



# **The Corvette**

---

The University of Victoria  
Undergraduate Journal of History

**VOLUME 2, NO. 1**

**FALL 2013**

Copyright © 2013

Authors contributing to the *The Corvette* agree to release their articles under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported license. This licence allows anyone to share their work (copy, distribute, transmit) and to adapt it for non-commercial purposes provided that appropriate attribution is given, and that in the event of reuse or distribution, the terms of this license are made clear.

Authors retain copyright of their work and grant the journal right of first publication.

Authors are able to enter into separate, additional contractual arrangements for the non-exclusive distribution of the journal's published version of the work (e.g., post it to an institutional repository or publish it in a book), with an acknowledgement of its initial publication in this journal.

—

The opinions expressed in *The Corvette* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editors or the History Department. *The Corvette* is a peer-reviewed journal. While every effort is made by the Editorial Board to ensure that *The Corvette* contains no inaccurate or misleading citations, opinions or statements, the information and opinions contained within are the sole responsibility of the authors. Accordingly, the Publisher, the Editorial Board, the Editors and their respective employees and volunteers accept no responsibility or liability for the consequences of any inaccurate or misleading information, opinion or statement.

## **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Benjamin Fast

## **ACADEMIC EDITOR**

Rayleen Lister

## **FACULTY ADVISOR**

Dr. Mitchell Lewis Hammond

## **GENERAL EDITORS**

Alina Blank, Diana Dale, Brandon Dellebuur, David Denhoff,  
Cam Fish, Sasha Gronsdahl, Nathaniel Hayes, Jordan McKay,  
Joseph Méthot, Noah Miller, Courtney Reynoldson,  
Christina Starko, Monique Ulysses

### **We gratefully acknowledge the support of:**

The University of Victoria History Department Faculty and Staff

The History Undergraduate Society

The University of Victoria Student's Society

Inba Kehoe

Alex Coates

—

## **CONTACT**

Connect with *The Corvette* throughout the year:

**Web:** <http://www.uvic.ca/corvette>

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/TheCorvette>

**Twitter:** @corvette\_uvic ([http://twitter.com/corvette\\_uvic](http://twitter.com/corvette_uvic))

**Email** (for general inquiries and to request permission to reproduce or republish any material from any edition of *The Corvette*): [corvette@uvic.ca](mailto:corvette@uvic.ca)

## **SUBMISSIONS**

*The Corvette* publishes the work of current and recently-graduated University of Victoria History Undergraduate students. *The Corvette* endeavors to publish articles that represent the best scholarship produced by UVic students concerning the past. We are interested in all methods and fields of inquiry.

## **PUBLISHING**

*The Corvette* is published by The History Undergraduate Society with the University of Victoria History Department and the University of Victoria Students' Society. *The Corvette* is printed annually at Victoria, BC by the University of Victoria Printing Services.

*The Corvette* is published online through the UVic Journal Publishing Services at <http://www.uvic.ca>.

## **DESIGN**

*The Corvette* logo was designed and created by Rayleen Lister. This issue of *The Corvette* was compiled and formatted by Benjamin Fast. The typeface used throughout this journal is Times New Roman.

*The Corvette* is named after the Second World War convoy escort vessels made famous by the courageous service of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Battle of the North Atlantic. Named after small Canadian cities and towns, the corvette-class of ships represented all of Canada and is recognized today as symbols of wartime ingenuity and industrial mass-production.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Dean's Message DR. JOHN A. ARCHIBALD	<b>1</b>
Editor's Introduction BENJAMIN FAST AND RAYLEEN LISTER	<b>2</b>
“Staggering Between Anarchy and Starvation”: An Examination of the Experience of German Civilians under the Allied Blockade of the First World War, 1916-1919 CHARLOTTE CASS	<b>4</b>
Historicity of Survival Theory: African Culture in Religious Experience MICHAEL CRONK	<b>15</b>
The Emergence of Gender Role Anxieties in the Weimar Republic SARAH FITTERER	<b>28</b>
The Public Face of the Royal Canadian Air Force: The Importance of Air Shows and Demonstration Teams to the R.C.A.F. LUKE F. KOWALSKI	<b>40</b>
The Iranian Revolution, 1979: Memory, Desire, and a Search for Identity JESSICA SINGH	<b>59</b>
Performing for the State: Censorship of the French Theatre under Napoleon MARGARET SPROULE	<b>68</b>

## Dean's Message

As Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this first digital-only issue of *The Corvette*.

