in a way that lampooned the South, not Lincoln. In changing the song, slaves challenged the southern culture that held them in bondage and mocked their captors. Slaves from Warren County, North Carolina, added "Knick knack dey say / Walk ole Georgia row" to the end of the song in order to parody it.[61] The addition of "Knick Knack dey say" transformed the song from being highly critical of Lincoln to a childish simplicity. This parody of southern culture succeeded in critiquing southern culture while remaining subtle enough to ensure the slaves' safety.

Lou Griffin of Missouri recalled making up a response song "'bout how old Lincoln got hold of Jeff Davis in de

army and Abe Lincoln took and rode Jeff Davis' big fine horse and Jeff Davis had to ride the mule."[62] By adding his own ending, Griffin countered southern whites' attempt to satirize Lincoln and portrayed Lincoln as powerful instead of foolish. Griffin ended his edited version with "Abe Lincoln was United States president and Jeff Davis was de fool."[63] Griffin completely refuted his master's representation of Lincoln by reversing the qualities of the two wartime presidents.[64]

Susan Snow's rendition of the Dixie song was even more confrontational than Griffin's. Snow heard white children singing the song, and responded with a song of her own: "Called a Union band / Made de Rebels un'erstan' / To leave de lan' / Submit to Abraham.'"[65] Snow's response, like the responses of Griffin, Wood, and many other slaves, provided an effective criticism of southern culture in a creative manner. While Snow received a beating for her retort, she successfully criticized the South without risking her life. Moreover, Snow referred to the Confederates as rebels, a word choice that challenged paternalistic southern assumptions that slaves were loyal to the Confederacy during the war because they preferred slavery.[66] Prince Johnson also remembered a young slave girl accidentally switching the names of Lincoln and Davis while singing the song. Apparently, his mistress grew so upset at hearing the mistake that she had the child whipped.[67] Johnson's mistress did not hesitate to whip the young girl for her accidental error, illustrating the extent to which the song was significant to Southerners. That Susan Snow, Lou Griffin, Amanda Oliver and many slaves still chose to satirize the song and southern representations of Lincoln despite the risk of whipping demonstrates the importance of Lincoln in slave life.

Some of the most pointed criticisms of the South came through the form of folklore. Through folklore, ex-slaves were able to make criticisms that otherwise would have been too dangerous to make in the Jim Crow South. Guy Miller of Tennessee illustrated how wary blacks were of criticizing whites when he observed that if he got in trouble with whites, they'd kill him.[68] Because of the dangers that offending whites posed, many blacks turned to folklore as a means to critique their society because folklore allowed blacks to make subtle attacks on Dixie that were not blatant enough to merit the violence that Miller feared.

One way in which folklore succeeded in critiquing the Antebellum South was through contrasting depictions of the Union and Confederacy. H.B. Holloway's fictive memory of Lincoln addressing Atlanta after the Civil War portrayed Lincoln and the freedmen as powerful and the South as weak. According to Holloway, Lincoln gathered all the Confederate money and had the oldest black man around set fire to the money in front of everyone.[69] Holloway emphasized the powerlessness of the defeated Confederacy by having Lincoln and an old black man destroy the currency necessary for the existence of the Confederate nation. That southerners longed for a separate political nation of a "cohesive southern people with a separate cultural identity" only underscores the symbolic power of burning confederate currency.[70] Without currency, no such nation was possible. Lincoln, then, destroyed the southern dream of autonomy when he and the slave burned Confederate currency. Frank Freeman also characterized Lincoln and the Yankees as dominant in his folk story. According to Freeman, Lincoln asked Davis three times to free the slaves before returning to the north to gather 140,000 Yankees who "whupped" the Confederates.[71]

"That southerners longed for a separate political nation of a 'cohesive southern people with a separate cultural identity' only underscores the symbolic power of a burning confederate currency."

Ex-slaves also made frequent use of the trickster archetype in their Lincoln folklore. In contrast to the domineering Lincoln that Holloway and Freeman remembered, the trickster Lincoln defeated his southern adversaries through deceit and trickery. Charity Austen said that Lincoln, Sherman, and Grant traveled throughout the South in rags and spied on Confederate meetings. By the time the Confederates found out that their Union counterparts had been spying on them, Lincoln had left and they were furious.[72] In depicting Lincoln as a traveler who deceived southerners, Austen succeeded not only in creating trickster tales based on Lincoln but also in emphasizing the South's incompetence.[73] Just like the trickster character in their folktales, Lincoln was cunning and sly in his attempt to spy on the Confederacy. Annie Alcott's' depiction of Lincoln also portrays him as a trickster character. LaCotts claimed that Lincoln came to her plantation before the war wearing a "gray blanket around him for a cape" with a string tied around his neck to hold the cape in place and "jean pants and big mud boots."[74] Lincoln's outlandish costume underscores the function of trickster stories as "satirical descriptions of their own world and its social relations."[75] Indeed, through her ridiculous description of Lincoln, LaCotts poked fun at the South's inability to thwart Lincoln in his quest to end slavery.

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In addition to being cast as a trickster, Lincoln also assumed the role of a poor and downtrodden member of society in folklore. That Lincoln often was described as poor is particularly fascinating considering his status as the most powerful man in America during the Civil War. In choosing to depict Lincoln as poor, ex-slaves characterized Lincoln in an image consistent with the trickster, who was always weaker and less powerful than his opponent.[76] In addition, slaves also connected Lincoln with themselves and distanced him from the slave-owning elite that oppressed them. Charity Austin remembered Lincoln as a ragged man by the railroad that had lost all his possessions. The slaves helped him out, and he returned to the White House, where he emancipated the slaves.[77] The difference between Lincoln and the slaves was minimized in Austen's story since Lincoln is depicted as a homeless person who needed slaves' charity. Moreover, Austen implied the slaves had a hand in their own emancipation, as it was their charity that saved the man who eventually saved them.

Austen was not the only ex-slave to use the railroad in her attempt to depict Lincoln as similar to African-Americans. Sam Polite claimed that Lincoln traveled through the South as a "rail-splitter and spy" prior to returning to Washington and deciding that southerners must free the slaves or there would be bloodshed.[78] Traveling incognito, Lincoln embodied the trickster persona by deceiving southern whites. He used the knowledge gained from spying in the South to determine that he must end slavery. Like the trickster, Lincoln appeared to be weaker than his opponent but gained the upper hand through trickery and deceit. Robert Toatley described Lincoln as a rail-splitter to draw similarities between Lincoln's life and the struggles African-Americans underwent everyday to make ends meet. Toatley knew "two men who split rails side by side wid him" and claimed slavery was "a hard time" for both poor whites and poor blacks.[79] Charlie Davenport used folklore to take the connection between Lincoln and African-Americans a step further. Lincoln "called hisse'f a rail-

splitter come her to talk wid us. He went all th'ough de country jus' a-rantin' an' a-preachin' 'bout us bein' his black brothers."[80] Indeed, the narratives of Davenport, Toatley, and Polite employed folklore both to satirize southern culture and make parallels between Lincoln and the slaves.

The folk story Alice Douglass of Tennessee told to the WPA very clearly demonstrates the connection between the trickster and the marginalized slave population. Douglass had Lincoln assume both roles in her account. According to Douglass, Lincoln and his wife traveled through her hometown and "dressed jess lack tramps." "Nobody knowed it was him and his wife till he got to the White House and writ back and told 'em to look twixt the leaves in the table where he had set and they sho' nuff found out it was him," she reported.[81] Lincoln's trickster character manifested in his ability to fool southerners into believing he was a tramp. The note he sent taunted southerners for being unable to recognize him. Douglass succeeds not only in connecting Lincoln with the slaves by depicting Lincoln as a tramp, but also satirizes Dixie's inability to defeat Lincoln through her characterization of Lincoln as a trickster.[82]

Freedmen who chose not to employ religious allusion or folklore had limited options in their response to questions regarding Lincoln and Davis. Any response that appeared overtly critical of Davis or the antebellum south put them in danger.[83] Southerners had a profound sense of nostalgia for the Confederacy and religious respect for Jefferson Davis.[84] Willis Anderson exemplifies ex-slave caution to not appear critical of the Confederate hero in their responses. Anderson's interviewer noted that he talked "very low when he mentions the name of Jeff Davis."[85] Anderson's fear of Davis stemmed from his slave days when whites would eavesdrop on black cabins and "if yer sed' that Jeff Davis was a good man, they barbequed a hog for you, but if yer' sed' that Abe Lincoln was a good man, yer' had to fight or go to the woods."[86] Anderson's narrative reveals much about the ex-slave mindset on how to respond to questions regarding Jefferson Davis. Ex-slaves realized the importance whites placed on their martyred president, as many had a lifetime of experience with whites enacting draconian punishments on any African-Americans bold enough to speak freely about Lincoln or Davis. Moreover, Anderson's hushed tone when responding to a question about Davis demonstrates that whites were successful in making blacks fearful to even speak about Davis.

In this climate, many slaves chose the safest option: claiming they knew nothing about Davis or Lincoln. Adeline Crump grew upset when asked about Lincoln and Roosevelt. She claimed not to "know enough 'bout Abraham Lincoln an' Mr. Roosevelt to talk about 'em. No I don't know just what to say." Crump then pleaded with her interviewer to change the subject by complaining that she "sho' hopes you will quit axin' me so many things cause I forgot."[87] Crump understood the dangers inherent to sharing her opinion, and chose not to risk her life for an interview. Her frustration that the interviewer even asked the question demonstrates the degree to which speaking freely endangered blacks in the Jim Crow South.

"African-Americans knew that a genuine criticism of the South like the one given by McWhorter could result in lynching."

A close reading of ex-slaves' responses, however, reveals their genuine thoughts on Davis and Lincoln. Nellie Smith of North Carolina, for example, didn't "know bout all dem old folks Lincoln, Davis, Booker Washington."[88] While Smith claimed not to know anything about Davis or Lincoln, she effectively gave her opinion on the presidents by noting right after that "slavery wus a bad thing cause dey sold families apart, fathers from their wives and children, and mothers away from their children."[89] Smith, like many slaves confronted with this loaded question, elected not to risk offending her white interviewer with a truthful answer. Smith's stated abhorrence of slavery effectively communicated her opinions of Lincoln and Davis without speaking frankly and endangering herself. Emeline Moore also didn't "remember nothing' about Lincoln" yet somehow knew that "he was President of the United States, an' lived in Washington, and gave us freedom."[90] Responses like those given by Moore and Smith demonstrate not only the ex-slaves' genuine opinions on Lincoln and slavery but also the precautions many African-Americans took to ensure they did not upset the racist social order.

Indeed, former slaves were wise to be wary of the consequences of their reactions. Whites longed for the political structure of the antebellum South because they feared blacks were beginning to use their freedom as a license, which they believed threatened the moral fiber of the South.[91] Whites responded to black political consciousness with violence, such as lynching by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan's. More than 1,100 blacks were lynched in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century alone.[92] Because of this, responses like those given by Lila Nicholas and Morris Sheppard were the least likely to offend violent white southerners. Nicholas claimed that ex-slaves "doan keer nothin' bout Mr. Lincoln" because he did not care about ex-slaves and "jis doan want de South ter get rich."[93] Sheppard's response was even more geared towards pleasing the southern white man. Sheppard was critical of Lincoln because he "didn't look after me and buy my crop right after I was free like old master did."[94] Sheppard and Nicholas represent a tiny minority of interviewees, but their responses demonstrate the influence southern whites could have on the interviewee's responses.[95]

Slaves that were blatantly critical and honest about their opinions of Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln represented another tiny minority in the narratives. William McWhorter's response was the most radical and overtly critical. McWhorter believed "Jeff Davis ought to be 'shamed of hisself to want Niggers kept in bondage."[96] Despite white insistence that Davis was a good man, McWhorter was forthright in his assertion that "you cant 'spect us Niggers to b'lieve he was so awful good."[97] While McWhorter was not alone in his disdain for Davis and the southern system that expected reverence for the Confederate president, his outspoken reaction separated him from other ex-slaves. African-Americans knew that a genuine criticism of the South like the one given by McWhorter could result in lynching.

One popular means through which ex-slaves avoided endangering themselves like McWhorter did was to focus their answer on their love of Franklin Roosevelt instead of risking sharing their thoughts on controversial figures like Lincoln and Davis. Indeed, that the Black community overwhelmingly supported Roosevelt would come as no surprise to white southerners.[98] Zeb Crowder noted that "from what little judgment I got I thought a right smart o' Abraham Lincoln, but I tells you de truf Mr. Roosevelt has done a lot o' good. Dates de truf. I likes him."[99] Given a choice between exalting Lincoln and exalting Roosevelt, Crowder chose to praise the president who had not toppled the Confederacy and ended the possibility of a holy southern nation. William Scott of North Carolina also praised Roosevelt for his practical assistance to the poor black community. Scott was thankful for Lincoln who "done the colored man a heap of good" and argued that if it "hadn't been for Mr. Roosevelt there are many livin' today who would have perished to death. There are many people walkin' about now who would have been dead if Mr. Roosevelt had not helped them."[100] Scott chose instead to focus on the good deeds of Lincoln and Roosevelt instead of the negative actions of Davis and their masters.[101]

Comparisons between Lincoln and Roosevelt were common in the interviews. Since the black community held Roosevelt in such high reverence, comparisons between the presidents enabled ex-slaves to voice their support of the great emancipator. Hannah Plummer thought, "Abraham Lincoln was one of the best men that ever lived" and "Roosevelt is just grand."[102] Lincoln and Roosevelt, then, held similar places in African American memory during the New Deal. Plummer added that she "pray to the Lord to let [Roosevelt] live to serve his country, and help his people."[103] Plummer's hope that Roosevelt lived to serve his country implied that she was unhappy at Lincoln's assas-

sination. Alex Woods summarized the opinions of many slaves when he said "Abraham Lincoln wus all right. He caused us to be free. Franklin D. Roosevelt is all right; he kept a lot of people from perishing to death."[104] Woods's response effectively praised Lincoln in a way that ensured his safety. By connecting Lincoln with Roosevelt, interviewees were able to communicate their love of the Great Emancipator without offending Davis-loving southerners.

Jefferson Franklin Henry navigated the question about Lincoln and Davis in a way that many slaves did. By praising Lincoln and choosing not to reveal their opinions of Davis, slaves quietly critiqued the Jim Crow South that exalted Davis as "a symbol of the South's holiness."[105] Henry only offered positive feedback on Lincoln, stating that "it was by God's own plan that President Abraham Lincoln sot us free, and I can't sing his praise enough."[106] When forced to comment on Davis, Henry explained that "Miss Martha named me for Jeff Davis, so I can't down him when I'se got his name."[107] Henry understood that criticism of Davis would be interpreted as criticism of the Confederacy, so he chose not to reveal on his thoughts on Davis. He most likely had a negative opinion of Davis, however, since his decision not to comment was based on the fact that he had Davis's name and thus could not insult him.

Indeed, many slaves' opinions of Davis can be inferred through their high praise for Lincoln and lack of opinions or hidden opinions about Davis. Red Richardson made his thoughts on the two presidents clear when he contrasted "Good old Lincoln; they wasn't nothing like 'im" with "old Jefferson Davis" who "was against the cullud man."[108] Julia King made a similar critique of Davis in exclaiming that "Lincoln was a grand man!" but Jeff Davis "was no friend of the colored people. Abe Lincoln was a real friend."[109] King and Richardson must have known the danger of confiding their thoughts on Davis. Instead of risking their lives to give an outright answer, they chose to allow the interviewer to deduce their feelings by contrasting the former presidents.

Ex-slaves often incorporated religion into their contrasting views of Lincoln and Davis. In doing so, slaves challenged the white assumption that Davis had the moral high ground. Ex-slave John C. Bectom believed "Abraham Lincoln was one of the greatest men that ever lived" and "was the cause of us slaves being free."[110] Bectom did not share the same enthusiasm for Davis, noting that he "didn't think anything of Jeff Davis."[111] Bectom's disdain for Davis can be inferred through interpretation of his statement that Davis "tried to keep us in slavery" and that "slavery was an injustice, not right. Our privilege is to life right, and live according to the teachings of the Bible, to treat our fellowman right."[112]

Charlie H. Hunter and Jane Montgomery also cited religion as a difference between Lincoln and Davis in their contrast of the wartime presidents. Hunter boasted that "Lincoln wus one of my best friends. He set me free. The Lawd is my best friend."[113] When asked about Davis, he kept his response simple: "I don't know much 'bout Jefferson Davis."[114] Hunter made the most flattering comparison possible of Lincoln by comparing him to the Lord. When asked about Davis, Hunter's non-response tells all about his attitude towards the southern hero. Jane Montgomery also connected Lincoln to God when she stated, "it was through Mr. Lincoln that God [saw] fit to free us," but she "don't know much 'bout Jeff Davis and don't care nothing 'bout him."[115] While Lincoln had divine connections, Davis was not even worthy of Montgomery's concern. Montgomery claimed she did not know enough about Davis to offer an opinion, yet was quick to note that she did not care about him either. Ned Walker also made clear his feelings on Davis and Lincoln in his religious contrast of the presidents. While Lincoln "was a mighty man of de Lord," Davis was simply "all right, 'accordin to his education" and was "just lak my white folks."[116] Hunter, Walker, and Montgomery's decision to attribute divine favor to Lincoln and not Davis countered white depictions of Davis as a southern martyr. Since neither Hunter nor Montgomery criticized Davis outright in their response, neither risked their lives in their challenge to Davis's sanctity.

In their responses, ex-slaves like Hunter and Montgomery found creative ways to attack the institution and culture that had oppressed them their entire life. Some used religious analogy, while others employed folklore. Many slaves inverted southern depictions of Lincoln, and even more criticized the South through comparison between Lincoln, Davis, and Roosevelt. The only constant in slave responses was an insistence that their voice be heard. Despite the dangers to which voicing their opinion made them vulnerable, time and time again slaves elected in some way to criticize the Old South. In doing so, they asserted their humanity in spite of a way of life that constantly rejected it.

Willis Anderson's recollection of being rewarded for praising Jefferson Davis and punished for praising Abraham Lincoln underscores that ex-slaves faced overwhelming opposition when they chose to share their true opinions of Lincoln and Davis.[117] Anderson's narrative demonstrates the lengths whites were willing to go to ensure blacks did not insult their Christian martyr. Indeed, whites were willing to take violent measures to ensure the social order of the South was maintained. Since Davis represented the Confederacy, a criticism of Davis was in essence a criticism of the South. Their decision to subtly criticize Davis, despite the dangers inherent in doing so, illustrates the active role the African-American community played in resisting the Jim Crow South's racial structure. African-Americans in the Jim Crow South were not submissive victims of their political reality. Rather, they seized the opportunity presented to them by the WPA narratives to make veiled, pointed criticisms of the political reality that afflicted them on a daily basis.

While ex-slaves may not have toppled the oppressive Jim Crow system that marginalized them in making criticisms of Jefferson Davis and the South, they contributed to a growing reality in which racial inequality and African-American rights were issues that could be addressed. Simply by implying they disagreed with white racial beliefs, ex-slaves opened the door for future generations to make greater criticisms of the South that had held African-Americans in bondage for centuries. In the years to come, African-Americans would form political groups committed to racial equality, organize sit-ins and strikes, and assert their right to basic American liberties. Had the ex-slaves in the narratives attempted such radical demonstrations, whites would have responded with lynching and violence. The subtle criticisms made by the ex-slaves, then, weakened the system of race relations in the Depression-era South, and in doing so, set the stage for the next generation's demand for racial equality.

ENDNOTES

1 The WPA narratives can be found at the Library of Congress American Memory site: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html hereafter cited as LOC WPA, with the interviewee's name, state, and volume number.

2 Charles Reagan Wilson, Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Los Cause, 1865-1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

3 Phil Town, Georgia Narratives, Volume 4, Part 4, LOC WPA.

4 Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 104.

5 Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 102.

6 Ibid

7 Essays on the narratives as historical sources include David Thomas Bailey, "A Divided Prism: Two Sources of Black Testimony on Slavery," The Journal of Southern History 46 (August 1980):381-404; John Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slave: Approaches and Problems," Journal of Southern History Volume 41 Number 4 (November 1975):473-492; Paul Escott, "The Art and Science of Reading WPA Slave Narratives," in The Slave's Narrative, eds. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 40; Sharon Ann Musher, "Contesting the Way the Almighty Wants it,'" American Quarterly 53, no. 1 (March 2001); Donna J. Spindel, "Assessing Memory: Twentieth Century Slave Narratives Reconsidered," The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 27 (Autumn 1996):247-261; C. Vann Woodward, "History from Slave Sources," The American Historical Review 79: (1974) 470-81.

8 Bailey, "A Divided Prism" 402.

9 Bailey, "A Divided Prism"391.

10 Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves," 482.

11 Ibid.

12 Scholarship on African-American life in the 19th and 20th century includes Eric Foner and Joshua Brown, Forever Free (New York: Random House, Inc., 2005); John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom A History of Negro Americans (New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1980); Stephen Hahn, "What Lincoln Meant to the Slaves," New York Times (February

2011); Stephen Hahn, One Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003); Harold Holzer, Lincoln Seen and Heard (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Robert Hunt, The Good Men Who Won the War (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010); R. Douglas Hurt, ed. African American Life in the Rural South, 1900-1950 (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2003);Stephanie P. Oates, "The Man of Our Redemption": Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation of Slaves," Presidential Studies Quarterly) 9 (Winter 1979); Barry Schwartz, "The Limits of Gratitude: Lincoln in African American Memory" OAH Magazine of History 23 (January 2009): 27-33; Barry Schwartz and Howard Schuman, "History Commemoration and Belief: Abraham Lincoln in American Memory 1945-2001," American Sociological Association 70 (April 2005): 183-203; Charles Reagan Wilson, Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

13 Hahn, "What Lincoln Meant to the Slaves"; Oates, "'The Man of Our Redemption'", 17; Holzer, Lincoln Seen and Heard, 107; 14 Hahn, One Nation Under Our Feet, 66; Schwartz, "The Limits of Gratitude,"28.