In reading past issues, I was struck with the diversity of subject matter, and the clarity of the writing and thoroughness of research in these essays. As professors, we often tell our students to follow their passion, and you will see here a passion for investigation and a dedication to probing multiple sources to get one step closer to the historical truth. Analytic skills such as problem solving, data analysis and clear presentations of complex ideas are all evident in these writings.

The team behind *The Corvette* also demonstrates the value of teamwork as we see undergraduates, graduates, and faculty working together to produce something more than the sum of the parts in this refereed journal.

Northrop Frye, the literary critic, was well-known for telling his students that ideas weren't ideas until they were written down. The process of writing clarifies our own thinking. The students writing here have built an argument by articulating their ideas. But lest I give the impression that all of these essays are merely cognitive therapy and mental exercise for our undergraduates, allow me to conclude by saying that they are an absolute delight to read.

Thanks to the authors and editorial team for putting this issue together and allowing us to showcase the talents of our students.

*John A.*

Dr. John Archibald  
Dean of Humanities  
University of Victoria

## **Editor's Introduction**

It is with great pleasure that we introduce the second issue of *The Corvette*, our first digital-only issue.

This journal presents the best research and writing by undergraduate students in the University of Victoria's Department of History and, further, the academic study related to history throughout the Faculty of Humanities. In addition to academic prowess, *The Corvette* stands for cooperation between students as they take part in a rigorous peer review and copy editing process.

The quality and scope of research featured in *The Corvette* exemplifies the way students are inspired to learn at our university. The essays in this issue cover the wide-ranging topics of German civilian experiences under the Allied blockade of the First World War, the continuation of African culture in American religious experiences, the changes in gender roles for people living in the Weimar Republic, an oral history examination of the famous Snowbirds and other Canadian military demonstration teams, the changing views of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and state censorship of Napoleonic-era theatre in France. Either through regular classes taught by exceptional professors or extraordinary opportunities such as the Jamie Cassels Undergraduate Research Awards, UVic undergraduates are encouraged to pursue their interests and explore their world through the academic research represented here. This focus on research provides valuable skills in analytical thought, writing, and editing which is useful for preparing students for further studies and employment.

Our thanks for this journal go first and foremost to our authors. There were many good essays submitted this Fall and we congratulate all those who exemplify hard work and passion for history. This journal would not be possible without the team of

*The Corvette* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2013)

volunteer peer reviewers and copy editors who spent many hours working through piles of essays to determine our content and create our best issue yet. *The Corvette* editorial team was guided by the invaluable expertise of our faculty advisor Dr. Mitchell Lewis Hammond, scholarly librarian Inba Kehoe, History Department chair Dr. Lynne Marks, and Dean of Humanities Dr. John Archibald – thank you all for your support. We would also like to thank The History Undergraduate Society and the University of Victoria Students' Society for their support and funding. The History Department staff and faculty support their students daily and provide encouragement through the busy school year, and they once again provided the resources and support needed to create a journal of this scope.

It is our desire as editors to have this journal stand as a legacy to the undergraduate students of UVic, that they may look to this and be inspired and challenged to pursue excellence in academics and in life. This is your journal to grow with, to learn with, and to celebrate excellence with, so we thank you for all your support.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Fast  
Editor-in-Chief

Rayleen Lister  
Academic Editor



## **“Staggering Between Anarchy and Starvation”: An Examination of the Experience of German Civilians under the Allied Blockade of the First World War, 1916-1919**

CHARLOTTE CASS

*The First World War went beyond military combat when Britain instituted a naval blockade against Germany in March 1915. Although it took until the last two years of the war for the industrial effects to be felt, the diminution of import capabilities meant that food and goods shortages began within months. The government deflected these shortages from the military onto the German people, which eventually resulted in a dramatic drop in the standard of living. The struggle for daily survival not only damaged national unity, it also bred contempt for the government itself, which was viewed as not sufficiently compensating its people for their forced sacrifices. The combination of these dire circumstances and the reality of military defeat make it unsurprising that revolution broke out in Berlin in early November 1918.*

At the outbreak of war in 1914, the British government was well aware that Germany was second only to themselves in terms of dependency on overseas imports to feed the population of 60 million. The British government thus chose to impose an industrial blockade in order to impede the industrial giant's ability to wage war. In retaliation, the German government declared unrestricted submarine warfare on February 4, 1915, which in turn prompted Britain to officially tighten her control of the seas. Although Germany's war industry had a higher productivity than Britain's during the first year of the blockade, food shortages emerged almost immediately, with the first queues forming at Berlin bakeries in October 1914. The early industrial success, in

conjunction with early agricultural and military successes, gave the German state a false sense of security of their ability to thrive under the limitations of the blockade. They paid no heed to suggestions for a comprehensive strategy for civilian food supply. As food shortages became dire enough to necessitate regulatory measures, the government policies were unable to guarantee the allocated amounts. Moreover, the prioritization of military supply and transportation needs meant the plight of civilians escalated at a more rapid pace. 1916 saw Germany's agricultural and industrial strength slowing down for want of raw materials. What became a daily struggle to attain the necessities of life bred contempt for the state. By the final year of the war, civilian starvation and disease were rampant, as was the feeling that the state had betrayed them when saying that all of their sacrifices would bring victory. This hostility grew exponentially under the circumstances of the eight-month extension of the blockade after the end of the military conflict. Thus, while the blockade did eventually succeed in crippling the German war machine, the debilitating effect it had on the legitimacy of the German state itself was far more detrimental in that, by failing to compensate its citizens for their increasing levels of deprivation, the German state had damaged its reputation beyond repair by November 1918.

The increasing difficulty for Germans of all classes to obtain food during the winter of 1916-1917, otherwise known as the *Kohlrübenwinter*, or Turnip Winter, exposed the insufficiencies of the supply system under the blockade. This bred resentment over the lack of compensation for their sacrifices. The potato harvest of 1916 was greatly diminished due to a lack of fertilizers – a key product made unavailable by the blockade – and as a result the population was forced to depend much more heavily upon the turnip for subsistence. Before the war turnips

had been used almost exclusively as fodder, and being forced to depend on it was taken as an insult, especially among agricultural workers. By the end of the winter, the daily caloric intake of civilians decreased from the prewar level of 2,276 to 1,336.<sup>1</sup> Annie Dröege discusses the cuts to rations in her diary on January 7, 1917:

We hear that we are to have only half-a-pound of potatoes per day per person . . . No one can live on half-a-pound of bread and half-a-pound of potatoes per day. We have only one quarter [of a pound] of sausage and one quarter [of a pound] of meat with bone per week and now we are to have only three-quarters [of a pound] of sugar per month. Toilet soap is not to be had at all and a very dreadful scouring soap is three shillings and sixpence a pound.<sup>2</sup>

The state responded with a system of soup kitchens in urban centers, but it was not lost on the population that this was a poor solution to what was a much larger issue surrounding supply. Author Ernest Gläser also lived through this winter as a young man and later reported his experiences in a novel, titled *Jahrgang, 1902* (*Born in 1902*). In one passage he describes the war-bread as being “like clay,” stating that it “could well have been used to make models of small men.”<sup>3</sup> He then goes on to identify the propaganda slogan of the year as “Better war-bread than no bread.”<sup>4</sup> Gläser also makes the following statement regarding the

---

<sup>1</sup> Eric W. Osborne, *Britain's Economic Blockade of Germany, 1914 – 1919* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 161.

<sup>2</sup> Annie Dröege, *The Diary of Annie's War* (London: Grosvenor House Publishing Limited, 2012), 249-250.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Gläser, *Jahrgang 1902 [Born in 1902]*, trans. Jeffrey Verhey and Roger Chickering (Berlin, 1928, pp. 290. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=960](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=960)).

<sup>4</sup> Gläser, *Jahrgang 1902*, 291.

way the overwhelming preoccupation with survival altered the concerns of the civilians: “Soon the women who stood in the gray lines in front of the stores were talking more about their children’s hunger than their husband’s deaths.”<sup>5</sup> During the Turnip Winter the pre-existing shortages escalated from an inconvenience to a question of basic survival to civilians whose faith in the government’s ability to alleviate the conditions had faded.