15 Hahn, One Nation Under our Feet, 47-60.

16 Ibid, 47.

17 Hahn, One Nation Under Our Feet, 112.

18 Ibid, 112.

19 Among those to have discussed slave religion in depth are John Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the 20 Antebellum South, New York, Oxford University Press, 1972); and Charles Joyner, Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina 21 Slave Community (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

22 Jane Arrington, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6 Part 1, LOC WPA.

23 Hahn, One Nation Under our Feet, 47.

24 Ibid.

25 Mattie Lee, Missouri Narratives, Volume 10, LOC WPA.

26 Sarah Waggoner, Missouri Narratives, Volume 10.

27 Hahn, One Nation Under Our Feet, 112.

28 Ruby Pickens Tart, Alabama Narratives, Volume 1, LOC WPA.

29 Two other Testimonies that compare Lincoln to God are Charlie Aarons, Alabama; and Louisa Adams, North Carolina. LOC WPA.

39 Charles H. Anderson, Ohio Narratives, Volume 12, LOC WPA.

31 Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 43.

32 Anderson was not the only slave to connect the bondage of his people to the biblical story of the Israelites. Mingo White remembers her slave community gathering to pray that the Lord would "free dem like he did de chillum of Is'ael." (Mingo White, Alabama Narratives, Volume 1, LOC WPA.)

33 Reuben Rosborough, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 9, Part 4, LOC WPA.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Many slaves praised Roosevelt in their responses. For further analysis of the function of Roosevelt in the narratives, see pages 21-22.

37 Easter Wells, Oklahoma Narratives, Volume 13, LOC WPA.

38 Easter Wells, Oklahoma Narratives, Volume 13, LOC WPA.

39 Sallie Paul, South Carolina Narratives, Volume 9, Part 3, LOC WPA.

40 Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 102.

41 Ibid, 4.

42 Elisha Doc Garey, Georgia Narratives, Volume 4, Part 2, LOC WPA.

43 Green Willbanks, Georgia Narratives, Volume 4, Part 4, LOC WPA.

44 Ibid.

45 Jim Allen, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 9, LOC WPA.

46 Ibid.

47 George Briggs also employed Micah 4:4 to criticize slavery in his interview. George Briggs, South Carolina Narratives, Volume 9, Part 1, LOC WPA.

48 Oates, "The Man of Our Redemption", 21.

49 Oates, "The Man of Our Redemption", 15-21.

50 Ibid, 17.

51 Ibid.

52 Gabe Emanuel, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 9, LOC WPA.

53 Pauline Worth, South Carolina Narratives, Volume 9, Part 4.

54 Hahn, One Nation Under Our Feet, 50-78.

55 Ibid, 67.

56 Charity Austin, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 1, LOC WPA.

57 George Womble, Georgia Narratives, Volume 4, Part 4, LOC WPA.

58 Ibid.

59 Esther King Casey, Alabama Narratives, Volume 1, LOC WPA.

60 Holzer, Lincoln Seen and Heard, 145.

61 Hahn, One Nation Under Our Feet, 65.

62 Ibid.

63 George Wood, Texas Narratives, Volume 16, Part 4, LOC WPA.

64 Tom Wilcox, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 2, LOC WPA.

65 Lou Griffin, Missouri Narratives, Volume 10, LOC WPA.

66 Ibid.

67 Amanda Oliver also recalled her sons satirizing Dixie through switching the roles of the dead Presidents. .

68 Susan Snow, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 9, LOC WPA.

69 Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 106.

70 Prince Johnson, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 9, LOC WPA.

71 Hurt, African American Life, 96.

72 H.B. Holloway, Arkansas Narratives, Volume 2, Part 3, LOC WPA.

73 Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 1.

74 Frank Freeman, South Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 1.

75 Charity Austen, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 1, LOC WPA.

76 Joyner, Down By the Riverside, 173-192.

77 Annie LaCotts, Arkansas Narratives, Volume 2, Part 3, LOC WPA.

78 Joyner, Down By the Riverside, 173.

79 Joyner, Down by the Riverside, 173-192

80 Charity Austen, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 1, LOC WPA.

81 Same Poilte, South Carolina Narratives, Volume 3, Part 3, LOC WPA.

82 Robert Toatley, South Carolina Narratives, Volume 4, Part 1, LOC WPA.

83 Charlie Davenport, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 9, LOC WPA.

84 Alice Douglass, Oklahoma Narratives, Volume 8, LOC WPA.

85 Lincoln also tricked whites in disguise and only revealed himself by leaving an item behind in Sam Mitchell's narrative. South Carolina Narratives, Volume 9, Part 3, LOC WPA.

86 Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 303.

87 Wilson, Baptized in Blood,103.

88 Willis Anderson, Texas Narratives, Volume 16, Part 1, LOC WPA.

89 Ibid.

90 Adeline Crunp, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 1, LOC WPA.

91 Nellie Smith, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 11, Part 2.

92 Ibid.

93 Emeline Moore, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 2.

94 Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 41.

95 Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 313.

96 Lila Nichols, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 2, LOC WPA.

97 Morris Sheppard, Oklahoma Narratives, Volume 8, LOC WPA.

98 Other narratives that gave favorable recollections of Davis and/or negative recollections of Lincoln include: Charlie Davenport, Mississippi; John V. Van Hook, Georgia; and Henry Pristell, South Carolina. (LOC WPA).

99 William McWhorter, Georgia Narratives, Volume 4, LOC WPA.

100 Ibid.

101 Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 338-401.

102 Zeb Crowder, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 1, LOC WPA.

103 William Scott, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 11, Part 2.

104 Ex-Slaves that compared Lincoln to Roosevelt include: William George Hinton, North Carolina; Susan High; North Carolina; George W. Harris, North Carolina; Chana Littlejohn, North Carolina; Parker Pool, North Carolina; Samuel Riddick, North Carolina; Jane Johnson, South Carolina;. Not all narratives that mention Roosevelt are listed here.

105 Hannah Plummer, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 2, LOC WPA.

106 Ibid.

107 Alex Woods, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 2, LOC WPA.

108 Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 51.

109 Jefferson Franklin Henry, Georgia Narratives, Volume 4, Part 2, LOC WPA.

110 Ibid.

111 Red Richardson, Oklahoma Narratives, Volume 13, LOC WPA.

112 Julia King, Ohio Narratives, Volume 7, LOC WPA.

113 John C. Bectom, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 1, LOC WPA.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.

116 Charlie H. Hunter, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 6, Part 1, LOC WPA.

117 Ibid.

118 Jane Montgomery, Oklahoma Narratives, Volume 8, LOC WPA.

119 Ned Walker, South Carolina Narratives, Volume 9, Part 4, LOC WPA.

120 Willis Anderson, Texas Narratives, Volume 16, Part 1, LOC WPA.

FIGURES OF EXISTENTIALISM

A Cyclical Relationship with Psychology

TRACY LU

WHAT IS THIS FEELING OF UNEASE THAT ARISES WHEN WE DO SOMETHING WE KNOW TO BE WRONG? AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM? THESE ARE QUESTIONS THAT HAVE PROVOKED GENERATIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY. MORE RECENTLY, THE PSYCHOLOGIST HAS ALSO JOINED THE INVESTIGATION. ONE WELL-KNOWN PIONEER OF PSYCHOLOGY IS NONE OTHER THAN SIGMUND FREUD. BY WAY OF HIS PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY, FREUD MADE BIG STEPS BY BRINGING VAGUE PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS SUCH AS THE UNCONSCIOUS AND THE PSYCHE (ID, EGO, AND SUPER-EGO) CLOSER TO THE FOREFRONT FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDY. THIS PAPER DISCUSSES FREUD'S PART IN FURTHERING THE EXISTENTIALIST MOVEMENT, BY FOCUSING ON SELECT WORKS OF DOSTOEVSKY AND CAMUS AS EXAMPLES OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL ENVIRONMENT BEFORE AND AFTER FREUD'S IDEAS BECAME WELL-KNOWN. THE THREE-PART PSYCHE WILL BE DISCUSSED AS IT RELATES TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENCE AS EXPLORED BY DOSTOEVSKY AND CAMUS IN *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV* AND *THE STRANGER*.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory begins by defining three parts of our consciousness and unconsciousness: the id, the ego, and the super-ego. These fragments have provided man with a haunting specter of his own mind and an emphasis on the vastness of that which he does not know. Each piece of this mental puzzle has its role, and the interactions between them are what move an individual forward in his life.

"Once Freud added his psychoanalytic theory to the collective pool of human knowledge, philosophy's bond with scientific inquiry was further strengthened, and both shook hands with the idea of a 'social science'".

These three parts also function to cultivate our individual experiences of being. Specifically, the conflict between the pleasure principle of the id and the sublimated super-ego is at the root end of many, if not most, existential dilemmas. Although Freud is commonly regarded as the father of psychology itself, we must not forget the influence of his predecessors, especially one philosopher and genius of psychological novels, Fyodor Dostoevsky. Even before Freud finished his primary education, this idea of dissonance between the super-ego and the id had been explored in detail in the works of Dostoevsky, although the terms themselves had not yet been patented. These complex and contrasting characters in *The Brothers Karamazov* make for an excellent portrayal of Dostoevsky's stance on psychology and philosophy in relation to human nature.

Once Freud added his psychoanalytic theory to the collective pool of human knowledge, philosophy's bond with scientific inquiry was further strengthened, and both grappled with the idea of a 'social science'. The world became a different place, and the existentialist movement found new fuel. The movement gave rise to an entire generation of thinkers who have shown traces of both Freud and Dostoevsky. One such example is Albert Camus who, often regarded as a principal player in the existential movement, brilliantly expresses such retrospective traces along with new insights into the human spirit.

The most prevalent themes in Dostoevsky's novels and shorter narratives, representative of the pre-existentialist era, influenced Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which in turn helped existentialism develop into its current vigor. The few works focused upon henceforth have been selected in order to capture the roles of their respective authors in this area between existentialism and Freud's psychoanalytic framework. The intent of this paper is to outline a particular instance of the circular movement in which philosophy and psychology influence each other. Looking specifically at the psychological strain arising from various interactions of the id, the ego, and the superego, it is possible to outline this circular movement as it pertains to existential philosophy and psychoanalysis. This movement can be traced through a historical and literary timeline from Dostoevsky to Freud to Camus.

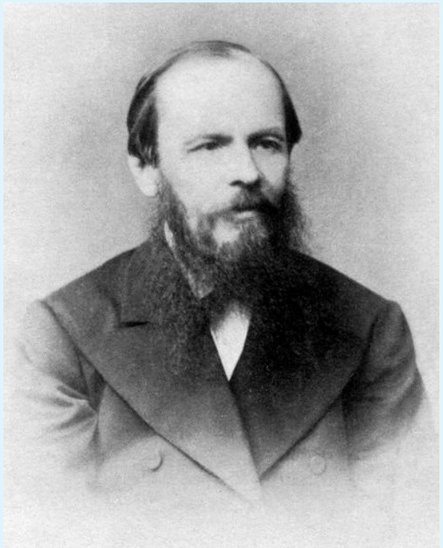
Nadryv as Cognitive Dissonance

One central motif in Dostoevsky's work involves *nadryv*, more or less finding its English counterpart in the word "strain".[1] This term defines, among other quintessentially Russian ideas, a psychological deterioration due the rupturing of one's sanity. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, this phenomenon is prevalent in situations of unease, especially towards the end of the novel. It also plays a significant part in the development of the individual characters. A prime example of the expression is found in Ivan Karamazov, whose entire existence revolves around an unwillingness

to accept the baser part of himself. Within him we see an interminable struggle between the super-ego and the id, which disturbingly ends in a mental breakdown.[2]

If it is any consolation, the tragedy of Ivan's ending can be somewhat rationalized by Freud's theory of the mind. To do this, it is important to focus on the super-ego, particularly its origin. According to Freud in his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, the super-ego is a manifestation of the introjection of one's natural aggression. He explains:

> "His aggressiveness is introjected, internalized; it is, in point of fact, sent back to where it came from—that is, it is directed towards his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of 'conscience', is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals. The tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment."[3]



AMONG FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY WORKS IS THE FAMOUS RUSSIAN NOVEL, *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*

The term 'super-ego' is used interchangeably with 'conscience', and expresses a fairly similar concept of internalized morality. In Freud's eyes, one's conscience is a natural product along the course of human development. However, it becomes clear that the sophistication of the super-ego is important in one's experience of being. To that extent, the strength of the ego must be enough to endure the strenuous battle between the super-ego and the id. This leads us back to Ivan's *nadryv*.

Ivan's super-ego is quite highly developed, the root of which may be found in a deep hatred for his father and the consequential rejection of similar traits he sees within himself. From the very beginning of his childhood, Ivan had a strict sense of his vulnerability and its implications.[4] Constantly opposed to his father's greedy and libertine ways, Ivan builds his identity around the focus of an objective totem of reason. Armed with the twin blades of rationalism and atheism, Ivan is able to deflect anything that may spark his baser instincts.

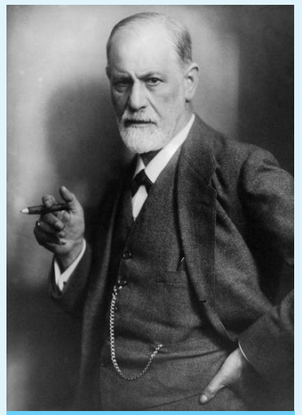
In the chapter of the "Grand Inquisitor", his brutal assessment of Christianity is enough to make Alyosha sufficiently uncomfortable. He makes the argument that given Christianity's current condition, the world would logically be unable to accept Christ in his hypothetical second coming.[5] In this allegorical story, Ivan makes the argument that humans cannot bear the freedom that Christ has allotted; the case against Christianity aside, this idea reveals a key source of existential angst. Confronted with the enigmatic conflict of simply being in the world, the ego is insufficient to cope. Accordingly, Ivan is unable to bear the burden heaped on by his conscience. His cool exterior houses a woeful internal struggle that soon forces his mind to collapse under the strain.

Thus Dostoevsky's expression for strain may well be defined by the newer term of cognitive dissonance.[6] Beyond *The Brothers Karamazov*, this internal conflict is also portrayed in the unnamed narrator of *Notes from the Underground*. This entity is constantly contradicting himself, and appears to be in a continual state of distress.[7]

Suffering as a Rupturing of the Ego

It would certainly agree with another one of Dostoevsky's idiosyncratic themes, that suffering ultimately offers a possibility of deliverance. There are many other examples of *nadryv* in *The Brothers Karamazov*, such as in the characters of Alyosha, Grushenka, and Dmitri. However, unlike Ivan, these three characters see relatively happy endings. They are each able to find some degree of inner peace and, spared the doomed fate of Ivan, attain a reasonable way to deal with their conflicts. But why this difference? Freud's psychoanalysis tells us that these survivor characters perhaps possess stronger egos with which to mediate the ever-wrestling id and super-ego.

Is there a biological predisposition for a stronger ego, and thus a greater chance to survive the angst caused by the scuffle between two thirds of our psyche? Philosophers of existence seem to collectively say no. Kierkegaard, one of the first pioneers of the school of existentialist philosophy, proposes in his *Fear and Trembling* that the knight of faith can be any individual. To him, the solution to the problem of existence can be attained only by way of the struggle between the id and the conscience. Philosophy-wise, the ego's ability to mediate the other two is not a concrete determinant of who survives the strain of existence.



SIGMUND FREUD IS WELL-KNOWN FOR HIS IDEAS OF THE EGO, SUPER-EGO, AND THE ID.

Camus and Accepting the Strain of the Absurd

Albert Camus explores this issue further, maintaining that in order to endure our suffering, we must learn to embrace it. There is no happy ending; the moment we realize this, we are saved. Just like Sisyphus persisting through his arduous and everlasting punishment, man is trapped in a permanent state of existential angst.[8] Camus explains:

> All Sisyphus' silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing. Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols....One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile...The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.[9]

He concludes that the moment we accomplish this, we are saved. In the face of existential suffering, we must not turn apathetic, and neither must we choose death. The secret is to realize the distress inherent in being and to accept it with a smile. We find in *The Brothers Karamazov* that therein lies the weakness behind Ivan's cracked ego. With such a profound intellect, Ivan acquires extremely complex principles that are an amalgamation of his own flawless logic and a logic that simply opposes his father's. His lofty morals restrict him from resolving the *nadryv* as he is fundamentally unable to accept the id. As portrayed by the courtroom scene and the Grand Inquisitor allegory, Ivan finally chooses to abandon his conscience.[10]

In Camus' novel *The Stranger*, we find in Meursault a character that is the polar opposite of Ivan. Brutally honest, unaware of sublimity, and seldom introspective, Meursault epitomizes Camus' method of embracing the absurd. In this case, the absurd is used to label the sensitivity of the individual in the face of an insensitive universe, and the

strain that results from the contradiction. Throughout the course of this philosophical novel, Meursault maintains a startlingly detached attitude towards his life. Affairs that are momentous such as death, love, and murder, are of little consequence to him. Although Meursault does not find a traditionally happy ending, he remains calm through the storm, and when at last he foresees his own death he accepts it rationally.[11] Yet in doing so, Meursault somehow manages to hold on also to his humanity; the purpose of coming to terms with the nihilistic world is to "squeeze out the maximum of consolation".[12] As such, he reconciles the two opposing ends of the individual that thirsts for meaning, and the world, which is mostly meaningless. Meursault differs most profoundly from Ivan in his ability to handle the anxiety of being in the world. The former intuits a disconnect between the reality of existence and the expectations he constructs.

The courtroom scene in *The Brothers Karamazov* illustrates a brief moment where Ivan seems to grasp this concept of embracing the absurd. He gives in to the injustice and illogicality of his circumstances and in doing so renounces part of his super-ego.[13] However, it is important to note that Ivan's manner of detachment fundamentally differs from Meursault's; where Ivan turns to it only after he has been pushed to the edge of his sanity, Meursault in fact finds relief in it. Meursault masters his detachment without falling into the pit of apathy. He is constantly uninvolved in whatever conflicts face him, unmoved by any threatening consequences, yet he willingly and actively exists; Meursault could never be coerced into suicide, by apathy or any other motivation.

How does he maintain such a will to live, given the callousness of the world he sees? The answer to this question is where Camus is leading his readers. Meursault exemplifies this extraordinary ability to embrace the callousness, submerge himself in it, and be content to float wherever the current of the insensitive world takes him. Ivan's weakness lies in his inability to do the same.

Relation to the Super-ego, the id, and *nadryv*

Unlike the paradigms of *nadryv* and psychoanalytical conflict, Camus' concept of absurdity is only partially internal. The foundations of this concept lie in a realization of the external world's nihilism. From Camus there is a shift from focus on the extremes of suffering to the daily existential angst that, as it happens, is much more aptly suited to the modern man. This general existential angst is certainly more relatable today than either the Biblical struggles of Abraham or the Victorian struggles of the Karamazovs. However, in one instance, Dostoevsky displays dazzling foresight of this anxiety in a brief passage from Ivan, who exclaims:

> "Oh, with my pathetic, earthly, Euclidean mind, I know only that there is suffering, that none are to blame, that all things follow simply and directly from one another, that everything flows and finds its level—but that is all just Euclidean gibberish, of course I know that, and of course I cannot consent to live by it! What do I care that none are to blame and that I know it—I need retribution, otherwise I will destroy myself."[14]

Ivan's angst here arises not from his ego, but rather from his super-ego. The latter is what wishes to ascribe significance and justice to the world, and now is at conflict with reality itself, in addition to the id as previously mentioned. This new relationship between the conscience and the external also underscores the beauty of Meursault in *The Stranger*. He unites the ruthlessness of the world with the individual's humanism, thus exposing Camus' solution to the kind of existential angst that destroys Ivan.

Given our inquiries so far, the super-ego seems to have offered nothing but a reservoir of existential and psychological issues. What good is this faculty of inner moralization if it only serves to burden us with guilt or inconsolable conflict with the external world? Freud offers a response. We must remember that without the development of a conscience, civilization could never hope to survive, much less thrive.[15] Maturation of the super-ego comes with a double-edge.

Is existentialism, then, a simple modern manifestation of Freud's early psychology? There are certainly elements of Freud's ideas in every major existentialist figure, and a reasonable answer is: partially. "Yes" would be an overstatement. Existentialism itself is at times a contradictory arena, each school of thought reflective of the personal experiences of the philosopher. Thus it would not do to disregard the influence of history, including the Industrial Revolution as well as certain remnants of romanticism. In fact, all things pertaining to the western tradition have left traces on new generations, and existentialism is simply another sojourn on the timeline.

ENDNOTES

1 *nadryv*, from the Russian root ryv, 'to rip' is not a tugging or a stretching but a tearing open. There is a sequence of tearings in the novel that dissociate and estrange, just as there is a sequence of bows that eventually bind people together." Caryl Emerson, "Review: The Brothers, Complete," The Hudson Review 44, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 315.

2 The scene in the courtroom reveals the moment Ivan suddenly comes to terms with his actions and loses his façade. He acquiesces to his id. Unlike Meursault, he loses himself to apathy as he realizes that his super-ego cannot win. See section on Camus. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), 685-7.

3 Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961), 84.

4 "...as if he had already perceived by the age of ten that they were indeed living in someone else's family and on someone else's charity, that their father was such that it was a shame to speak of him, and so on and so forth." Dostoevsky, 15.

5 "we shall not allow you to come to us. This deceit will constitute our suffering, for we shall have to lie...There is nothing more seductive for man than the freedom of his conscience, but there is nothing more tormenting either...you chose everything that was beyond men's strength." Dostoevsky, 253-4.

6 "Cognitive dissonance is a theory first proposed by Leon Festinger in the 1950's. He theorized that when an individual holds two or more ideas that are related but inconsistent with each another the inconsistency creates a state of discomfort." Jay Walker, "Cognitive Dissonance," James Randi Educational Foundation, last modified April 16, 2011, http://www.randi.org/site/index.php/swift-blog/1277-cognitive-dissonance.html.

7 "I might foam at the mouth, but just present me with some little toy...and I shouldn't be at all surprised if I calmed down completely, even be deeply touched, though afterwards I should most certainly snarl at myself and be overcome with shame and suffer from insomnia for months". Notes from the Underground is an early example of the existential novel. Fyodor Dostoevsky in Gordon Marino, ed., Basic Writings of Existentialism (New York: The Modern Library / Random House, 2004), 194.

8 It is interesting to note where this existential angst comes from. There are many different hypotheses, but one that is particularly insightful, and quite different from the struggle between super-ego and id. Also by Freud's invention, it is the death instinct. "...as well as Eros there was an instinct of death...A more fruitful idea was that a portion of the instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness and destructiveness." Freud ,77-8.

9 Marino, 492.

10 See endnote 2.

11 "And, on a wide view, I could see that it makes little difference whether one dies at the age of thirty or three-score and ten- since, in either case, other men and women will continue living, the world will go as before." Albert Camus in Robert C. Solomon, ed., Existentialism, college ed. (New York: The Modern Library / Random House, 1974), 174.

12 Ibid.

13 See endnote 2.

14 Dostoevsky, 244.

15 The super-ego develops by dissolving some of the inherent aggression in every human, thus allowing people to come together in a functional society. Freud, 84.

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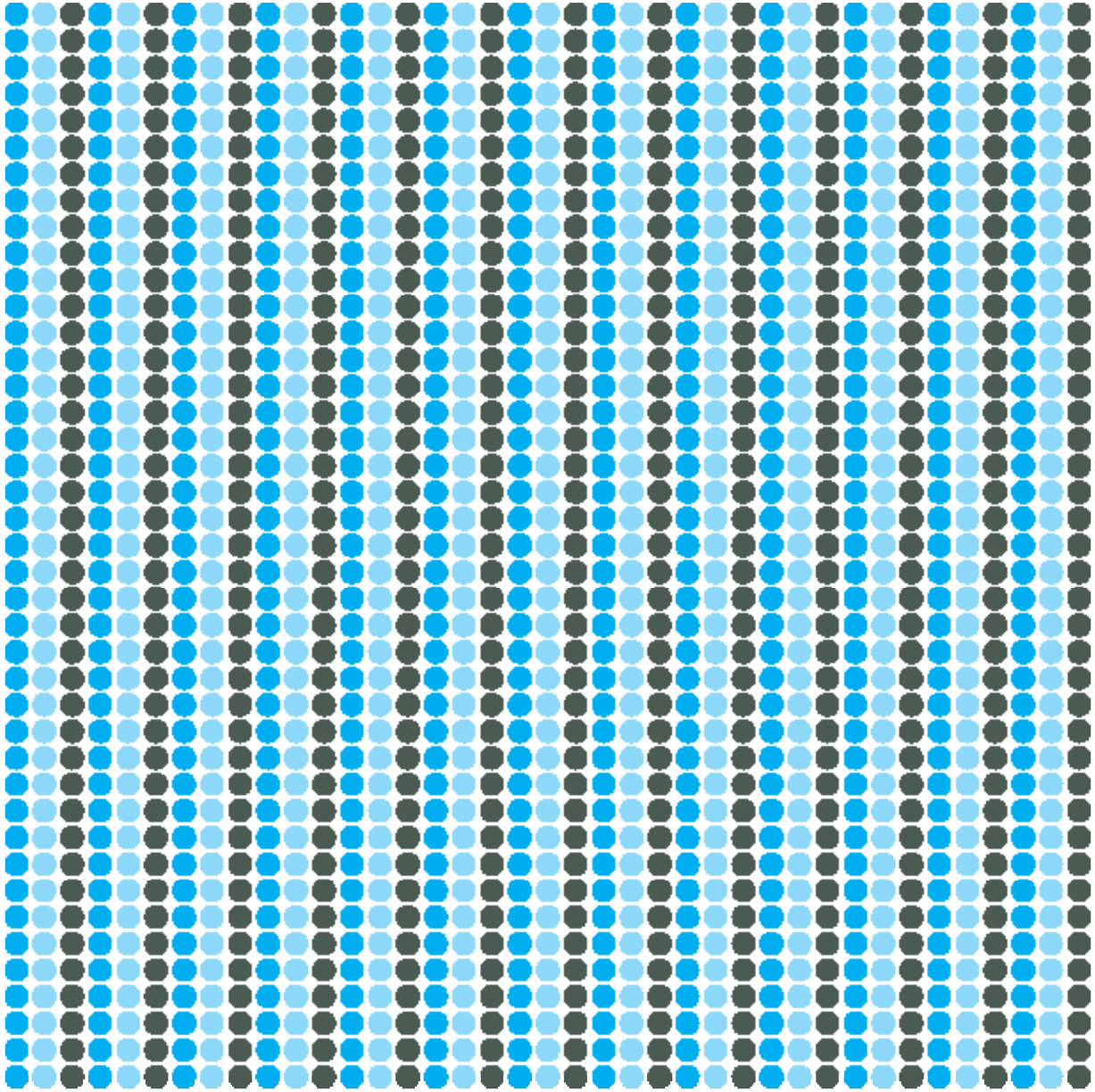

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIDWAY

Human Exhibits at World's Fairs, 1893 and 1904

CLAIRE MARINELLO

[NEED ABSTRACT]

For over a century after the first world's fair opened in London in 1851, the exposition medium was one of the most influential phenomena in the world. Between 1883 and 1939, every major fair included live exhibits of "exotic" or "primitive" humans. These displays fell into two main categories: government-sponsored fairground exhibits and unofficial sideshows. The imperialist and racist motivations of people who organized such displays have been well studied, but the stories of the people inside the exhibits have largely been overlooked. Each individual in a human exhibit at an American world's fair agreed to be there. Some of those exhibited worked at multiple fairs, turning the act of being exploited into their life's work. Because participants' voices are underrepresented in historical records, it is difficult to explain why they were so willing—indeed, even eager—to participate in their own degradation.

Many exhibited people did not speak or write fluent English, and American observers were not necessarily interested in their opinions, so most of what they said while on display has been lost to history. For this study, therefore, I relied heavily on reports of their actions, traces of which have survived in newspaper archives, exposition company records, accounts of lawsuits, and similar secondhand records. Although these sources create an incomplete picture, they demonstrate that the primary motivations of most human exhibit participants were financial. To most people on display, being displayed was a job, or even a career. The displays were a type of show business and the people in them were performers. They self-advertised, hired managers, played to audiences' expectations, and used any available gimmicks to their best advantage.

Participants knew their jobs were exploitative. They suffered from a lack of privacy and frequently had to deal with rowdy and disrespectful crowds. Some groups found their traditions of dress and behavior sexualized by ignorant observers. Other groups had their cultural artifacts stolen by souvenir seekers. After the World's Columbian Exposition closed in the autumn of 1893, mobs even tore apart and carried away the housing materials from the vacated Javanese Village.[1] Almost every exhibit's participants were regularly called weak, stupid, barbaric, amusing, or similarly hurtful and dismissive names—both in the press and to their faces. The language used to describe each group depended on the popular stereotypes of the day, but was always insulting and often dehumanizing. As historian Barbara Vennman discusses in her article "Dragons, Dummies, and Royals," a review of a commercial Chinese exhibit in 1892 explicitly equated the human participants with mannequins that were arranged in tableaux. To the Chicago Tribune reporter, both the people and the dummies were "models of Chinese acquiescence."[2] While most people on display may not have been able to read or speak English, they noticed when audiences laughed at them. By agreeing to participate, however, these men and women were asserting agency over their situation and finding a way to profit from the imperialist age in which they lived. While performing in an exhibit, they could sometimes carve spaces for their own individuality. They shrewdly found spaces for human interaction, cultural exchange, and personal benefit in terrible situations.

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (WCE) in Chicago, which has been called the greatest American world's fair, offers several excellent examples of people who used the act of being displayed to their own advantage. This six-month-long exposition, organized to celebrate the quadricentennial of Christopher Columbus's landing in the Americas, became the best-attended world's fair in the history of the United States. On its single busiest day of operation, the ninth of October, 751,026 visitors came to the fair. At the time, this was hailed as the largest peaceful gathering in human history. Hundreds of attractions dazzled, entertained, and educated the crowds. There were fountains, a lagoon, and boats of all shapes and sizes. There were electric lights, the first that many visitors had ever seen. There were buildings honoring nineteen foreign countries and thirty-six US states, plus one to honor the territories of Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. There were large exhibit halls housing thousands of exhibits on art—manufactures and liberal arts—fisheries, horticulture, mines, electricity, transportation, machinery, agriculture, forestry, anthropology, and women's achievements. There were a multitude of exhibits in dozens of smaller buildings, not to mention restaurants, vendors, and an entire police force.[3]

There was also a thirteen-block avenue extending west from the main fairgrounds, known as the Midway Plaisance. This was the entertainment district of the fair, where more than thirty concessionaires ran independent exhibits. Each concession charged separate admission and gave a portion of its profits to the exposition company. It was on the Midway that visitors could dine at restaurants, hover in a tethered hot-air balloon, or ride a gigantic Ferris wheel—the first in the world. The Midway Plaisance also featured exhibits of over three hundred nonwhite, "primitive" people living in seventeen "villages." The villages were laid out so that those considered least civilized, i.e.

CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR GROUNDS, 1893

the Bedouin and Dahoman groups, were the farthest away from the main fairgrounds.[4] These human exhibits were nominally controlled by the Ethnology Department, and fair organizers initially intended them to educate the audience about the progress of civilization. In practice, however, visitors found them as entertaining as the amusements around them.

One notable concession was the Javanese Village. The 135 inhabitants of this village were the only human exhibit participants who claimed to be there for political reasons. Fair commissioner Leigh S. Lynch apparently promised a Dutch planter, G.F.C. Mundt, a fairgrounds exhibit to show off the culture and goods of Java. Mundt recruited the Javanese participants, but, when they arrived in Chicago, they were shocked to learn that they were expected to perform on the Midway. There was a minor scandal, with Mundt complaining, "I came here not to make money, but to show what we had in Java and to try and bring about commercial relations."[5] The exposition company's demand for half of this concession's gross profits added insult to injury. The Ferris wheel, one manager pointed out, was only required to pay half of its net profits. After less than three months, the Javanese Village closed its doors. As one of his reasons for closing, the Javanese manager known as Kallf stated, "We thought we were going to be located in [the main fairgrounds] as an exhibit, not here on the Midway as a show." In reference to the percentages he added, "It looks to us as though we are being taken advantage of, a thing we will not stand."[6]

The conflict between the Javanese and the fair managers was an exception to the usual pattern, however. The rest of the Midway residents did not try to get displays on the main fairgrounds; they devoted their energies to succeeding at the Midway's particular brand of show business. This was certainly an exploitative style of show, and its success was due to the imperialist and racist expectations of the audience. But for the people inside the exhibits, it was also a career and a chance to profit from racism by acting out the stereotypes the audience expected minorities and foreigners to fit. All of the people on the Midway Plaisance, from the violent Bedouin tribesmen to the alluring Arab women to the buffoonish Chinese waiters, were acting violent, alluring, or buffoonish for money. The press even referred to them as professional "actors."[7]

In the quest to obtain coins from the audience more efficiently, these performers used every marketing trick available to them. Bedouin and Egyptian camel owners held races down the Midway to drum up publicity. Female performers tapped into the sexualized aspect of racism to attract crowds. Daily, continuous *danse du ventre* (belly dancing) shows, performed with varying degrees of respectability by scantily clad, dark-skinned women, brought a steady stream of curious audiences to the Algerian Village, Cairo Street, the Persian Theater, and the Turkish Village. All four received criticism for being shocking and immoral, but the criticism was often tongue-in-cheek and accompanied by lurid descriptions of how attractive and enticing the dancers were. When the Persian Theater was shut down amid accusations of obscenity, the Tribune joked, "None of the visitors . . . had a chance to get their feelings shocked yesterday." At least four of the dancers later took their act to the Grand Central Palace in New York City, where a police raid and fines for immoral conduct attracted even larger crowds. A block away, one journalist described teenaged Samoan girls as polite, talkative, and completely unashamed of being half-naked in front of fully clothed Americans. The author took these traits as signs of naïveté, but did not hide his attraction to these young ladies. Since they understood their audience's language and were stared at for hours each day, Mele, Lola, and Fetoia could hardly have been unaware of the effect their nakedness had on the male audience. Nonetheless, they did not try to hide themselves. For the Algerian, Arab, Turkish, and Samoan women, being sexy paid well.[8]

Where pretty women and publicity stunts could not attract customers, child stars could. American Indian, Bedouin, Arab, Javanese, Chinese, Samoan, Sudanese, Dahoman, and Laplander (Sami) parents trained their children to greet the public. During the brief time the Javanese Village was open for business, one father made the best of a bad situation by putting his toddler's supper dish in front of their door so that she would be forced to face the audience. When customers offered her coins, a Tribune reporter claimed, "a penny might cause a rebellion, a nickel or a dime might be accepted," and she knew to put it in her father's money jar right away. In the American Indian village, a sign proclaimed, "to all people this baby is born on ground please drop money in his bag he will thank you for it." A Syrian mother carried her daughter around while selling Ottoman coins, and eager customers woke the infant constantly.[9]

A few Midway managers got into legal trouble, which contemporary observers took as evidence of savagery and degeneracy. Several cases, however, might better be described as foreigners taking advantage of the chances they had. For example, Congress made a special exemption to the Chinese Exclusion Act, allowing the Wah Mee Company, which ran the Chinese Village & Theater, to bring Chinese laborers to Chicago. Almost 500 Chinese men and women emigrated to the United States under the company's auspices, but the courts later estimated that two or three hundred of them never worked at the world's fair. Because they could not all be identified, they were able to stay in America.[10] It was a clever scheme, but it outraged the nativist American public. Another scandal came about because concessionaires were suspected of falsely declaring bankruptcy in order to increase their profits.[11] When the Wah Mee Company declared bankruptcy, American observers blamed poor management and marketing, but as historian Barbara Vennman has pointed out, it may have been a ploy to avoid paying to remove the exhibit.[12]

"For the Algerian, Arab, Turkish, and Samoan woman, being sexy paid well."

The American audience usually did not give the performers credit for their marketing and acting talents. There is evidence that some of them could have done more to challenge ethnic stereotypes, but intentionally confined themselves to acting out the parts expected of them. For example, Sol Bloom, a showman and impresario who was in charge of recruiting concessions for the Midway Plaisance, arranged for an Algerian Village concession to come to Chicago after seeing the troupe perform at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. The Algerians landed in New York City a year early due to a miscommunication. On the docks, Bloom initially tried to get their attention by swearing at them in French. One of them approached him and said, in perfectly accented English, "I suggest you be more civil."[13] To his astonishment, Bloom discovered that these Algerians spoke multiple languages and some could read and write. Later, during the exposition, they earned a reputation for knowing American customs and slang far better

than other recently arrived foreigners.[14] Because of their linguistic talents, Bloom was able to find some of the women secretarial work to support themselves until the concession could open—but when it did, they worked as mute, sexualized belly dancers instead. They had the skills for more "respectable" careers, but chose the Midway.

In addition to marketing and showing their audience what it wanted to see, these performers were also visitors at the impressively large World's Columbian Exposition. Consequently, they were exposed to some degree of cultural exchange. One group of Chinese men paid for a demonstration of the newly invented phonograph. The first to don

JAVANESE VILLAGE HOUSE AT THE FAIR, 1893

the headphones smiled and began dancing when he heard the music. He and his friends then paid to hear several more songs. Because they were Chinese fair employees and not American visitors, their interest in the invention warranted a condescending newspaper article. But one of the purposes of the exposition medium was to expose people to inventions they might never have otherwise discovered, and this vignette showed that the World's Columbian Exposition was succeeding in that goal.[15] Similarly, one interviewer reported that the Samoans were fascinated by the Midway Plaisance and by the audiences coming to see them.[16] Their surroundings were certainly polyglot and exotic. In Chicago, Samoans lived across the street from Javanese neighbors, diagonal from a Japanese bazaar, and three doors down from Turks. Residents of the Midway could ride the Ferris wheel or visit Hagenbeck's Animal Show. Although they spent most of their time on the other side of exhibit ropes, sometimes they took an interest in the same unique aspects of the exposition that other visitors did.

Of course, the humans being exhibited were not like other visitors. They had little privacy, they were constantly subjected to stereotyping and objectification by their audiences, and they had to perform for long hours every day. In spite of all that, some exhibited people were able to create spaces for individual existence and come to terms with the influence of Western civilization. One obvious assertion of independence came through religious practices. Muslim participants said their daily prayers in the mosque recreated for Cairo Street. A few Turks and Syrians also accepted Reverend W.F. Black's invitation for the entire Midway to attend services at the Central Church of Christ. At least some of those who accepted were committed Muslims who were curious about Christianity; others may have been Orthodox Christians already, and curious about Protestant sects. Reportedly, two former atheists connected with the Japanese commission actually accepted baptism under Rev. Black's ministry. The reverend's optimistic hope for "wholesale conversion," as he put it, was not fulfilled, but he did find some people willing to explore a different religion. The several dozen attendees were investigating a cornerstone of Western civilization, while still maintaining their own faiths.[17]

A more dramatic example of individuals cautiously accepting aspects of American life came about after a fight in the Bedouin Village. Moustafa Ahras, a camel driver, had met and become infatuated with the wife of a Bedouin actor, Mossley Ahmed, when the village arrived on the Midway. In late August, the couple eloped. Hashad Abdahla, a friend of Ahmed's, demanded that the Bedouins explain where Ahras had hidden Ahmed's wife. Four of them attacked Hashad instead. His response showed that he had learned a few things about American laws during his stay in the country: rather than come back with his friends and fight them, he hastened to the police station and had them

arrested. A newspaper article reported that it was only after the manager posted their bail that "a general fight broke out and whips and sabers were freely used." The incident offers a curious case of the blending of customs. The tribal fight over a woman was interrupted by appeals to the Chicago police, almost as though Abdahla did not know whether to experiment with American law or trust to custom. In this instance, the law failed him by releasing his attackers, while a "general fight" apparently settled the dispute.[18] The sixty residents of the Bedouin Village did not lose faith in American justice, however. After the fair closed, they had to continue living on the Midway while they waited for passage home. Because they were not provided with heating for their temporary homes in the interim, they took the concessionaire to court in mid-November 1893 and demanded better living quarters.[19]

The Bedouins were not the first group of Midway performers to use the courts to demand satisfactory conditions. An earlier lawsuit concerned a group of "Eskimos."[20] Twelve Inuit families from Newfoundland arrived in Chicago in October 1892, because winter weather would have made a later trip impossible. Thus, the Eskimo Village, which was actually located just outside the Midway Plaisance on the main fairgrounds, opened early. The tiny community welcomed no fewer than four babies in the winter of 1892-1893, and the resulting free publicity contributed to the Village's initial success. By late February, however, the weather was warming up and the actors' fur costumes were oppressively hot. The Inuit tried to go on with the show in more appropriate clothing, but the concessionaires were set on forcing them to be "authentic." The irony of European-Americans telling Inuit how to correctly demonstrate their culture was, apparently, lost on the managers. When two men purchased and wore jeans, the concessionaires locked them in their quarters. Upset by such treatment, five young men left and took other jobs. Annoyed by this show of agency from his exhibits, one concessionaire got a security guard to force the rest to stay. Both the papers and the courts sympathized with the "imprisoned Esquimaux [sic]." Rather than give in and wear furs, though, the dozen wronged families hired a lawyer, obtained a writ of habeas corpus, and sued for damages. In an ironic twist, after winning their case, they chose to stay in Chicago rather than return home. They simply moved the Eskimo Village outside the fairgrounds and went on with the show, under their own management and on their own terms.[21]

In fact, one of the families involved in the lawsuit went on to make a career out of exposition performances. Fifteen-year-old Inuit Esther Eneutsiak gave birth to a daughter on the Midway Plaisance. An unwed mother, Esther warded off scandal and courted publicity by having the president of the WCE's Board of Lady Managers become the child's godmother and by naming the infant Nancy Columbia in honor of the exposition. Little Nancy never saw Newfoundland, but starred in Eskimo Villages everywhere from world's fairs to Coney Island to the Barnum and Bailey circus throughout her childhood and adolescence. This adorable child star continued to tour until 1910 along with her mother, her stepfather, and her younger siblings. The family then founded a permanent Eskimo Village in California and opened a props department for Hollywood films. Nancy even wrote and starred in a silent film, before finally retiring from the ethnological entertainment industry in her thirties. In other words, being on display actually helped Esther Eneutsiak overcome the stigma of having a child out of wedlock, support herself and her daughter, and make Nancy Columbia a national celebrity.[22]

Both the behavior and the success of Midway Plaisance performers indicate that this type of acting could be a viable career choice. There is no evidence to suggest that the Arab, Inuit, Samoan, American Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Bedouin, Dahoman, Sami, and Turkish actors saw their time on the Midway as an abuse of their human rights, despite the occasional violations of their legal rights. Their opinions, however, are only half the story. Sol Bloom's impressions of the people that he recruited and worked with were surprisingly open-minded for the time. Given the Eurocentric layout of the Midway, the imperialist outlook of the exposition's directors, and the casual xenophobia of the Gilded Age, a modern scholar might expect Bloom, who was only twenty-one years old at the time of the fair, to have been a snarling racist who treated his charges like zoo animals. The rest of his life story belies this assumption, though. In 1922, he was elected to the House of Represen-

tatives as a Democrat, served as a staunch liberal until his death twenty-seven years later, advocated with particular passion for refugee crises and civil rights, and helped draft the charter of the United Nations. In other words, the man who organized the human exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 was the same man who helped create an international organization committed to "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."[23] How can one explain this paradox?

A year before his death in 1949, Bloom wrote his memoirs, from which a good deal of his mindset can be reconstructed. He was not immune to the prevailing racial attitudes of his generation, and it would be unreasonable to expect him to have been. The book is peppered with casual stereotypes and epithets that were perfectly appropriate in the 1940s and have since become unforgivable. Nonetheless, Bloom was an Orthodox Jew in a predominantly Protestant America, and very sensitive to what it meant to be the object of prejudice. At several points throughout the narrative, he made a point of specifying ways in which he was not racist. He insisted his congressional offices were always open to petitions from "white and colored, Democrats and Republicans, Jews and Protestants and Catholics. All of them [were] treated alike." When he mentioned a particular "black" neighborhood in which he had once lived, he expressed happiness at the thought that at least some African-Americans could afford to live there.[24] Significantly, he did not find it necessary to preface his stories of the World's Columbian Exposition with such disclaimers. To him, the Midway was just show business, and in no way incompatible with being socially conscious. He vehemently defended the virtue of his infamous belly dancers, calling them "artists" and insisting their dance was no more licentious than ballet. When describing the Algerians, he more or less spoke of them the way he spoke about other acts he had booked for vaudeville tours, though he did mention their race in passing. They were performers, and he thought they would be a hit with audiences, so he hired them.[25] Bloom may not have represented the typical man involved in the organization of the 1893 fair, but his involvement challenges the assumption that everyone involved in the Midway Plaisance—organizers, participants, and spectators alike—saw it as a display of scientific racism and a justification of imperialism.

Regardless of Bloom's personal opinions or the outlook of the Midway participants, life along the Midway Plaisance was neither comfortable nor dignified. The gawking crowds were racist and condescending, the living conditions were poor, and the job was culturally demeaning. Still, the performers on display made the most of the situation by acting out their cultural stereotypes and profiting from the performance. There were lawsuits, fights, and scandals, but the shows went on and were wildly popular. Similar human exhibits became a staple at American world's fairs.

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2 Cited in Barbara Vennman, "Dragons, Dummies, and Royals: China at American World's Fairs, 1876-1904," Gateway Heritage 17:2 (1996): 16-31.

3 Erik Larson, The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America (New York: Crown Publishers, 2003), 319; Rand, McNally & Co. guide map, reproduced in Stanley Applebaum, The Chicago World's Fair of 1893: A Photographic Record (New York: Dover Publications, 1980), viii-ix.

4 Paul Greenhalgh, Fair World, 139; Larson, The Devil in the White City, 235; Rand, McNally & Co. guide map, The Chicago World's Fair of 1893, viii-ix; Charles A. Kennedy, "When Cairo Met Main Street," 271-298.

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9 "Midgets Who Make Midway Merry," Chicago Daily Tribune, Oct 15, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174872396?accountid=9673, (accessed February 9, 2013).

10 "Many Cannot Be Sent Back," Chicago Daily Tribune, Nov 12, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174848510?accountid=9673 (accessed February 9, 2013).

11 See, for example, the account of the Turkish bazaar in "The Midway," Chicago Daily Tribune, Nov 01, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174862342?accountid=9673, (accessed February 9, 2013).

12 Vennman, "Dragons, Dummies, and Royals," 16-31.

13 Cited in Bloom, The Autobiography of Sol Bloom, 123.

14 "The Midway," Chicago Daily Tribune, Nov 01, 1893.

15 "Chinamen Try Edison's Phonograph," Chicago Daily Tribune, Aug 20, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174831501?accountid=9673, (accessed February 10, 2013).

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17 "Runs Amuck in Cairo Street," Chicago Daily Tribune, Aug 28, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174901685?accountid=9673 (accessed February 13, 2013); "Converts on Midway," Chicago Daily Tribune, Aug 17, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174824978?accountid=9673, (accessed February 13, 2013).

18 "Steals Ahmed's Wife," Chicago Daily Tribune, Aug 21, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174822826?accountid=9673 (accessed February 14, 2013).

19 "Orientals Toddle on the Stage," Chicago Daily Tribune, Aug 22, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174851220?accountid=9673 (accessed December 30, 2012); "Bedouins Shiver with the Cold," Chicago Daily Tribune, Nov 16, 1893, http://search.proquest.com/docview/174891256?accountid=9673 (accessed February 17, 2013).

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22 Paula Becker, "Miss Columbia Is Declared Queen of the Carnival at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle on August 19, 1909," http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=8881(accessed January 10, 2013); Zwick;
Jessie Tarbox Beals, Esquimaux Sleigh with Natives. Photograph, 1904. PHO: 34130. Missouri History Library, St.Louis; Official Photographic Company. Inuit Man with Nancy Columbia in Door of Igloo on the Pike. Photograph, 1904. PHO:16730, Missouri History Library, St. Louis.

23 Charter of the United Nations, Chapter I, Article 1. http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml.

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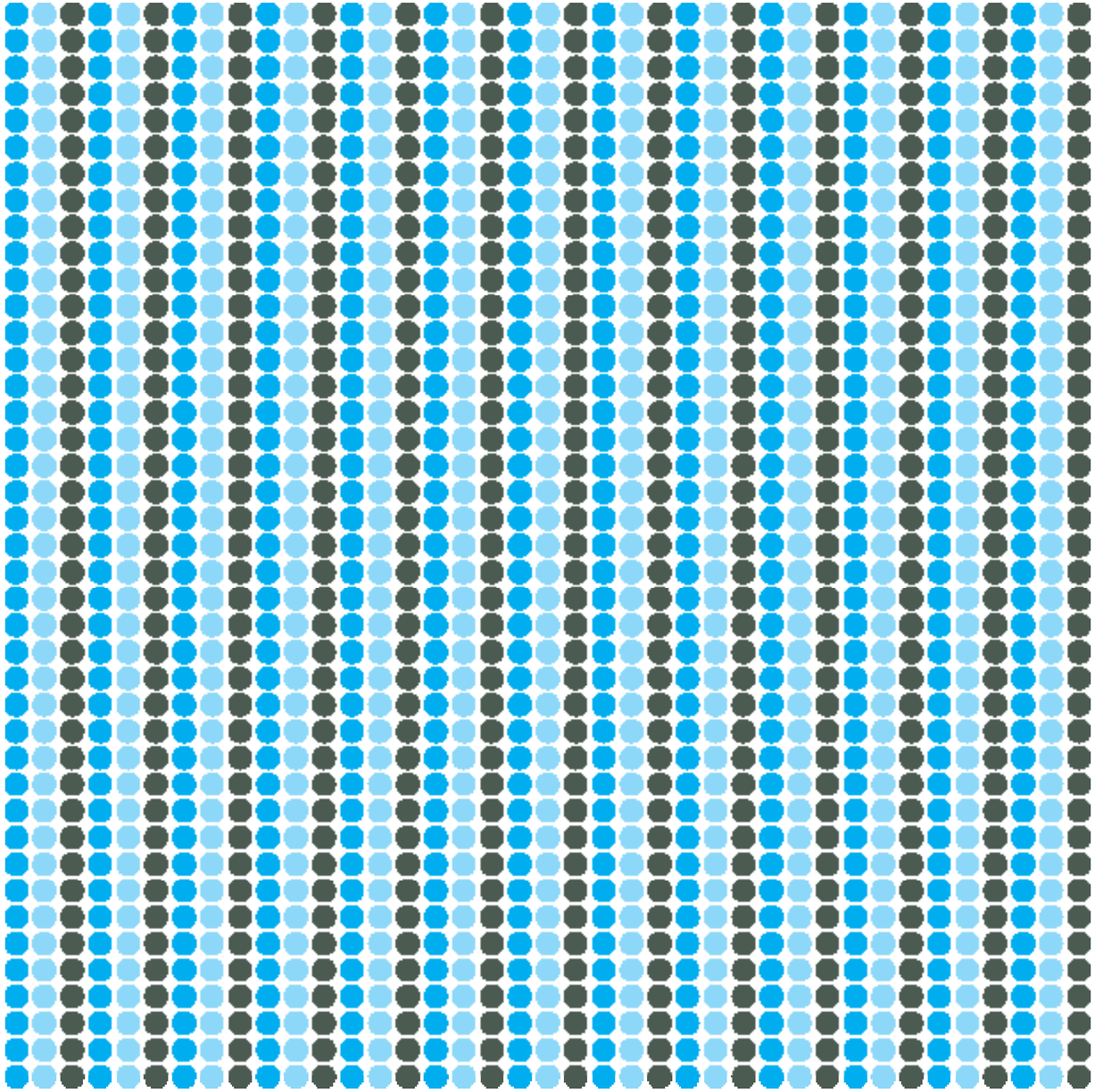


BLURRED LINES

Variations on Willem de Kooning's Women, *1950-1966*

EMILIE SINTOBIN

WILLEM DE KOONIG IS ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED AND PROLIFIC MODERNIST PAINTERS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. ONE OF HIS MOST FAMOUS BODIES OF WORK, A SERIES OF PAINTINGS KNOWN AS THE *WOMEN* PAINTINGS, SERVES TO EXEMPLIFY THE TRENDS THAT EXIST THROUGHOUST DE KOONING'S WORK; TRENDS OF CONSTANT EVOLUTION AND REVISION, OF WILD, UNSETTLING COLORS AND IMAGES, AND OF A SURE AWARENESS OF HIS MEDIUM, THE CANVAS. IN ADDITION, ANALYSIS OF HIS LIFE AND WORK THROUGH THE METHODOLOGIES OF GOOMBRICH, DE SAUSSURE, AND FREUD LEADS TO A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ARTIST'S MIND AND REASONS.

Despite being one of the most renowned and accomplished artists of the second half of the twentieth century, Willem de Kooning remains to this day a fairly enigmatic character in the history of art. Though he produced a remarkably large body of work throughout his career, and his work is decidedly characteristic of his own methods of painting, he never developed what many other Abstract Expressionist artists held as their "signature style." This distinguished him among the painters of the New York School, who strove fastidiously to develop a distinctive aesthetic: there was Rothko with his characteristic floating planes of amorphous color, Pollock with his spirited, transcendental drip paintings, and Newman with his authoritarian Zip. De Kooning, while his works are undoubtedly distinctive, does not subscribe to such an exacting principle of painting. His body of work exists more as a progression of experiments and trends rather than a Motherwellesque decades-long study of the same subject. While de Kooning certainly did explore themes in his work, no single trend or exploration lasted more than seven years at best, with the exception of one specific iconographical study. The one place that he did remain consistent in his work, however, was in his paintings of women: a subject he returned to time and time again throughout the fifty-or-so years of his career as a professional artist. By implementing the methodologies of E.H. Gombrich, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Sigmund Freud, this paper attempts to delve into de Kooning's at once non-committal and yet steadfast approaches to particular themes in his art. His *Woman* paintings in particular, as we will see, provide a focused lens through which we can come to a fuller understanding of his sense of continued exploration.

Though regarded as one of the most American of the Abstract Expressionists, de Kooning was in fact born in the Netherlands in 1904, and emigrated to the States as a stowaway in 1924. As an adolescent, he received training at the Rotterdam Academy of Fine Arts; originally a sign painter, he later worked in the murals and easels division of the WPA Federal Art Project. It was not until 1934, after he befriended Arshile Gorky, that he began his foray into the world of fine art. Over the course of over half a century, he would establish himself as one of America's—and the world's—most accomplished painters.

After Gorky's death in 1948, de Kooning fell in with a number of artists known as the New York School. While the group did not present themselves as a bona-fide artistic movement, certain general motivations brought the group together: most notably, their pursuit of meaning through abstraction in painting. The writings of art critic Harold Rosenberg solidified the group. In his 1952 article "The American Action Painters," Rosenberg articulated what these artists had been doing: that is, revolutionizing the very idea of painting. No longer was it a quest to represent something upon a canvas; rather, above all else, it became evidence, evidence of an act of human agency and muscularity. "At a certain moment," Rosenberg wrote, "the canvas began to appear...as an arena in which to act...What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event."[1] What a spectator saw was no longer an image in the traditional sense of the word, but proof of the artist's action and the manifestation of the emotion and furor that went into its creation. That sense of action was more than evident in the works of de Kooning, who affirmed Rosenberg's principle both in image and in word. "Painting is a way of living," he once said. "Art derives from life, but neither the artist nor the painting has a character that pre-exists their encounter."[2] By the time Rosenberg's article was published, the artist had become known for works like *Excavation*, a six-foot-long mural of powerful brushstrokes and dynamism.

In this sense, de Kooning belonged entirely alongside other New York School painters: that sense of action and dynamism would pervade his paintings throughout the majority of his career. But the purpose served by that action seemed to change every handful of years. Whereas Rothko's planes of color explored emotion to the point of exhaustion, and Newman painted his Zips ad nauseam, de Kooning was constantly pursuing something new. It could be argued that part of the reason other New York School artists became so entrenched in one particular idiom was the prevalence of art critic Clement Greenberg's writings. A sort of arch nemesis to Rosenberg, Greenberg saw the new developments in art not as the result of action-packed encounters, but as the result of a historical movement of art towards an ultimate aesthetic purity. In his 1965 essay "Modernist Painting," Greenberg coined the term 'mod-

ernism,' by which he meant that each respective art form—be it sculpture or painting—should stress its intrinsic quality. As he wrote, "the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium."[3] For painting, that quality was flatness; anything in a painting that recalled another artistic medium, such as sculpture, needed to be eliminated from the work of art in order for it to be truly modern and pure. "For the sake of its own autonomy," Greenberg wrote, "painting has had above all to divest itself of everything it might share with sculpture."[4] Three-dimensionality thus became anathema to modern painting, and as the years progressed, Greenberg's writings pervaded the work of the majority of painters. For an artist subject to the Greenbergian view, painting could no longer represent anything three-dimensional if it was to be met with favorable criticism.

De Kooning never took Greenberg's stipulations to heart, however. It could be said that his paintings fulfill Greenberg's conditions insofar as they become progressively abstracted throughout his career. But ultimately, they always retain an element of figural representation, never fully reaching that apex. Throughout his career, de Kooning never managed to relinquish figuration entirely; even *Excavation* is made up of biomorphic forms that suggest some kind of recognizable imagery. De Kooning paints a number of toothy mouths throughout the composition as well, bringing what might have been an abstract, compositionally flat image back to the figurative world. As gallerist Sidney Janis writes of the painting, "*Excavation* belies its name: it is depthless. Its violent thrust and counterthrust of biomorphic forms establish a precarious, densely packed equilibrium in the depthless arena of a mere surface...the whole surface of the canvas writhes with agitated motion."[5]

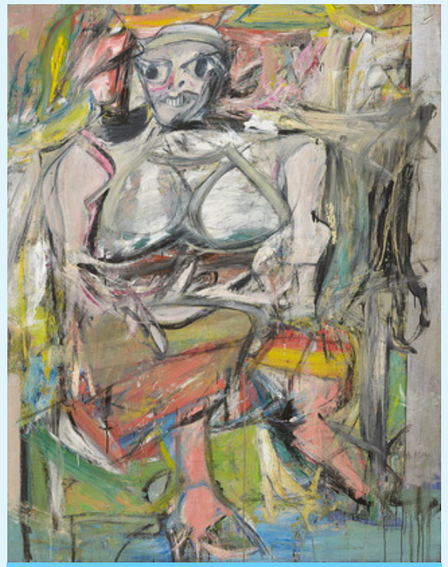
In *Door to the River*, painted ten years later in 1960, what appears at first glance as a layering of rapidly applied, muscular strokes in the most Rosenbergian sense, is injected with figuration by its evocative title. The spectator suddenly sees the gray form in the center of the canvas as a portal, and the blue line below it as a river in the distance. With the suggestion of the title, we are henceforth unable to dissociate the image from a representational interpretation, which is precisely de Kooning's intention. When speaking of Greenberg's purity, de Kooning once said, "No purity means no oneness...better to make a picture that trembles with anxiety than one that is static because it is stylistically pure."[6]

The question of anti-Greenbergian figuration is most prevalent, however, in de Kooning's *Women* paintings. Though he had painted women before, his work *Woman I*, painted from 1950-1952, ignited what would prove to be the most compelling—and controversial—idioms of his artistic oeuvre. Of about fifteen different series de Kooning worked on from 1934 on, *Women* comprise six of them, constituting roughly twenty years of work.[7] The fact that the subject matter always remained figurative served as a foil to Greenberg's purist mandates. In a famed encounter between the authoritarian critic and the painter, Greenberg told de Kooning, "It is impossible today to paint a face." De Kooning, not one to be constrained by another's demands, replied, "That's right, and it's impossible not to."[8]

"Greenberg told De Kooning, 'It is impossible today to paint a face.' De Kooning, not one to be constrained by another's demands, replied, 'That's right, and it's impossible not to.'"

In any case, de Kooning's series of *Women* are a collective study of progressions. As he moved from painting to painting, he sought to delve into another facet of his subject, transitioning from one to the next in a methodology of revision. In an interview with Harold Rosenberg in 1972, de Kooning told the critic, "[My painting] is an event, and I won't say it is kind of empty, but...I have no message. My paintings come from other paintings."[9] This sense of progression and permutation demonstrates the degree to which de Kooning's personal methods of creation coincide with the methodology of E.H. Gombrich. In Art and Illusion, Gombrich argues that the process of art making is always informed by a system that he terms schema and correction. We make sense of things, according to Gombrich, by first approaching something with a general category, or schema, in mind. To arrive at the particular meaning, we must make corrections or modifications to that original assumption. As he writes, "Every artist has to know and construct a schema before he can adjust to it the needs of portrayal."[10] The schema, then, is an inherited preconception that dictates how we see and visualize things; the spectator thus finds himself comparing what is in front of him to the schema, engaging in constant visual correction to arrive at meaning. Gombrich is much like Greenberg in this sense, insofar as both methodologists maintain that art will never stop progressing. Whereas de Kooning outright rejected Greenberg, however, Gombrich's schema and correction system seems to be decidedly applicable to the entirety of his art. If, as he stated, his paintings came from other paintings, then in the Gombrichian sense, his entire career revolved around a sort of schema and correction system, each painting serving as a launching pad for the next, a catalyst for a new investigation and analysis of an idea. "I never was interested in how to make a good painting," de Kooning once wrote. "I didn't work on it with the idea of perfection, but to see how far one could go."[11] But Gombrich maintained the idea that the system of schema and correction would ultimately produce a system of progression that would end in a final, evolved result. Throughout his career, however, de Kooning returned time and time again to themes he had already established and studied. The Gombrichian schema and correction thus becomes in de Kooning's body of work more of a theme and variation—a leitmotif that reappears again and again in his work—though the style may not necessarily evolve or become more representational over the years.

To illustrate this further, let us take into account a selection of de Kooning's *Women* painted over a number of years. To begin, let us examine the most infamous of the women, *Woman I*. The work is at once Rosenberg's dream and Greenberg's nightmare. From a cacophonous battlefield of brushstrokes emerges a female figure, severe and jarring to the spectator, and yet fiercely powerful. The lower half of her body dissipates into the rhythm of the paint, while her upper body, particularly her breasts and face, are clearly delineated within the abstract expressionist confusion. Painted during the years that de Kooning was also working on far more abstract images, *Woman I* blends figuration and abstraction in the most rebellious of ways, and many younger artists of the time saw this as the resur-



WOMAN I

gence of figuration in art. As de Kooning scholar Thomas Hess writes, "Many younger artists, already in reaction to the rigorously intellectual climate of Abstract Expressionism, considered [*Woman I*] a permission to revive figure painting."[12] Among the established artists, however, the painting was an act of treachery. As critic David Sylvester writes, the avant-garde took *Woman I* as a "gross betrayal of principles and of comrades that a leading member of the Abstract Expressionist movement, which had been struggling so desperately to get a foothold in the world of acceptable art, should do a set of paintings of a subject so readily identifiable and so utterly traditional. It was an act both of personal disloyalty and of aesthetic impropriety."[13]

Outside of artistic circles, *Woman I* scandalized public audiences. Her enormous, piercing eyes and bared teeth, coupled with the violent brushwork surrounding her made her violent, abused, threatening, and wild to the general public. Critic Marla Prather summarized his mythical goddess as "predatory and rapacious…an evil muse…an exposition of hate and brutality."[14] Even de Kooning himself, looking at his composition ten years after its completion, remarked, "I look at them now and they seem vociferous and ferocious."[15] When asked about the intent of the work, de Kooning was often hesitant, never providing an exact reply. In one interview, he described his motivation indecisively: "I think it had to do with the idol, the oracle, and above all the hilariousness of it," he said. "I do think that if I didn't look upon life that way, I wouldn't know how to keep on being around."[16]

While *Woman I* serves as the first step in de Kooning's theme and variations, as we will see shortly, the painting is also a paradigm of the system in and of itself. Over the two years it took to paint it, the work underwent at least eight stages of revision as de Kooning struggled to arrive at a satisfactory image. As John Elderfield, president of the Museum of Modern Art, outlines in his essay "The Beginnings of *Woman I*," each stage of the painting bespoke a greater degree of painterliness, with an assemblage of forms similar to those in *Excavation* ultimately becoming fleshier, less graphically clear, so that the figure began to dissolve in the ground. As Elderfield writes, with *Woman I*, "de Kooning had been struggling to picture a figure as much immanent as emergent."[17] Since the beginning of his career, de Kooning had perpetually struggled with finishing his paintings. Never quite content with what he had put on a canvas, he would often stop working in a bout of frustration, either abandoning or destroying a work out of dissatisfaction. In his essay "Content as a Glimpse," de Kooning wrote of this struggle, saying "As to the painting being finished, I always have a miserable time over that. But it is getting better now. I just stop. I sometimes get rather hysterical and because of that I find sometimes a terrific picture."[18] As critic Thomas Hess wrote of de Kooning's process, "Because de Kooning wanted to put everything into his painting, each thing he got into it not only had its own presence, but represented the absence of something else…To finish meant to settle for the possible at any given moment, to abandon an effort and continue it elsewhere. But continuity itself then became an issue…If the painting is destroyed, its destruction opens the way to a fresh beginning."[19]

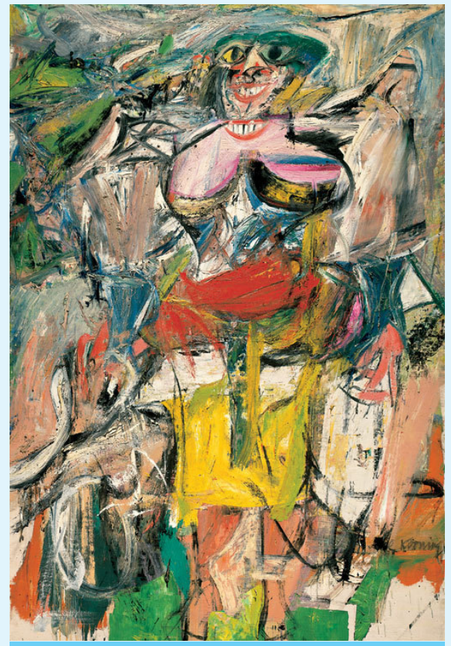
Woman I was initially abandoned in this very manner; after a year and a half of revisions and struggles, the canvas was pulled off the frame and discarded.[20] De Kooning returned to other less challenging canvases, until a few weeks later, when art historian Meyer Schapiro visited de Kooning's Greenwich Village studio, asking to see the abandoned painting, and eventually convinced the artist to resurrect her. As Hess described the finished—or as finished as it could be —work, "The painting's energetic and lucid surfaces, its resoundingly affirmative presence, give little indication of a vacillating, Hamlet-like history. *Woman* appears inevitable, like a myth that needed but a quick name to become universally applicable. But like any myth, its emergence was long, difficult and (to use one of the artist's favourite adjectives) mysterious."[21] The painting is a testament to revision and correction, to theme and variation, and its greatest strength lies in that fact. Mark Stevens emphasizes this, saying that "*Woman I* was not unresolved out of indecision or weakness, but out of strength: it was left to its imperfections by the aggressive decision of a great artist, in order to increase the work's disruptive, expressive power."[22]

The painting not only acts as the evidence of its own corrections, but also as the theme for de Kooning's ensuing *Women*. As Gombrich described, the schema "is the starting point for corrections, adjustments, adaptations, the means to probe reality and to wrestle with the particular."[23] The same applies for de Kooning's theme. *Woman I* ignited a fire of exploration within de Kooning, who went on to exhaust the theme of the female for the next seven years. The images that followed were simply continuations in the same thematic: corrections of that original schema to get at a bigger sense of what de Kooning was searching to understand, whether it was the Venus, the classical nude, or a Sumerian goddess. He recognized the connection between his women and the immense art historical tradition that had existed since the Ancient Greeks—depicting the woman in art is in its own right an overarching system of corrections and revisions. "Painting the *Women*," de Kooning wrote, "is a thing in art that has been done over and over—the idol, Venus, the nude…The *Woman* became compulsive in the sense of not being able to get hold of it."[24]

For de Kooning, unlike many of his New York School cohorts, painting was less about encapsulating an idea and making an intellectual statement, than about exploring a subject and studying it to the point of exhaustion. What becomes manifest on the canvas is the artist's emotional response—often frustration, sometimes delight—to the subject at hand. It is a process of revision aimed at discovering something not only about the image, but also about himself.

Living in an environment confronted by existentialism and riddled with agony after World War II, Abstract Expressionism, particularly in the case of de Kooning, transformed painting into a mode of inquiry rather than statement-making. "Behind de Kooning's voluptuous marks and ruthless pre-emptings," writes Sally Yard, "figures the conviction that painting is a way of working through how we are in the world."[25] Painting was thus a path to discovery, a study of what was for him a kind of idol. On numerous occasions de Kooning referred to idols as a source of inspiration in his work. When speaking with David Sylvester about the women, he admitted that "it had to do with the female painted through all the ages, all those idols." "It's rather like the Mesopotamian idols," he remarked in another interview.[26]

In his succeeding paintings, then, each *Woman* acts first as a correction to the preceding one, and then assumes the role of theme as de Kooning moves onto the next. *Woman II*, painted in 1952, retains the foundational features of its predecessor: the wide-eyed gaze, the toothy grin, the emphasized breasts, and the broad, almost Giotto-esque shoulders. Now, however, she falls into the background



WOMAN AND BICYCLE

rather than emerging from it, subsumed by the gestural activity around her body. The surface of the picture plane

is far flatter in comparison to *Woman I*, as figural parts begin to commingle with fragments of a surrounding environment. And despite however flat—or pure, in the Greenbergian sense—it may be, the work retains a figure/ground relationship that is intrinsic to its structure.

In *Woman with Bicycle*, painted from 1952 to 1953, the canvas becomes even more chaotic. Here again, de Kooning depicts the face and breasts with greater clarity; he treats the rest of the canvas with attacks of his brush, at once flattening the canvas and bringing it to life with evocations of great movement and violence. What has changed, apart from the high-keyed colors and the inclusion of a prop, is the face of the woman herself. As Elderfield writes, in this painting, de Kooning for the first time paints directly staring eyes. "The earlier women," he writes, "had misaligned gazes, one eye looking forward, the other away. Now, a woman stares back unremittingly at the viewer."[27] That gaze is arguably the most conspicuous feature of all the subsequent women paintings: the spectator is confronted not only by the aggressive brushwork and garish colors, but also by the frontal positioning of the figure and her piercing eyes. The confrontation is heightened further in *Woman with Bicycle* by a manic grin, at once frightening and hilarious, that de Kooning duplicates below the woman's face. The artist was fascinated with the smile: he included several in *Excavation*, and each of his 1950s-era women bears a toothy grin. He often cut a woman's smile out of magazines, tacking them upon the canvas as he worked on the rest of the image. In a study for *Woman I*, he left the cutout from a Camel cigarette advertisement on the finished work, exaggerating the "hilariousness," as he put it, of the female figure.

Ultimately, when considering all of the 1950s *Women* paintings, there is no doubt that through them de Kooning sought to encapsulate a new facet of his interest in moving from one painting to another. To say that one painting comes from the next, however, necessarily implies an inherent relationship between each work. If everything we perceive and understand, as Gombrich argues, is based on relationships, it would then follow that there can be no meaning without some kind of relational connection. "Without some standards of comparison," he writes, "we cannot grasp reality."[28]

Gombrich does not elaborate on this statement, however, and we are thus left to search for an explanation within another methodology: that of structuralism and modern linguistics. Established by French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralism maintains as a foundation the concept of language as a system of signs. The sign, as described by Saussure, is comprised of both signifier and signified, where signifier is a form used to express the signified or original idea. The word 'chair', for instance, is the signifier of the physical chair, the signified. An idea without a signified, he argues, cannot be a sign: a word that refers to nothing is meaningless. And yet, though a signifier requires a signified in order to convey meaning, their relationship is entirely arbitrary. As Jonathan Culler writes in his explanation of Saussure's methodology, "There is no natural or inevitable link between the signifier and the signified."[29] Because there is nothing inherent about a word or sound that has a particular significance, any other linguistic form could be applied to the signified and produce the same meaning: "the signified associated with a signifier can take any form; there is no essential core of meaning that it must retain in order to count as the proper signified for that signifier."[30]

Saussure goes on to argue that a signifier only retains meaning insofar as it is in relationship with another signifier: 'chair' refers to a chair only inasmuch as it does not refer to a couch or a table. Without something against which to differentiate an object, that object has no meaning, for a concept, he argues, cannot exist in isolation. "Because the sign is arbitrary," Culler writes, "because it is the result of dividing a continuum in ways peculiar to the language to which it belongs, we cannot treat the sign as an autonomous entity but must see it as part of a system."[31] Here, we see Saussure's connection with Gombrich's insistence on relationships. Just as a word conveys meaning only inasmuch as it distinguishes itself from other utterances, so too does a painting, according to Gombrich, distinguish itself from the meaning of another. "You cannot create a faithful image out of nothing," Gombrich wrote. "You must have learned the trick if only from other pictures you have seen."[32] Furthermore, in the case of a single painting, such as de Kooning's *Woman I*, relationships—between one stage and the next—build layer upon layer of meaning for the artist himself to discover. As both Saussure and Gombrich argue, there can be no meaning without difference, and the relationships created by those differences. It is through the complexities and differences between each of the *Women* paintings that both the spectator and the artist himself are able to find meaning.

To derive meaning from those relationships, then, we must consider these works as both schemata and corrections of each other, progressing from one to the next as de Kooning continues his course of discovery. The progression from *Woman I* to *Woman II*, as has already been discussed, involved a movement from an intensely varied color palette to one that was more subdued, a figure who went from projecting assertively from the surface of the picture plane to one who blended in more with the surrounding gestural work. As John Elderfield writes, the resulting effect of such a treatment is a "giving of greater corporeality to the space than to the figures."[33] The distinction between figure and ground becomes blurred in this second painting, though the spectator still registers the presence of a figure in the composition. What perhaps best contributes to that awareness is the *Woman*'s eyes, almost a direct translation from *Woman I*, where, with one eye partially obfuscated by the dynamic brushwork, we are not confronted directly by her gaze.

This changes with *Woman with Bicycle*, where subject and spectator stare at each other with equal intensity. That intensity is only amplified by de Kooning's duplication of the woman's mouth, but, in contrast to the two previous works, that sense of aggression is tempered by a certain amount of comic humor. In this sense, the work's double smile serves as a prefiguration of Pop Art, particularly when considering the work of Warhol. The effects of repetition, as he would prove in his [exhaustive] series, desensitize the spectator to a certain degree to a real, unmitigated experience. Reproduction, as Warhol demonstrated in works like *Mona Lisa (30 Is Better than 1)*, neutralizes the power of a work of art such that a spectator can no longer truly see the original. As a result, in the case of de Kooning, that desensitization mitigates what would be a formidably intense image, as *Woman I* and *II* are.

In *Woman*, painted in 1953, de Kooning takes another approach to the issue of reproduction, this time duplicating both his figure's eyes and mouth on her body. Neither the gaze nor the smile are explicitly depicted, however. The duplicated mouth seems only half finished, stretched and scratched out on the left side, while the eyes look in different directions, one blurred and seeming to slip off the woman herself. Her body is perhaps the most clearly defined among of the previously noted works, as she projects from the surface of bare canvas on the right. And yet, despite the fact that she is distinct from the surrounding en-

vironment, the interior of her body is rendered quite imprecisely. The spectator can make sense of her arms and legs, but beyond that, the detail becomes blurred. Roughly executed lines interrupt the fluidity of the rest of the body; where her neck should be, a jagged protrusion of either chin or collarbone disrupts the integrity of her body. The flat yellow plane of color negates any sense of volume, and sketchy skeins of paint extending from the more gestural areas overtake her figure as a whole.

Perhaps in an effort to return to the body, de Kooning painted *Two Women in the Country* the next year. Whereas the details of the body in *Woman* had been intentionally overlooked, here they make a return, and doubly so, as if to emphasize this return all the more. In the case of this painting, it is now the face that becomes the imprecise element. On the whole, the two women's bodily features are readily detectable – each limb is designated with a thick black outline that cuts into the active colors in the background. He returns to the idiom of dramatically broad shoulders and oversized breasts that he developed in earlier works. The detail of their bodies exceeds perhaps all previous women paintings: de Kooning even goes so far as to paint a shoe on the foot of the woman on the left. Furthermore, de Kooning leaves the bottom register of the canvas unfinished, the image above hovering over the solid grey field. That the image stops so abruptly as the spectator's eye moves downward is de Kooning's tongue-in-cheek way of reminding his audience that this work is no more than paint on surface: by leaving this strip of canvas bare, he shatters the illusion of countryside created by the title.

Eleven years later, the broad-shouldered, assertive woman of the fifties had become for de Kooning an immense foundation upon which to build: a schema which he could forever correct. In 1964, after moving to Long Island—a pastoral Arcadia compared to his former home in New York City—he painted *Woman Accabonac*, a figure so unclear and obscured that it appears to be submerged under water. As Elderfield writes of the painting, "The notion of a gravity-defying bodily image appears to have allowed the artist to imagine the component parts of a figure as floating weightlessly across the canvas surface."[34] Likely influenced by his recent move and new proximity to the coast and water, de Kooning transforms his woman into something affected by and part of nature. Though *Woman Accabonac* bears comparison with the artist's 1953 *Woman*, insofar as a significant portion of the canvas is left bare, the figure/ground relationship does not remain the same. In the earlier painting, the white of the canvas pushes the figure forward toward the spectator. In *Woman* Accabonac, however, she is one with the background. Much of the gestural brushwork around the top half of her body commingles with her figure; outlines are distorted, and colors blend with one another in a watery mix. Of the blurring of this figure/ground distinction, de Kooning once said, "The landscape is in the *Woman* and there is *Woman* in the landscape."[35] And yet her face still retains that same ferocious character of the past, despite its being blurred and distorted along with the rest of her figure.

As we can see, though each of de Kooning's *Woman* paintings possesses a distinctive character all its own, and maintains its own intrinsic gravitas in isolation, each work gains a new level of depth once it is placed within a context of comparison. "There is no way of looking at a work of art by itself," de Kooning once said. "It's not self-evident. It needs a history, it needs a lot of talking about...it is part of a whole man's life."[36] Examining the works in chronological progression thus echoes de Kooning's own process of schema and correction, which in turn permits us to engage in the same process. We approach each work with the schema of its antecedent, acknowledging the differences between the two and correcting our first impressions to arrive at a truer comprehension of each work.

But what is the ultimate meaning that we are meant to infer from these serial relational differences? As a pivotal member of a group of artists fastidiously dedicated to abstraction, de Kooning always held fast to some element of figuration, never fully arriving at the point of non-objectivity—as was demonstrated with *Door to the River*. In the case of the women, he makes his New York School lineage evidently manifest through brushstrokes and gesture that delighted the likes of Rosenberg. And yet in the middle of this amalgam of activity, he places this ferocious character of a woman. The public and critics alike have debated the

nature of de Kooning's women since *Woman I* first came on the scene; to Rosenberg, they were a perfect manifestation of the artist's act upon the canvas: the fact that this included a figure didn't make it any less of a one. For Greenberg, however, the women were regressions from his Hegelian track of artistic purity. To feminists, they were attacks upon the female body, the violent activity of the brushwork an embodiment of his hatred of and chauvinism toward women. As has been discussed, however, de Kooning never spoke to this interpretation, and was instead more likely to reference the "hilariousness" of his women, their assertive presence, and their long-established heredity in the history of art. But as feminist critic Lisa Vogel rightly argues, in some way or another, the female figure was a medium through which he was able to channel a variety of perspectives, which could have included his "male ambivalence and confusion about women as ferocious, evil, consuming, iconic, motherly, romantic, vulgar, banal, and so on." Certainly, if de Kooning maintained that his paintings depicted something iconic, he must have held other opinions about them as well.

To delve further into what the *Women* represented for de Kooning, we can look to the philosophy of Sigmund Freud for guidance. In *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, Freud demonstrates his self-proclaimed aptitude in psychoanalyzing arguably the greatest artist of the western world. The father of modern psychology, Freud maintained that an individual's psychological life was often as, if not more, significant than their real life history. He believed there to be a causal link between a person's emotional life—often a fantasy—and a particular neurotic symptom they expressed, because we as individuals systematically repress into the unconscious mind certain drives that run counter to the social fabric. Thus, in Freud's method, one must examine the characteristics of a personality that people generally dismiss. Phenomena such as the slip of the tongue or the dream, according to him, are vehicles through which the unconscious expresses itself. In the case of da Vinci, Freud latched onto a particular memory of the artist and used elements of his biography to elucidate its meaning. Much of what Freud proves comes from da Vinci's childhood, notably his relationships with his parents. If we are to apply this to de Kooning, it is important to consider his childhood in the same way.

To follow in the footsteps of Freud, we can begin by investigating one of the more foundational relationships that influence an individual's psychology: that of the mother and child. The likely influence of de Kooning's mother Cornelia Nobel on his *Women* paintings is quite evident: a notoriously strict woman, she divorced de Kooning's father when he was just five years old, allowing only a limited amount of contact between father and son from that point on. Thomas Hess acknowledges this as well: his mother "was a bartender in a café largely patronized by sailors. I touch on these details," Hess writes, "because... they supply possible clues to de Kooning's magisterial *Woman* of the early 1950s."[37] Though de Kooning did not speak much about his family, there is no doubt that such a developmental situation would affect his psychology later in life. In fact, in the Freudian sense, it is so much the better that de Kooning did not speak of it, for it is what the individual does not disclose that bears most importance in psychoanalysis.

If we attempt to psychoanalyze de Kooning, the role of the mother, just as it was for da Vinci, is crucial for his later work. De Kooning's mother was undoubtedly a formidable woman: powerful, self-sufficient, and yet also a menace to de Kooning, for she created a chasm in his relationship with his father and destroyed the solid foundation that a proper childhood requires. If we take the Freudian perspective, then, we could assume that de Kooning felt a considerable degree of resentment towards his mother for upending the essential father-son bond. In the *Woman* paintings, whatever resentment might have been suppressed in the artist's unconscious becomes manifested in an act of passionate gesture upon the canvas. The *Woman*, as Hess writes, takes on the role of "the mother who betrays the son, gets rid of the father, destroys the home."[38] Sylvester concurs, writing that de Kooning's mother may have figured into the *Woman* paintings as "the artist's perception of the female as a monster and his infliction of violence upon her."[39]

In any case, Freud's investigation proves the necessity of biographical events to explain something about an artist's work that might otherwise remain unexplained. Looking into the artist's life history is crucial to understanding how it affects their psychology. For an artist of the abstract expressionist ilk, in which action painting was essentially the equivalent of spilling one's guts onto a canvas through gesture and color, the question of psychology is irrefutably paramount. As Rosenberg noted, "the principle common to...the Action movement is that painting is an extension of the artist's inner life in its highest intensity."[40] That inner life, both biographically historical and highly emotional, is revealed upon de Kooning's canvas in a variety of manifestations.

Ultimately, however, though they pulled inspiration from a number of sources—his mother, Venus, the nude, and many more—the *Women* exemplify above all else a desire to discover something new, not necessarily to prove something explicit. Rosenberg wrote that painting was for de Kooning "the exhilaration of an adventure over depths in which he might find reflected the true image of his identity."[41] What mattered to him was not the subject matter contained within the confines of the frame, but the relationship between the works; as he said, "it's not that you paint them, but it is the connection."[42] In an interview with David Sylvester in 1963 entitled "Content as a Glimpse," the artist stressed his interest in the ambiguous and the unclear, saying "Content is a glimpse of something, an encounter like a flash. It's very tiny—very tiny, content."[43] He used the term "slipping glimpses" frequently to describe the fragmentary, passing manner in which the content of his paintings presented itself to the spectator. For his *Women*, then, the color, the brushwork, the form and the line are, as he says, tiny. What he was most interested in was the resulting relationship created between one work and another. As Thomas Hess writes, de Kooning's paintings make more sense as a collective entity than individually, "each feeding the other, each in a sense inhabiting the other."[44] This rings especially true in the case of his *Women*, who, as this paper has discussed, build off of one another progressively, each an alteration of the same idiom, an effort on the part of the artist to "see how far one could go" to gain a new perspective on the schema he sought to understand.[45] Without considering them collectively, de Kooning's women remain rather ambiguous, not as a result of oversight but simply because content, that "slipping glimpse," was not what de Kooning was after. "That's what fascinates me—" he said in an interview, "to make something I can never be sure of, and no one else can either. I will never know, and no one else will ever know...that's the way art is."[46]

ENDNOTES

1 Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," ArtNews, december 1952.
2 Harold Rosenberg, The Anxious Object: Art Today and Its Audience (New York: Horizon Press, 1964), 117.
3 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 1960, 6.
4 Greenberg, 7.
5 Sidney Janis, Willem de Kooning (New York: Grove Press), 1960, 30.
6 John Elderfield, Willem de Kooning (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 2011, 16.
7 In his book Willem de Kooning, Thomas Hess establishes fifteen categories of de Kooning's painting, which are as follows:

1. Early high-key color abstractions, 1934-1944
2. Early figures (men), 1935-1940
3. Early figures (women), 1938-1945
4. Color abstractions, 1945-1950
5. Largely black with white abstractions, 1945-1949
6. Largely white with black abstractions, 1947-1949
7. *Women*, Series II, 1947-1949
8. *Women*, series III, 1950-55
9. Abstract urban landscapes, 1955-1958
10. Abstract parkway landscapes, 1957-1961
11. Abstract pastoral landscapes, 1960-1963
12. *Women*, Series IV, 1960-1963
13. *Women*, Series V, since 1963
14. *Women* in the country, since 1965
15. Abstract countryside landscapes, since 1965

8 Thomas Hess, Willem de Kooning (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 74.
9 Interview with Harold Rosenberg.
10 Gombrich, Art and Illusion, (Princeton: Princteon University Press, 1969), 116.
11 Willem de Kooning quoted from "Content as a Glimpse" in Hess, 149.

12 Hess, 74.
13 David Sylvester, "The Birth of *Woman I*," The Burlington Magazine, April 1995, 222.
14 Ibid.
15 De Kooning, "Content is a Glimpse," 149.
16 Sally Yard, Willem de Kooning: Works, Writings, and Interviews (Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafica, 2007), 56.
17 Elderfield, 259.
18 De Kooning, "Content as a Glimpse," 150.
19 Hess, 23.
20 Thomas Hess, "de Kooning Paints a Picture," ARTNews March 1953, p 30-32, 64-67
21 Ibid., 30.
22 Mark Stevens, "The Master of Imperfection," New Republic, July 1994, 30.
23 Gombrich, 173.
24 De Kooning, "Content as a Glimpse," 148.
25 Yard, 86.
26 Sylvester, 231.
27 Elderfield, 277.
28 Gombrich, 178.
29 Jonathan Culler, Ferdinand de Saussure (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 29.
30 Ibid., 33.
31 Ibid., (35)
32 Gombrich (83)
33 Elderfield (288)
34 Elderfield (282)
35 Elderfield (239)
36 Elderfield (10)
37 Hess, Willem de Kooning (12)
38 Hess, Willem de Kooning (75)
39 Sylvester (222)
40 Harold Rosenberg, Art on the Edge: Creators and Situations (New York: Macmillan, 1975) (81)
41 Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters" (48)
42 Willem de Kooning, "Content as a Glimpse" (149)
43 Willem de kooning, "Content as a Glimpse" (148)
44 Elderfield (13)
45 De Kooning, "Content as a Glimpse" (149)
46 Rosenberg, Interview with de Kooning, ArtNews, September 1972.

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"IMPRIMATUR OF LEGITIMACY"

Grim Prospects for Accountability in Post-UNTAC Cambodia

JORDAN DORNEY

IN RESPONSE TO THE MISDEEDS OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ELITES, DEMOCRACY OFFERS ACCOUNTABILITY. TRANSNATIONAL FORCES, HOWEVER, IN SEEKING TO PROMOTE STATE ACCOUNTABILITY, DEMOCRACIES CAN THEMSELVES BECOME UNACCOUNTABLE. IN POST-CONFLICT CAMBODIA, POLITICAL GLOBALIZATION—USUALLY TIED TO A LOSS OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY—HAS IN FACT STRENGTHENED THE EXISTING REGIME BY GRANTING MATERIAL AID AND LEGITIMACY. TRANSNATIONAL FORCES UNDERMINE ACCOUNTABILITY FROM ABOVE BY IGNORING OR EXACERBATING THE PROFOUND PROBLEMS IN CAMBODIA'S VIRTUAL "COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIANISM," WHILE THE REGIME ITSELF DESTROYS ACCOUNTABILITY FROM BELOW THROUGH THE SUPPRESSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY.

In her study of accountability and the relationship between state power and transnational forces, Valerie Sperling uses the case study of post-conflict Cambodia to examine the transnational impact on democratic accountability.[1] Under the auspices of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), some beneficial political development occurred. However, as Sperling argues, the "authoritarian leadership [was left] in place, legitimized by the imprimatur of the United Nations."[2] Despite elections and the growth of human rights organizations, the Cambodian state has enacted little more than competitive authoritarianism. Corruption and patronage remain commonplace, and electoral manipulation and a lack of a division of powers has solidified the rule of Prime Minister Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP). To use Sperling's terminology, there is a culture of impunity. Since Sperling's account focuses primarily on the period of UNTAC involvement and the immediate aftermath, this study will examine the most recent developments in Cambodia. Sperling's fear that political globalization has only brought legitimacy to an otherwise unaccountable regime was not overstated.[3] Since 2008, transnational forces, including Western governments and international institutions, have continued to erode, whether in economic, political, military, judicial, or civic terms, the accountability relationship between the citizens and the state of Cambodia.

A brief overview of the most recent, most egregious abuses of the CPP regime will prepare one to assess the degree of accountability in Cambodia. Involved in the killings of opposition party members throughout the 1990s, Hun Sen and his allies have been tied to the recent slaying of a well-known environmental activist who had been protesting corruption in the timber industry. The government also imprisoned a group of women for protesting their forced eviction from lucrative real estate in the capital.[4,5] Economic Land Concessions (ELCs), made under Cambodia's 2001 Land Law, have been a sticking point for critics of the regime. Widespread corruption has made Hun Sen incredibly wealthy, and continued suppression of the opposition has ensured that elections occur, as Brad Adams, a director at Human Rights Watch and a lawyer who worked with the UN in Cambodia, put it, "in which no one imagines the vote will be free and fair or that an electoral defeat would result in Hun Sen leaving power."[6] According to Andrew Robert Cock, Hun Sen has enacted a strategy of the personalization and consolidation of power over the political order, development projects, resource management, foreign aid, and civil society. The lack of accountability can be seen especially in the case of foreign investment, which Cock argues allows elites to "appropriate wealth without having to play any substantive role in producing it."[7] Hun Sen and the CPP have largely been able to subvert transnational efforts at reform.

Another interpretation, albeit an unconvincing one, has been put forward to explain the success of the CPP and to judge the relative accountability of the regime. In direct response to Adams' critique, one writer for the *Economist* appeals to the idea of democracy. The problem with the complaints against the regime, the claim goes, is precisely that Hun Sen "keeps on winning elections." Hun Sen and the CPP are popular among Cambodia's predominately rural voters. Responding to charges of irregularities in the most recent elections, the argument is, curiously, that things could have been much worse:

> The complaints the observers heard were not insignificant. They included charges that the government used the police and army to help it campaign; that the opposition's access to the media was limited; and that radio stations were instructed by the information ministry not to carry certain stories. Influential CPP officials were seen at polling booths, where they are alleged to have tried intimidating voters into supporting their candidates.

The only improvement is that there were fewer violent incidents—fewer election-related murders. Voter participation was significantly down to 54% from highs of 84% and 87% in 1993 and 2003. Only the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) and other opposition parties lost votes, which, it is argued, belies critics who claim "widespread disenchantment with the incumbent as well as a sense of inevitability about the outcome." Cambodians are unlikely to have their own Arab Spring—one way of holding the government accountable—since they remember the horrors of civil war and Hun Sen's achieving peace where the UN had failed.[8]

Transnational forces have, in fact, made reform more unlikely.

In addition to the abuses described and the continued policy of CPP dominance, another recent political development is worthy of note. Norodom Sihanouk, former king of Cambodia, died in October 2012. Once deeply involved in Cambodian politics, King Sihanouk was considered by some a restraining force on Hun Sen. His death has left a vacuum of moral authority. The current king, Norodom Sihamoni, is unmarried, without an heir, and remains absent from politics. Allies of Hun Sen and the CPP consider this detachment the king's constitutional role.[9] It remains to be seen what effect, if any, this change will have. The possibility that Hun Sen will oversee the selection of the next king does not bode well for those wishing to restore a counterbalancing force.

HUN SEN IS THE SOLE PRIME MINISTER OF CAMBODIA SINCE 1998.

We turn, then, to the particular ways in which transnational forces have affected accountability. Economic interests are one such area. In Cambodia, economic incentives have led to greater impunity. One development fund backed by the International Finance Corporation—the private arm of the World Bank—and the Norwegian and Finnish governments noted the scarcity of capital in Cambodia. Low confidence in the judiciary, coupled with a lack of credit information, discourages investment. Still, prior to the economic crisis of 2008, the Cambodian economy grew at about nine percent for a decade. In coming years, it is expected to grow at five percent. Cambodia continues to grow because it is a pro-business government. There are few restrictions about where one can invest. The failure of dispute resolution and the preponderance of corruption, while "important issues for the business community," according to a Phnom Penh lawyer and adviser to the government, have not prevented economic growth.[10] Business interests reduce the regime's accountability to its citizens.

Hun Sen and the CPP, facing complaints about their human rights record, are tolerated for engineering growth. Cambodia's economic advantages—low wages and no-quota access to Europe and the United States—have led to the growth of low-cost assembly work, especially garment production. With the country's economic success, however, has come a newly empowered citizenry who seek more social and political rights. Cambodia has seen an increase in strikes over working conditions and pay, along with protests against forced evictions. Facing elections in 2013 and a newly unified opposition (the SRP and the Human Rights party have combined to form the Cambodian National Rescue Party), Hun Sen and

the CPP have offered some concessions, suspending new land appropriations,[11] ordering a ten dollar per month pay increase for every worker, and shelving a bill restricting NGO activities.[12] Here the CPP is not so much concerned with real accountability to voters, but with appeasing them in the way least painful to the regime.

Cambodia's relationship with the United States is another possible source of the country's democratic deficit. As with the involvement of UNTAC and other international institutions, U.S. involvement in Cambodia in recent years has given the "imprimatur of legitimacy" to Hun Sen's government. Opposition groups within Cambodia, as well as members of human rights INGOs, have warned that actions (even largely symbolic ones) by U.S. officials can stand in the way of accountability. In October 2012, Sam Rainsy, the opposition leader-in-exile, criticized President Obama's plans to visit Cambodia, saying that the trip would be used by the CPP government to "deny Cambodians the opportunity for self-determination that Americans take for granted." Rainsy noted that in the aftermath of Secretary Hillary Clinton's visit to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit, the owner of an independent radio station was sentenced to 20 years in prison.[13] Cambodia is the current chair of ASEAN and recently hosted a summit of foreign ministers, including Sec. Clinton. U.S. foreign policy toward China plays a large role in U.S. dealings with Cambodia. In a November 2012 visit, Secretary Leon Panetta warned Cambodia that the United States supports "the protection of human rights, civilian oversight of the military, and respect for the rule of law and the right of full and fair participation in the political process." Nonetheless, the United States military continues to provide counterterrorism training to the Cambodian military and conducts small-scale joint exercises.[14] As a cost of such cooperation with the CPP, the U.S. faces the strengthening of the regime.

Critics continue to point to the UN and other international agencies for much the same reason: regardless of pronouncements of support for human rights, Western governments allow Cambodia to participate, largely unimpeded, in the international system. Adams contrasted diplomatic rhetoric after the Arab Spring with the continued rule of Hun Sen in Cambodia. Despite talk about confronting dictatorships, Western governments have not taken action on Cambodia.[15] Glenys Kinnock, the former EU special representative to the Cambodian national elections, criticized Cambodia's recent bid for the Security Council's Asia-Pacific seat. Though unlikely to succeed, Cambodia, argues Kinnock, "shouldn't be in the running at all," given the "land-grabbing crisis," violence, and corruption.[16]

These symbolic gestures, however, hardly compare to the systemic problems of Western international involvement in Cambodia. Some critics of the Cambodian regime do believe that international agencies can help. For instance, bad press about the Boeung Kak Lake incident forced the World Bank to suspend loans to Cambodia. In response, the government returned 30 acres to the 900 families who refused the initial, meager offer of compensation. The particular 30 acres to be returned were not specified, so protests continued. Mu Sochua, a Cambodian member of Parliament from the Sam Rainsy Party, and Cecilia Wikström, a member of the European Parliament, note that "local NGOs, Cambodian leislators and media all have a part to play" but that "as the World Bank's intervention...shows, foreign governments and international organizations can also help." Mu Sochua has called on the U.S. to suspend military aid pending review of ELCs. Wikstom argues that the EU's Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative has directly contributed to ELCs. The EU grants duty-free access to products from certain developing countries, including Cambodia. This has led to the explosive growth of sugarcane production, and ELCs have been used for that purpose. Both Mu Sochua and Wikstom called for an EU delegation to investigate the situation: "It's time the Cambodian government be held accountable for violating its people's basic rights."[17] The problem, however, is that external actors are unable to consistently apply pressure to elites, since the imperative to provide aid fails to create well-defined interests.[18]

Another example of UN and international incompetence in promoting accountability has been in the tribunals of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).[19,20] Three Khmer Rouge leaders were charged in

UNIT LOGO FOR THE FORCE COMMUNICATION UNIT OF UNTAC, THE AUSTRALIAN COMPONENT OF THE MSSION

the UN-backed tribunal: Khieu Samphan,[21] the head of state, Ieng Sary, the foreign minister, and Nuon Chea. In 2010, Kaing Guek Eav, the commandant of a Khmer Rouge prison, was sentenced to 35 years, commuted to 19 years. James A. Goldston, executive director of the Open Society Justice Initiative, has written on the inability of the UN to address Cambodian interference in the ECCC. When the co-investigating judge Siegfried Blunk resigned over Cambodian demands to cease all investigations, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon treated the situation, in Goldston's words, as "business as usual," thanking the judge for his service and announcing the search for a replacement. Goldston places the blame on the UN itself and the "principal donor governments," including the U.S., France, Japan, and Australia.[22,23] Hanna Bertleman points directly to the problem of accountability inherent in the ECCC:

> A shared ownership may lead to an overall lack of ownership, which is evidenced by the fact that repeated allegations of corruption remained unaddressed for a period of over two years. In this regard, the inability to reach an agreement also demonstrates that a lack of ownership can imply a lack of accountability.[24]

The problem with the ECCC lies in its joint operation by the state and the UN. Were it the exclusive jurisdiction of the CPP regime, fair-minded observers might simply regard it as illegitimate; were it the exclusive venture of the UN, skeptical citizens of Cambodia might do the same. Yet, since both parties share in its operation, neither is accountable.

As for the sphere of civil society, both the Cambodian regime and transnational forces have weakened accountability. For the CPP, this has meant, as part of its wider political agenda of consolidation and control, the marginalization of and increasing influence over civil society organizations. In 2011, international human rights agencies denounced a proposed law to require NGOs to register and

follow certain reporting procedures. The government would have gained new powers to shut down NGOs considered opposed to it. The law, said Simon Taylor of Global Witness, was a test for donor nations and international agencies. In fact, international aid to Cambodia has increased. Brad Adams called the law a threat to one of Cambodia's few lasting post-conflict achievements: the development of civil society.[25]

Internal factors limit the possibility of reform; however, since Western governments and international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank underwrite the assistance that ultimately benefits the ruling elites, real reform would be unprofitable.[26] Cock notes the growing importance of China as an external influence on Cambodia. Facing cuts in aid from the West, Cambodia secured aid, loans, and debt cancellations from China in the late 1990s. This in turn has granted Cambodian elites increasing latitude on human rights.[27] Hun Sen, through pragmatism and adaptability, has largely been able to harness or neutralize reform pressures. Announcements of reform, for example, are tied to meetings with donor nations and do not represent "some coherent strategy of political and economic transformation."[28]

Though local NGOs working with international institutions seek to combat corruption in Cambodia, business groups are unwilling to promote an anticorruption agenda, seeing the CPP as "key to political stability and a continued flow of lucrative state contracts."[29] The CPP itself has largely ignored corruption reform; however, the state has worked in other areas to promote social accountability. In 2008, the World Bank launched the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) program, in conjunction with the Cambodian Ministry of Interior. Despite public pronouncements from the Bank about anticorruption efforts, the DFGG program was about moving activists "from shouting to counting." The institutions involved are "marginal to the key areas of resource management and land, and consequently do not directly tackle the political economy of corruption underpinning CPP power." In the same vein, the Bank created the Program for Enhancing Capacity for Social Accountability, to train civil society organizations in "global accountability practices."[30] The Bank also sees these programs as an opportunity to "reduce distrust between the Cambodian government and civil society."[31] Instead, the Bank's efforts play directly into Hun Sen's strategy of consolidation and control, with his critics shuffled away into marginal areas. "Accountability from below" may not succeed from such a weakened position.

Questions of accountability in Cambodia take on a rather different tone than more general concerns over the clash of state and transnational power. Despite massive, direct intervention by the UN, the Bank, the IMF, and other international agencies, the Cambodian regime remains dominant. The regime's authoritarian nature allows both impunity and power. The ruling elite has survived, in fact, according to some critics, not despite but because of the "provision of material aid and political legitimacy [provided] by external actors."[32] The state may be, in Sperling's parlance, "altered"—but that alteration has been one of making accountability almost a moot question. Even as transnational forces actively seek to inculcate accountability based on moral or liberal ideas, they have helped preserve existing power structures.[33] Open eyes about the failure of democracy and the assault on civil society—the sources of accountability from above and below—may be the only way forward. Precisely what international agencies mean to accomplish with their aid must be better defined. Only such direct pressure, consistently applied, can combat the Cambodian regime's inherent drive to preserve itself.

ENDNOTES

1 Valerie Sperling, Altered States: The Globalization of Accountability. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2009). 18.
2 Sperling, 107.
3 Sperling, 138.
4 L.H., "Justice in Cambodia: The Boeung Kak 13," The Economist, 27 July 2012. http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/06/justice-cambodia.

5 A group of 13 women arrested for protesting their evictions were later freed by an appeals court. 4,000 families were evicted from the Boeung Kak Lake section of Phnom Penh, a lucrative real estate area near the city center. The developers include a company owned by Laeo Men Khin, a CPP senator, and a Chinese investment group. Human rights groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, condemned the arrests. Ibid.

6 Brad Adams, "10,000 Days of Hun Sen," International Herald Tribune. 31 May 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/opinion/10000-days-of-hun-sen.html.

7 Andrew Robert Cock, "External Actors and the Relative Autonomy of the Ruling Elite in Post-UNTAC Cambodia," Journal of Southeast Asia Studies 41 (2010): 249, 256

8 L.H., "Strongman of Cambodia," The Economist, 8 June 2012. http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/06/hun-sen.

9 Thomas Fuller, "Cambodia, Mourning, Casts an Eye to the Future," New York Times. 17 October 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/18/world/asia/thousands-mourn-former-king-sihanouk-in-cambodian-capital.html.

10 Simon Marks, "Cambodia Is Hard Sell for Investment Companies," New York Times, 29 June 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/30/business/global/30rdbseacam.html.

11 Domestic political pressure, as well as support from Sec. Clinton, forced Hun Sen to make nominal changes to land policy. Of course, this suspension did not cover deals already made—even ones that had not yet been announced at the time of this policy change.

12 "Cambodia's Economy: Not a Complete Stitch-up," The Economist, 29 September 2012. http://www.economist.com/node/21563763.

13 Sam Rainsy, "Obama Should Stay Away from Cambodia," International Herald Tribune. 31 October 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/31/opinion/obama-should-stay-away-from-cambodia.html.

14 "In Cambodia, Panetta Reaffirms Ties With Authoritarian Government," New York Times, 16 November 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/17/world/asia/in-cambodia-panetta-reaffirms-ties-with-authoritarian-government.html.
"Cambodia and Islamism: Courting the Cham," The Economist, 30 September 2010. http://www.economist.com/node/17155688.

15 Adams.

16 Glenys Kinnock, "Cambodia's Brazen UN Bid," International Herald Tribune. 17 October 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/17/opinion/cambodias-brazen-un-bid.html.

17 Mu Sochua and Cecilia Wikström, "Land Grabs in Cambodia," International Herald Tribune. 19 July 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/19/opinion/land-grabs-in-cambodia.html

18 Cock, 246.

19 Peter Maguire, "Cambodia and the Pitfalls of Political Justice," International Herald Tribune. 20 June 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/21/opinion/21iht-edmaguire21.html.

20 Peter Maguire uses the term "political justice" to describe the end goal of tribunals like the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). It is "a strange admixture of law and politics…in a constant state of flux." Most of the Khmer Rouge killers have gone free, and the UN and ECCC spend large sums prosecuting only a few party members. The ECCC and its supporters could not deliver the "therapeutic benefits of war crimes trials" that were promised: truth, reconciliation, and healing. See: Peter Magquire, Facing Death in Cambodia. (See endnote for citation.)

21 Khieu Samphan testified that he hoped the trial would allow him to "explain to the Cambodian public" how he could have been in a senior position without knowing "all that was happening" in the country.

22 James A. Goldston, "Justice Delayed and Denied," International Herald Tribune. 13 October 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/14/opinion/14iht-edgoldston14.html

23 Goldston's solutions place much of the burden on the Ban Ki-Moon himself but do not provide a compelling case that the UN and the donor nations will feel any more accountable.

24 Hanna Bertelman, "International Standards and National Ownership? Judicial Independence in Hybrid Courts: The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia," Nordic Journal of International Law 79 (2010): 381.

25 Seth Mydans, "Donors Asked to Withhold Aid Over Proposed Law in Cambodia," New York Times, 7 April 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/08/world/asia/08cambodia.html.

26 Cock, 257-258.

27 Ibid., 259-260.

28 Ibid., 261.

29 Garry Rodan and Caroline Hughes, "Ideological Coalitions and the Internal Promotion of Social Accountability: The Philippines and Cambodia Compared," International Studies Quarterly 56 (2012): 375.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 376.

32 Cock, 241.

33 Rodan and Hughes, 367.

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THE DECAY OF DIGNITY

Violence and Heroism in the Great War

CAMERON GIVENS

THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES THE SHOCKING VIOLENCE OF THE GREAT WAR AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CHANGING ROLE OF HEROISM IN THE MINDS OF PARTICIPANTS. BEFORE THE CONFLICT, GLORIFIED PERCEPTIONS OF THE WAR PREVAILED, ONLY TO BE SHATTERED BY UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF BRUTALITY BOTH ON AND OFF THE BATTLEFIELD. THE IMPACT OF "TOTAL WAR" WAS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHIFT, AS IT LOOKED TO INFLICT MAXIMUM INJURY ON THE OPPOSITION THROUGH ALL AVAILABLE MEANS – WHETHER IT WAS BY GUN, GAS OR THE WIDESPREAD MISTREATMENT OF CIVILIANS. THE RUTHLESS MENTALITY OF TOTAL WAR SEEMED TO NEGATE THEORIES OF A "CIVILIZING PROCESS" IN EUROPEAN SOCIETY AND, INSTEAD, APPEARED TO DEMONSTRATE A TREND OF BRUTALIZATION. AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF SUCH HORRIFIC VIOLENCE, SOLDIERS WERE FORCED TO QUESTION THE PLACE OF HEROISM. AS READERS, WE ARE MADE TO DO THE SAME.

Introduction

The words of German poet Jacob Vogel described death as an honorable sacrifice, transforming a brutal end into a hero's reward solely because of the wartime context:

> No more blissful death in all the world,
> Than he who is killed by the foe,
> On the green heath, in the wide field
> He will not hear great cries of woe.
> In a narrow bed where one has to go
> Alone to the ranks of the dead.
> But here he will find fine company,
> Falling with him like blossoms in May.
> ...
> Many a brave hero
> Will thus have Immortal glory.
> Body and blood has he
> Sacrificed for the sake of the Fatherland.[1]

Vogel's poem, often quoted in soldiers' letters and diaries, reflected the traditional view that closely associated the battlefield with masculinity, camaraderie, patriotism, and, above all, "immortal glory." Combat was presented as the theater for a young man's self-actualization. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 was marked by the resurgence of a traditional militarism that relied heavily on notions of heroism and glory.

"Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?" a young girl asks her father on a recruiting poster. The insinuation is clear: to abstain from the fight was a shameful evasion of duty that would one day have to be justified to future generations, while participation was heroism at its finest. In his fascinating book on post-war commemorations and memorials, Jay Winter observes that, while monuments were initially erected to celebrate the call-to-arms (and formed, in some cases, a permanent excoriation of those who chose not to go), the commemoration soon shifted to the "stupendous character" of the conflict itself.[2]

The destructiveness of the war posed an immediate and unmistakable challenge to this "stupendous character." The disfigured, troglodytic landscape left in the wake of combat held little resemblance to Vogel's "green heath," while the horrible mutilation of the human body often ended in a death that did not seem to be glorious. The level of violence challenged the idea that Western Civilization had been the beneficiary of an ongoing 'civilizing process,' a theory promoted by German sociologist Norbert Elias. Elias theorized that the process, when considered over long periods of time, resulted in an overall diminishment of social violence. Similarly, other historians have emphasized an increase of the "in depth self-containment achieved by human beings."[3] For Elias, the Great War was merely a temporary aberration that could not undermine the larger line of development.[4] Historians Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker disagree, holding that the sustained violence of the Great War constitutes a major rebuttal to the notion of a civilizing process in modern history.[5] While acceptance of the war ranged from passive acquiescence to impassioned alacrity, it was the implementation of the violence by millions of men over a period of four and a half years that seemed to contradict Elias' thesis. The very men who were theoretically refined by the civilizing process were the same ones who left their civilian lives behind to participate in one of the most brutal episodes in human history.

The unprecedented levels of violence revealed the dramatic transformation from the warfare of the past to that of the future. The extent to which the Great War represented a significant break with past practices has been a subject of much historical analysis. John Keegan's comparative study of several battles from the fifteenth century through the Great War relies heavily on the development of battlefield weaponry to understand the behavior of individual soldiers. In Keegan's estimation, to comprehend the use of different types of weapons and how, in the face of each, soldiers lived, suffered or died, is to approach an understanding of what battle was really like.[6] Undoubtedly, modern technology was largely responsible for the unprecedented level of destruction; machine guns, artillery shells, and toxic gases had devastating effects on land, mind, and body.

According to Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, however, the intensification of warfare was not provoked by technologi-

cal developments alone.[7] An unmistakable change in the mindset of participants was equally responsible for the brutal paroxysms of violence. The psychology behind combat became a desire to eradicate the opposing side through any means necessary, a strategy often referred to as "total war." Along with this extermination mentality, it entailed the complete mobilization of society against the enemy. Perhaps the deadliest contribution of total war was that it blurred the line between the battlefield and the home front, obfuscating the distinction between the enemy and the unarmed to a point where atrocities against women, children, the elderly, the wounded, and prisoners were sanctioned as an acceptable countermeasure against the opposition.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS LIKE THE ONE ABOVE WERE USED TO ENCOURAGE RECRUITMENT DURING THE WAR.

Some historians claim that there were successive stages leading to the drastic change in warfare. Ian F.W. Beckett argues that the nineteenth century can be taken as an extended transitional period of the increasing impact of total war.[8] The Revolutionary and Imperial wars in France, followed by the American Civil War and the Franco Prussian War of 1870-71, showed signs of total war in both the method of combat and the treatment of civilians.[9] Thus, the ongoing development of a violent, totalized methodology may point to a counter-trend of brutalization in modern history. While the earlier confrontations kept the tradition of 'regulated warfare,' which placed certain limitations on the levels of violence, the Great War constituted a break with this tradition of 'self-containment.'[10] In Great War, Total War, Roger Chickering questions the ability of the nineteenth-century antecedents to predict the nature of the conflict, contending that the war represented a 'wrenching discontinuity' in the history of modern warfare.[11] Approaching the war, belligerent nations had no way to predict the gravity of the situation; most assumed that a quick, tidy conclusion to the war would return soldiers to their homes and families within several months. They were quickly disillusioned when the Great War demonstrated a sustained brutality previously unseen in earlier conflicts.

This article describes the brutalizing process that challenges the memory of the war as heroic and examines whether heroism held any meaning given the harsh realities of modern warfare. The conditions in which soldiers fought, lived, and died cannot be overlooked, as they fundamentally affected the experience of nearly every soldier. The harshest reality confronted by soldiers was violence (and, of course, the death that often followed). Thus, violence is the primary lens through which we must view the events of 1914-18 if we are to truly understand the Great War—to understand the thoughts and fears, the motivations and apprehensions of the common soldier sitting in the filth of a trench. Violence between soldiers is examined, with a focus on the technology that intensified and brutalized the conflict. This is followed by an examination of violence against the unarmed as a distinct type of wartime violence against those who could not defend themselves. Evidence of the brutalization of warfare is considered to determine how the mechanized slaughter challenged the notion of heroism both in the minds of soldiers at that time and in our minds today.

Part I: Conditions

After Germany's Western offensive through France was halted in 1914, the remarkable speed of the war's earlier days was replaced by the stagnant deadlock of trench warfare. Significant progress became impossible, and so, both sides dug in to wage a long and costly war of attrition. Consequently, it was warfare no longer defined by quixotic notions of glorified combat. Soldiers often endured long periods of boredom. According to one French war novelist, the infantry had become a "waiting machine" by 1916.[12] Alan Seeger, a member of the French Foreign Legion, wrote of the common soldier's plight:

> Exposed to all the dangers of war, but none of its enthusiasms or splendid élan, he is condemned to sit like an animal in its burrow and hear the shells whistle over his head and take their little daily toll from his comrades... How different from the popular notion of the evening campfire, the songs and good cheer.[13]

Seeger gives us a valuable glimpse into the pre-war perceptions that anticipated camaraderie, merrymaking, and bravery. As he had already realized when writing this account, however, the trenches were painfully short on "good cheer" and there was little to imbue soldiers with patriotic or heroic ardor. Bombardment became an incessant element of a soldier's life and, from what Seeger indicates, filled them with a frustration and helplessness that provoked a degradation of self-worth. Under shelling, they became powerless, able only to wait and hope that they did not join the "little daily toll." The effect of the experience was dehumanizing, reducing men to little more than animals, huddled in fear within their earthen shelters. In some cases, Seeger's description was not far from the truth. In the Battle of the Somme, for example, many Germans endured the Allied bombardment in "mined" dugouts that were up to thirty feet deep.[14]

If men began to think of themselves as animals, it was because they lived in conditions that were fit for only the lowest of creatures. Alongside the constant threat from enemy guns, soldiers faced another foe that proved to be just as unrelenting. "We were all lousy and we couldn't stop shitting because we had caught dysentery," described Leonard Thompson, a soldier in the British Army.[15]

Lice were a constant annoyance to many soldiers but were a relatively small nuisance compared to dysentery. Although the intestinal inflammation was usually only mild, the fever, abdominal pain, and increased defecation could prove extremely troublesome. The last symptom in particular did little to improve the overall conditions. The passing of human waste, usually done with some degree of privacy before the war, was often done in the trenches along with everything else. Private Frank Richards of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers wrote:

"We wept, not because we were frightened but because we were so dirty."

> Our sanitary arrangements were very bad: we used empty bully-beef tins for urinating in, throwing it over the back of the parapet. If a man was taken short during the day he had to use the trench he was in and then throw it over the back of the trench and throw earth after it.[16]

Bereft of any proper means for the disposal of waste, soldiers were forced to add the smell of human excrement to the already unpleasant olfactory potpourri. This presented a tangible challenge for those who tried to maintain a semblance of normal life in the trenches, desperately clinging to what remained of their humanity. "We wept, not because we were frightened but because we were so dirty," Thompson recalled.[17]

It would be misleading to suggest that the war erased all connections to civilian life, however. Michael Roper exam-

ines the letter correspondence between British subalterns and their mothers as a strikingly human phenomenon amidst a highly desensitized atmosphere. The extraordinary degree of 'mothering from a distance' sheds a new light on the war, he argues, showing that the conflict actually enhanced the significance of home in the minds of soldiers.[18] Although Roper offers some evidence that soldiers preserved a degree of humanity, we cannot assume that the delivery of letters and parcels from home mitigated the effects of life in the trenches.

An examination of how soldiers managed the psychological burden of their experience, for example, demonstrates the profound impact of the conflict on its participants. Ten minutes before the Battle of Passchendaele, Arthur Lapointe of the 22nd French-Canadian Battalion wrote:

> Dawn is coming, and my heart is filled suddenly with bitterness when I realize that the day may be my last. . . .Yesterday, I believed I could die with something approaching indifference. Now I am aware of intense desire to live. I would give anything to know beyond doubt that I had even two whole days ahead of me. Yesterday, I had made all preparation for the voyage from which no traveler returns. But now I am unwilling to go. I see things—differently than I did yesterday.[19]

Lapointe showed no signs of excitement—no giddy anticipation for a chance to win glory. Surpassing the desire for any individual heroism and eclipsing all patriotic sentiment was the fundamental and instinctual desire to live. Soldiers in the trenches had a kind of morbid intimacy with death, and it became a permanent and unconquerable fear—one that undermined human reasoning, instincts and emotions.[20] When reminded so often of their own mortality, they were forced to drastically change their relationship with death. In his memoir *Goodbye to All That*, Robert Graves wrote:

> There has been a dead man lying on the fire-step waiting to be taken down to the cemetery to-night. He was a sanitary-man, killed last night in the open while burying lavatory stuff between our front and support lines. His arm was stretched out and, when he was got in, it was still stiff, so that when they put him on the fire-step his stiff arm stretched right across the trench. His comrades joke as they push it out of the way to get by. 'Out of the light, you old bastard. Do you own this bloody trench?' Or they shake hands with him familiarly. 'Put it there, Billy Boy.'[21]

The soldiers had a certain familiarity with death—one that would not be appropriate in normal society. Life in the war was starkly different than back home; traditional mores and attitudes toward the deceased held little resemblance to the values instilled by modern cultures. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis who watched two of his sons join the Austrian army, concluded that the war lessened soldiers' susceptibility to culture and caused them to adopt a mode of expression that was less morally developed.[22] While witnessing violent deaths temporarily shook the resolve of new soldiers, it eventually became routine for them.[23] As Graves' account suggests, the banality of violence stripped the deceased of any sanctity and left soldiers either unable to, or unwilling to, mourn. There was no time to give an individual death much thought; there were simply too many bodies.

We should consider whether the conditions in the trenches prompted a reevaluation of heroism and glory in the conflict. Did the filth, lice, dysentery, dehumanization, and moral degeneration really live up to soldiers' traditional ideals of war? To understand how these ideals were changed or forgotten, it is important to consider the violence of the war itself.

Part II: Violence

For participants, violence was the crux of the wartime experience, as nothing else had such a profound impact on mind and body. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker describe violence as a prism, contending that it reveals much of what would otherwise remain hidden.[24] Under this prism, they argue, the thesis of the 'civilizing process' appears as nothing more than a veneer that can be stripped away from entire societies.[25] Even a brief examination of the violence on and off the battlefield reveals what lay beneath this thin veneer. It was not the traditional image of heroes defending the fatherland but a desperate, brutalized war that would scar the minds and bodies of all those involved.

Soldier-Soldier Violence

The technology of combat was no accident. Although the magnitude and severity of its effects may have been unexpected or even shocking, it was consciously implemented over the course of the war with a brutally simple goal in mind. Whether it was by bullet, shell or gas, the different mediums of violence sought to cripple the enemy through any means available. There existed a "logic of annihilation,"[26] and the physical and psychological devastation that resulted rendered any notions of glory virtually meaningless.

Typical artillery included "trench mortars" that lobbed 2-, 3-, or 4-inch bombs across no-man's-land into enemy trenches, as well as three distinct sizes of guns: field artillery, medium artillery, and the heavy howitzers. The first consisted of 18-pounder guns and 4.5-inch howitzers capable of firing small shrapnel, high explosives or gas shells to a range of 6000 yards. The medium artillery consisted of 60-pounder and 4.7-inch or 6-inch guns capable of firing highly explosive shells to a range of 10,000 yards. Finally, the heavy howitzers of 6-, 8-, 9.2-, 12-, and 15-inch caliber fired shells, weighing 100-1400 lbs. to a range of 11,000 yards.[27] The typical filling for shells was a compound called Amatol that was forty percent ammonium nitrate and sixty percent TNT.[28] These shells had devastating effects on the human body. Of one patient, a nurse wrote:

> There was a great gash beneath his chest, and his stomach was literally lying outside of him, ripped and covered with mud. He had been lying in that condition out on a field for two days, and according to all human calculations should have died long ago.[29]

There seemed to be a vast disconnect between the horrible mutilation and suffering sharply contrasted with the idea of war as a theater for heroism and bravery.

Shells were capable of severing limbs, entombing men in their trenches, and even disintegrating men entirely. The shrapnel from a blast caused multiple, irregular wounds and, even if not fatal, often carried in bits of clothing or filth that could lead to infection. Tetanus was a common outcome. It began with spasms in the jaw muscles that created an eerie and uncontrollable "grin." Eventually, more muscles contracted until the patient's head was bent backwards and his body arched. The process was extremely painful and often resulted in a death from exhaustion or suffocation.[30] "Gas gangrene" presented an equally unpleasant fate. It resulted from several types of Clostridia organisms (found in the digestive tracts of domestic animals and, therefore, common in heavily-manured fields of the Western Front) being driven into tissue by shrapnel or other projectiles. Thriving in enclosed wounds where there was little oxygen, these forms of anaerobic bacteria caused severe infection. Large amounts of muscular tissue

A VICTIM FROM MUSTARD GAS

were destroyed, resulting in gas bubbles that gave off a horrible stench. If not amputated immediately, patients became severely ill and died of toxemia soon after.[31]

Aside from these noticeable effects, shells could also kill in ways that showed no signs of physical damage. Capable of causing over-pressure or vacuums in the body's organs, shells could rupture lungs or produce hemorrhages in the brain and spinal cord.[32]

Nothing in civilian life could have prepared men for the experience of an artillery barrage. Naturally, many feared that they would lose their self-control and betray themselves as cowards: "How I had subconsciously dreaded what my feelings would be and whether I would show them," wrote one soldier.[33]

In addition to artillery, the machine gun wasted no time in demonstrating its importance to modern warfare. Capable of firing up to 600 rounds a minute and requiring minimal human attention, it industrialized the act of killing. In the words of John Keegan, the operator was nothing more than a "machine minder."[34] With no extraordinary skill, one man could now kill hundreds. In 1914, a United Press war correspondent described his experience at a battle in Russian Poland:

> Then came a new sound. First I saw a sudden, almost grotesque melting of the advancing line. It was different from anything that had taken place before. The men literally went down like dominoes in a row. Those who had kept their feet were hurled back as though by a terrible gust of wind. Almost in the second that I pondered, puzzled, the staccato rattle of machine guns reached us. My ear answered the query of my eye.[35]

The image is a powerful one, conveying the unnatural efficiency of the slaughter. The writer's first inclination was to explain what he had witnessed by a natural phenomenon ("a terrible gust of wind"). Shortly thereafter, he recognized that the horrific bloodshed was only possible through the new technology of the war.

Also notable was the improvement to the rifle, which increased its effective range to over a mile and allowed the operator to fire over a dozen rounds per minute.[36] Firing a high-velocity canonical bullet, it too was capable of inflicting a variety of injuries. If bullets did not pass through cleanly, they would often hit bone and "tumble," sending bone splinters into surrounding tissues. Some bullets even set up hydraulic effects, pushing bodily fluids away from the wound at pressures too high for the surrounding tissue to withstand.[37] In a letter to a friend, a nurse wrote of the difficulty in dealing with the wounds:

> The bullet makes a tiny hole...which will be quite difficult to find when the patient is admitted, but inside the limb or body, if it has not passed right thro', it will be found to have caused a large abscess with the bullet lying in the centre. You can understand in the abdomen, it means a very serious operation, and is nearly always fatal.[38]

Not only did soldiers stand a small chance of surviving an operation after being shot in the abdomen, but they also had very little chance of ever receiving medical attention. There was a low incidence of those with chest and abdominal wounds being admitted to medical units because of the high mortality rates for such injuries.[39] Many would have died almost instantly, but still many others would have suffered through their last moments alone and in pain in the mud of the trenches or the craters of no-man's-land.

First used by the German army in a 1915 attack on the Ypres salient, gas is one of the most discussed developments of the war, despite the comparatively lower casualty rates.[40] Nonetheless, the use of gas certainly epitomized the destructiveness of modern technology and, to a greater extent, demonstrated the extreme measures combatant nations were willing to take against their enemies. In his study on the use of chemical agents in the war, Rolf-Dieter Müller claims that gas, even more so than other new weapons, was a graphic display of the industrialized, total war ravaging Europe.[41]

By 1916, both sides moved away from the discharge of gas by cylinders and began using gas shells.[42] Relying on the wind to carry the gas cloud to enemy trenches, cylinders had proven dangerous and unreliable. A sudden change in wind direction could easily make the use of gas a devastating military blunder. Gas shells, however, increased accuracy, efficiency and, more importantly, lethality.

The types of gases used in the war fell under three main categories: asphyxiating gases (phosgene and chlorine), lachrymatory gases (benzyl bromide and xylyl bromide), and blistering agents (mustard gas). Chlorine gas was intensely irritating to the eyes, nose, and throat, often causing severe coughing and vomiting. Inhalation damaged lung tissue and produced large amounts fluids that could cause the victim to die of asphyxia. Phosgene gas, although less irritating, presented a serious danger. Its reduced irritation allowed for more of the colorless, invisible gas to be inhaled before its effects became noticeable. This caused increased damage to lung tissue and a more rapid onset of asphyxia.

"'Functional illness' that seemed to disrupt a patient's ability to function without the presence of any organic injuries plagued neurologists and psychiatrists from the beginning of the war."

Lachrymatory, or tear-causing, gases were the least harmful of the three types. Because they dissipated within several hours, they were used in areas that would soon be occupied by friendly forces.

Mustard gas, on the other hand, was a dark, oily liquid that could not be dispersed by wind or weather. It often persisted for months and continued to induce casualties by causing painful blisters to any tissue with which it came in contact.[43] Writing from her diary in Wimereux, Sister Ellen Cuthbert described the horrifying effects:

> The boys came in quite blind with enormously swollen eyelids they are quite unable to open them, and the eyes discharging freely, also the patient is burnt over the face and body with huge blisters burned by the effects of the mustard gas. These burns are very painful, and the patient is mostly of a dusky colour or may be quite black in the face and neck. Frequently the patient is unable to speak above a whisper. The mucous membrane of the throat and digestive tract may also be burned.[44]

The human body was simply unable to withstand the unforgiving power and lethal efficiency of modern technology.

Unfortunately, the threat to soldiers did not end at physical harm. Often, participants' minds suffered more than their disfigured frames. The psychological consequence of combat presented an entirely separate dimension of the war worth remembering for its profound and unmistakable effect on soldiers' wartime experiences.

One of the biggest challenges presented by psychological injuries was the poor understanding of their causes. "Functional illnesses" that seemed to disrupt a patient's ability to function without the presence of any organic injuries plagued neurologists and psychiatrists from the beginning of the war.[45] Symptoms ranged from anxiety and depression to paralysis, muscle contractions, and mutism. Many questions remained unanswered. Were the disturbances the result of physical injuries? Were they physical manifestations of the emotional and psychological shock induced by combat? Were they merely the affected behavior of malingerers looking to escape the front lines? The conditions were poorly understood and often lumped together under general designations such as "shell shock,"

"commotional syndrome," "war neurosis," "battle hypnosis," or simply "hysteria."[46]

In *Treating the Trauma of the Great War*, Gregory M. Thomas examines doctors' variegated, wartime understanding of the causes. Hereditary defects (such as a family history of alcoholism or melancholy), contagious illnesses, personality, race, and social class were all suggested as possible precursors to the development of mental or neurological illnesses.[47] In the absence of somatic answers, the degeneracy theory gained popularity, especially among French asylum doctors. The theory attributed the illnesses to the "degeneration" of a victim's family from the gradual accumulation of hereditary defects across successive generations.[48]

Dennis E. Showalter, examining the emasculating implications that became associated with soldiers' conditions, shows that the psychological maladies were often diagnosed as feminine.[49] Other theories placed even more blame on the soldiers themselves, viewing their behavior as conscious malingering. French doctors' conflation of the 'mythomanic' personality type (displaying an aptitude for inventing myths) with wartime hysteria led to a judgment of the afflicted as willful liars.[50] George Mosse examines the European perception of shell shock as a 'social disease,' one that was attributed to a weak will power or other abnormality.[51]

An overriding assumption was that the unselfish service in the name of a higher ideal would put a soldier in control of himself.[52] In reality, the chaos of battle put the soldier in control of nothing—certainly not himself or his psychological state in the face of death. Fighting for higher ideals that appeared meaningless next to the very real violence of war proved to offer little protection against the psychological onslaught of combat. Robert Gaupp, one of Germany's leading psychologists, discussed the effects of shell shock:

> From [December 14] on, the number of these cases grew ever more quickly...The main causes are terror and anxiety in the face of exploding enemy shells and mines, at the sight of dead and maimed comrades, wounds, or bodily injury on one's own person. The results are the now familiar symptoms—sudden muteness, deafness, general trembling, the inability to stand and walk, fainting spells, and cramping.[53]

Shell shock often had a completely debilitating effect on soldiers, rendering them incapable of completing most tasks and leaving them unable to engage in combat. The causes described by Gaupp were so prevalent in the trench environment that they would have been nearly impossible to avoid. Thus, shell shock affected everyone, from officers to common soldiers. Arthur Osborn, a soldier in the British Army, described the actions of a Staff Officer:

> Then suddenly, spasmodically, he began to dig furiously with his fingers. The huddled men, mostly stretcher-bearers of the R.A.M.C., stared at him in amazement, the pink tabs on his collar, and a decoration on his smart uniform, seemed strangely inconsistent with this extraordinary behavior. It was a case of complete loss of nerve and self-control...His behavior was simply less than human.[54]

As Osborn's reaction demonstrates, soldiers had the natural inclination to view officers as less susceptible to a psychological breakdown, as if their elevated rank somehow reflected some innate superiority that better equipped them to cope with the war. It became immediately clear that being an officer or wearing a "smart uniform" offered no assistance in retaining one's mental faculties. Exposed to the violent, brutalized environment for long stretches of time, many soldiers were left so psychologically battered that they became what Osborn describes as "simply less than human." The ease with which Elias' civilizing process could be reversed was remarkable.

The soldier-soldier violence of the Great War and the devastating effects that it had on body and mind called into question pre-war perceptions of the conflict. The importance of abstract notions like heroism, bravery, and glory were reassessed as soldiers confronted previously unimaginable levels of violence. "Each writer tried to tell how painless the death was, and how bravely the brother met it," wrote Phelps Harding, a lieutenant responsible for censoring letters, "but in each case I imagine the mother will think only of her loss, and not the fact that her boy died a true American."[55]

In the eyes of wartime poet Wilfred Owen, dying for the fatherland was a horror rather than an honor:

> In all my dreams, before my helpless sight
> He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.
> If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
> Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
> And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
> His hanging face, like a devils' sick of sin;
> If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
> Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
> Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
> Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
> My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
> To children ardent for some desperate glory,
> The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
> Pro patria mori.[56]

Soldier-Unarmed Violence

The collision of unarmed men, women, and children with military policy led to a culture of atrocity and brutality that deeply affected the dynamic of the war. The total war mentality played a central role in shaping the belligerent nations' perspectives. Reacting to the unexpected duration and severity of the conflict, soldiers from both sides attempted to sway the deadlocked, attritional war by any means at their disposal. Typical distinctions between enemy combatants and noncombatants were eroded to such a degree that the latter were increasingly seen as wholly legitimate participants. As the conflict dragged on, yielding horrific injuries, an ever-rising death count, and immeasurable grief, the mistreatment of innocents became increasingly commonplace, rationalized by either military necessity or warranted retaliation. The overall effect was an increase in the violence of a conflict that had already proven to be unimaginably brutal. This section examines the mistreatment of civilians and prisoners to understand

CHLORINE GAS BEING RELEASED ON THE BATTLEFIELD

how this distinct form of wartime violence challenges the memory of the war as heroic.

Reflecting on the war, a soldier described the mark it left on combatants:

> In the midst of beautiful actions, of sacrifice and self-abnegation, it also awoke within us, sometimes to the point of paroxysm, ancient instincts of cruelty and barbarity. At times, I...who have never punched anyone, who loathes disorder and brutality, took pleasure in killing....That barbarous, horrendous moment had a unique flavour for us, a morbid appeal; we were like those unfortunate drug addicts who know the magnitude of the risk but can't keep themselves from taking more poison.[57]

The battlefield had a powerful impact on soldiers, provoking a startling transformation with regard to their perception of physical violence. Thousands of men who represented the product of modern civilization now "took pleasure in killing." Most unsettling is that the writer recognizes the morbidity of his pleasure, readily acknowledging both the "cruelty and barbarity" of his primordial urge and his inability to overcome it.

The brutalizing effects of the war became apparent from the outset when Germany invaded the small, militarily weak nation of Belgium. The Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages (more commonly known as the Bryce Report) emerged, detailing atrocities that ranged from babies being bayoneted to children being nailed to walls. It stunned the British and American public. Although the testimonies contained no names, few identifying details, and a clear propagandistic intent, the violence that civilians suffered at the hands of German soldiers was undeniable.[58] Some Belgians were taken as hostages and deported to Germany, while many others were used as human shields, raped, and even collectively executed. Numerous villages and towns were set ablaze under the German policy of punitive arson.[59] Overall, in excess of 6000 civilians were killed and 15,000-20,000 buildings were destroyed.[60]

"Characterizing the war as a solely heroic endeavor masked its true brutality and offered a form of rememberance that necessarily ignored the suffering"

The mistreatment of civilians was not confined to the Western Front. The Report upon the atrocities committed by the Austro-Hungarian army during the first invasion of Serbia, by Professor R.A. Reiss, detailed the horrific atrocities of the Balkans:

> In this district the Austrians killed 54 persons in various ways. Most of them were disemboweled with the large sabers...K.K., aged 56, eyes put out, nose and ears cut off...M.V., aged 21, violated by about 40 soldiers, genital organs cut off, her hair pushed down the vagina. She was finally disemboweled, but only died immediately after. L.P., aged 46, one hand cut off and eyes put out. One family: M.P., aged 45, breasts cut off; D.P., 18, eyes put out; S.P., aged 14, eyes put out, nose cut off; A.P., aged 7, ears cut off. They were found in a ditch, with their dog, pinioned and all tied together, including the dog.[61]

The Austro-Hungarian soldiers apparently saw the civilians with whom they came in contact as nothing more than animals. Professor Reiss, the author of the report, concluded that the manner of the butchery constituted a "system of extermination."[62] This form of violence—really nothing more than a merciless slaughter against those who could not defend themselves—is one of the greatest challenges to memory of the war as heroic.

Even soldiers could find themselves in the defenseless role usually occupied by civilians. Those who threw down their

weapons and attempted to surrender effectively entrusted their lives to enemies. It was certainly dangerous to assume that that an opponent, who may have lost his own friends and family to the war, would be able to control his animosity. After his surrender at La Frere on March 22, 1918, Private Alfred Grosch of the Post Office Rifles wrote: "The German has spared us. Would we have spared him under the circumstances? God knows! Perhaps not."[63] Grosch's remarkable honesty shows that soldiers considered the killing of unarmed prisoners to be a valid option—one that was decided on frighteningly mercurial bases. Had his capturer held an intense hatred for the enemy, had wanted to avenge a fallen comrade, or simply had been in an unmerciful mood after a long night in the trenches, Grosch's life could have ended with just a small movement of the index finger.

Of course, the incidents in which the unarmed were mistreated or killed were often intended as acts of retaliation. Murder was the harshest form of reprisal but there were certainly other forms. Sometimes prisoners were concentrated in areas that were subject to an enemy air attack.[64] More often, prisoners were sent immediately behind the front lines and made to reinforce enemy trenches or bury the enemy's dead. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker note that this was the ultimate humiliation for prisoners—they were returned to the war as combatants against their own countries. No longer entitled to the treatment of ordinary prisoners, they were unable to receive mail or parcels and were not included on the published lists that notified their relatives if they were living or dead.[65] Both sides resorted to prisoner mistreatment as a form of reprisal, citing the treatment of their own prisoners as reason for further escalation. It was a cycle through which many on both sides would suffer.

Heather Jones, who sought to investigate the forgotten issue of wartime violence towards prisoners, suggests that it may have been inevitable that military violence would spread into the POW system, given the totalized battlefield environment.[66] The total war mentality did not see prisoners as human beings but, instead, as a means to pressure the enemy government to conclude the war. The harsh treatment of prisoners was thus seen as sound military policy.

> As early as 31 August, 1914 an order in the German 8th Army, on the transport of Russian prisoners from the eastern front, stated that '...all food must be reserved for the German troops...Prisoners must be treated strictly... They are not to be given water at first; while they are in the vicinity of the battlefield it is good for them to be in a broken physical condition.[67]

Although it did conform to military logic, the policy of keeping prisoners in a "broken" state was undeniably cruel. "I saw two men, or rather skeletons, because they were nothing more," recalled Sapper George Waymark of his encounter with two prisoners being transported from the occupied zones behind the German line to Worms.[68] The influence of the total war doctrine had engrained the practice of prisoner mistreatment in military conduct. Anyone who disregarded this policy was shown no mercy. In a famous incident on October 12, 1918, a German guard shot and fatally wounded Yvonne Vieslet, a ten-year-old Belgian girl, as she attempted to give her school lunch to some French prisoners held at Marchienne-au-Pont.[69]

At the same time, it would be unfair to view Germany as the sole perpetrator of prisoner mistreatment. Jones notes that, while German prisoners in France generally received better food and were allowed to continue receiving parcels (the reverse was not true), they also experienced poor conditions after capture.[70] A German prisoner who escaped from Souilly, one of the main holding camps in France, stated that prisoners were beaten to obtain information, were fed watery rice, suffered from frozen hands or feet, and were punished if reported sick.[71]

Regardless of how deplorable conditions became in western European camps, they paled in comparison to those along the Eastern Front. Historian Alon Rachamimov's study of captivity details the horrific challenges that prisoners faced. Russian camps were particularly unpleasant—severe overcrowding and bad sanitary conditions often led to outbreaks of infectious diseases, especially epidemic typhus. Because typhus was transmitted by body

lice, it spread rapidly. Throughout the first week, men experienced high fevers, pain in the muscles and joints, and dark-red rashes. By the second week, they became delirious, lost control of their bowels, and faced a high risk of death. The poor living conditions were compounded by a 1:1500 ratio of doctors to prisoners, resulting in mortality rates of 50-70% from the disease.[72] One prisoner described the situation in the Transbaikalian camp of Strentensk in 1915:

> At the height of the plague there were three patients to two beds, and you might wake up one night to find a dead man on either side of you, and so you would lie through the long hours till morning came.[73]

Prisoners were exposed to such dreadful conditions because the overall camp environment placed little value on prisoners' lives and even less value on proper sanitary conditions and food. Elsa Brändström, a Swedish Red Cross nurse, remarked:

> [It is] hardly possible to describe the existence of these men without seeming to exaggerate, for the conditions under which they were forced to live almost surpassed the bounds of mental and physical endurance....It is difficult to imagine a more dreary and wretched existence than of these working prisoners of war.[74]

Brändström's statement can be extended to almost all prisoners in The Great War—the camp system presented a degree of physical and psychological hardship that would seem to push men to the breaking point. Perhaps, her statement can be extended even further to encapsulate the nature of the conflict itself. In a sense, all unarmed participants were held captive by a violent, merciless war that treated them as enemy combatants. Were they not also pushed to a point that seemed to transcend the threshold of human tolerance for suffering? Sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, relatives, and friends were mistreated or murdered as a totalized war ravaged the ranks of the unarmed. This brutalization of warfare, so apparent in the shocking levels of violence, leaves little room for visions of a heroic war.

Conclusion

Of the faces carved into stone memorials throughout Europe, Jay Winter notes, "Fatigue, and a reflective acceptance of duty and fate, are etched into their features. They have been through the fire, and rarely proclaim its virtues."[75] Those faces of stone were not the only ones to serve as a lasting testament to the character of the war. The "gueules cassées," or "broken faces", of those who returned from combat were a form of bodily memory, capturing and recording the devastating violence of the conflict. In another, perhaps more enduring way, the severe facial mutilations symbolized the enormous cost of the war—a cost that transcended mere physicality.

Still, there remained those who longed to see the returning victors as heroes. In a 1917 edition of the New York Times, Dr. Joseph Fraenkel wrote: 'I do not think that women will let the marks of honor stand in their way of marrying war heroes who return, especially since these men will have the added appeal of heroism and glory."[76] Dr. Fraenkel's attempt to convince women that the returning soldiers were the same as when they left (albeit with the added appeal of heroism and glory) was critically flawed. Those who returned were simply not the same.

Characterizing the war as a solely heroic endeavor masked its true brutality and offered a form of remembrance that necessarily ignored the suffering. Despite the relative brevity of the Great War, the totality of the violence left deep scars on the face of Western Civilization, suggesting a brutalizing process rather than a civilizing one. Our collective memory of the events from 1914-1918 is a palimpsest of the many emotions that surrounded the war: heroism, patriotism, horror, and grief. Ultimately, each of us must judge which memory best characterizes the war and whether heroism deserves to be included at all.

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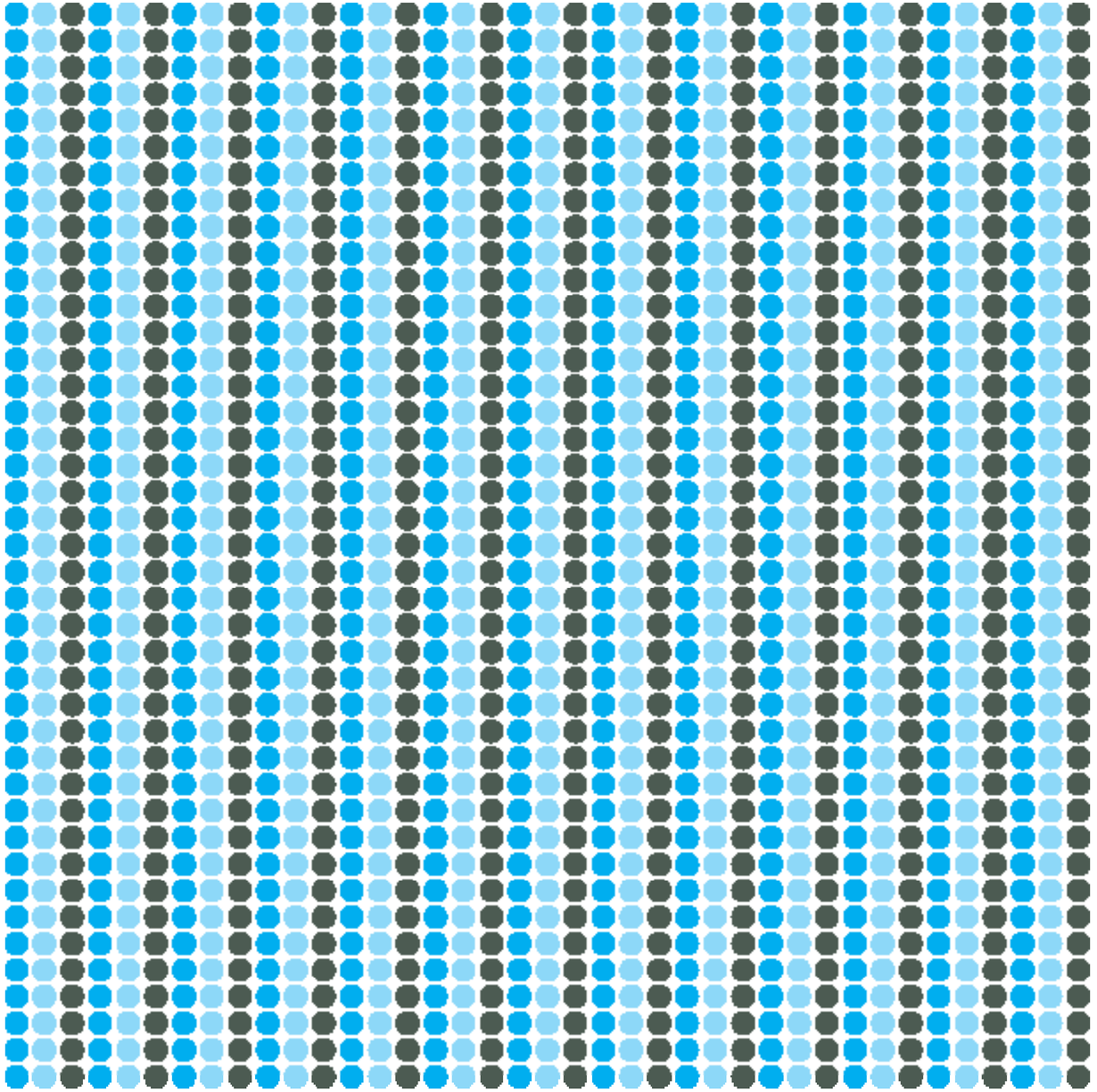

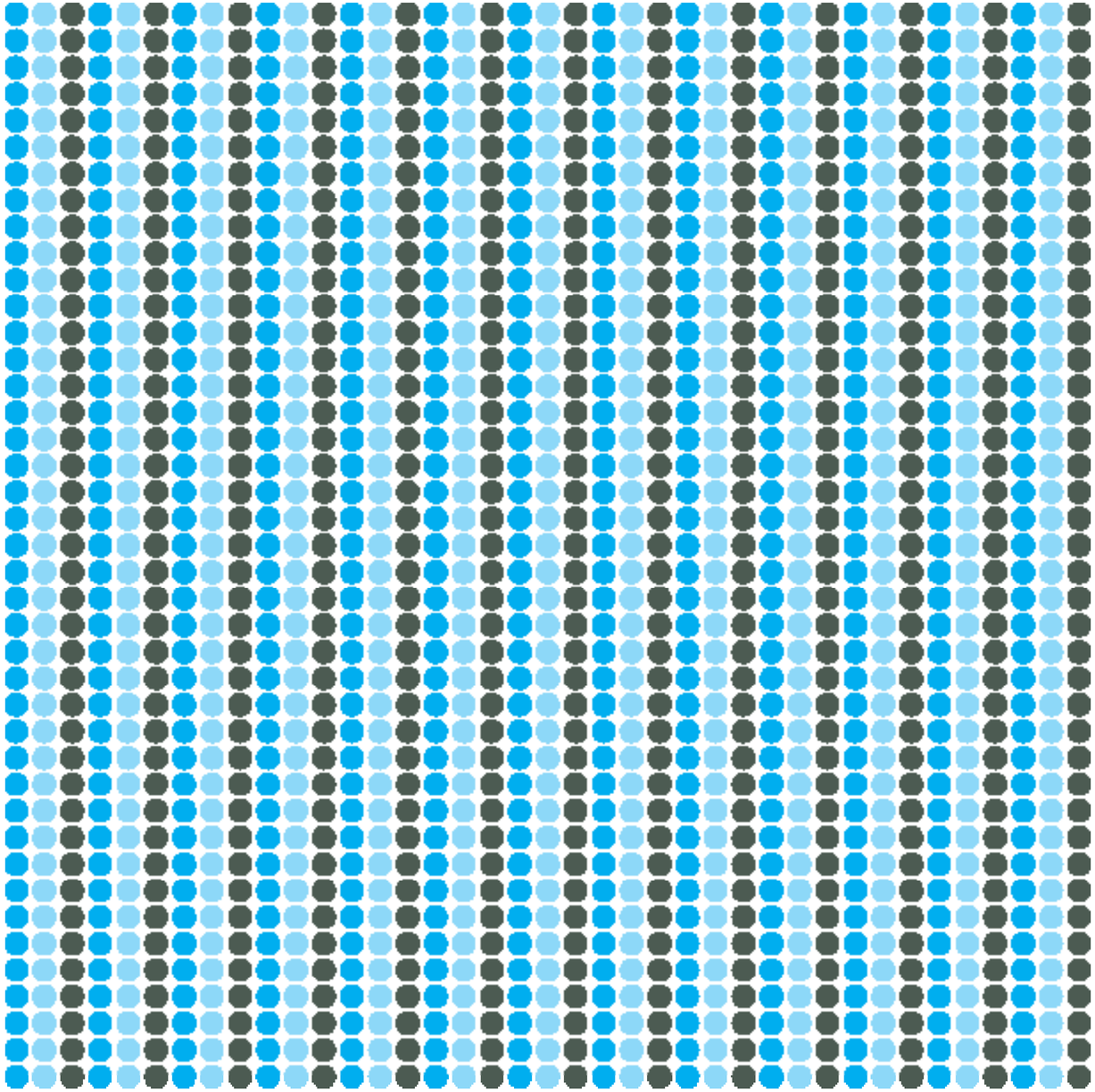

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