As the war progressed and shortages of raw material imports became more dire, the government further alienated itself to the population by increasing the demands for sacrifice, yet not equitably supplying and distributing the necessities of life in return. The shortage of supplies prompted the government to limit civilian use of scarce goods and to introduce substitute products, such as saccharine in place of sugar. The riding of bicycles was banned in 1916; with all of the rubber from the tires being seized for war materials.<sup>6</sup> A schedule was introduced dictating certain days of the week on which meat and fat were not to be eaten. When writing about these meatless days on April 18, 1916, Annie Dröege references the joke which emerged that clothes-less days should also be introduced to conserve limited cloth supplies.<sup>7</sup> The truth behind this joke was that civilians began to question how extensive these regulations would become. Annie Dröege also mentioned the imposition of a “compelled” war loan into which all single men had to invest whatever amount they earned in excess to sixteen shillings per week.<sup>8</sup>

Tensions among the German civilians was further compounded by the failure of the *Kriegsrohstoffabteilung* (War

---

<sup>5</sup> Gläser, *Jahrgang 1902*, 292.

<sup>6</sup> Dröege, *The Diary of Annie’s War*, 221.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 198

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

Raw Materials Department) to deliver on its promise to fairly distribute rations. For example, under the rationing system, which was begun in 1915, industrial workers were given additional rations to enable them to work at more efficient rates. Other civilians viewed this favoritism with spite. There was also unofficial inequality in terms of those who had connections in the countryside or the black market through which they could augment their personal supply.<sup>9</sup> Then of course there was the proportionally high amount of foodstuffs going to the army; while 30% of the grain harvest was allocated to those in the military despite their accounting for only 11.7% of the total population, only 33.3% went to the urban civilians, who constituted 67%.<sup>10</sup> Historian C. Paul Vincent describes these tensions in the following passage from his book *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915 – 1919*: “Civilians were forced to deal with rigid competition for goods and services and an increasingly dehumanizing struggle for survival – an especially hideous struggle because it took place among fellow countrymen.”<sup>11</sup> Gläser also describes the effects of this “dehumanizing struggle,” stating simply that “hunger destroyed unity.”<sup>12</sup> Forced to cope with the debilitating shortages and regulations, civilians felt a sense of injustice at the government’s failure to provide an egalitarian system of supply and distribution.

---

<sup>9</sup> Thierry Bonzon and Belinda Davis, “Feeding the cities,” in *Capital Cities at War*, eds. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 320.

<sup>10</sup> N. P. Howard, “The Social and Political Consequences of the Allied Food Blockade of Germany, 1918-19,”

*Germany History* 11, no. 2 (April 1993): 163.

<sup>11</sup> C. Paul Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915 – 1919* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Gläser, *Jahrgang 1902*, 292.

Germany endured the blockade much longer than economists would have predicted possible, but during the final year of the war major military and domestic breakdowns began to occur at the expense of the government's popular support. Naval historian Eric W. Osborne estimates that by 1918 Germany's agricultural capabilities had diminished to those of the harvest of 1881-1882, producing only 50% of the 1913 levels.<sup>13</sup> The agricultural issue was compounded by three external factors in 1918: first, America joined the Allied blockade force in April 1917, which meant increased pressure on neutrals to abstain from trade with Germany; second, the much depended on Romanian harvests failed; and third, Ukrainian peasants burned their crops, which were due to be seized by German authorities.<sup>14</sup> The blockade was at last having the strongest effect upon the capabilities of the German war machine, with the Hindenburg program for industrial production showing signs of overheating during this time and the failure of the summer offensives in regaining dominance of the Western Front.

These imminent domestic and military collapses meant further decline into poverty for civilians. By October 1918 the cost of living in Berlin was 243% of what it had been in August 1914.<sup>15</sup> Lack of available consumer goods or food in the shops meant that wages had ceased to be any incentive. Moreover, the mental and physical fatigue caused by the gradual progression into starvation meant that the influenza epidemic, as well as diseases such as tuberculosis, thrived among the civilian population, particularly in urban centers. During the final stage of

---

<sup>13</sup> Osborne, *Britain's Economic Blockade of Germany, 1914 – 1919*, 182.

<sup>14</sup> Howard, "The Social and Political Consequences of the Allied Food Blockade of Germany," 165.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Manning, "Wages and Purchasing Power," in *Capital Cities at War*, eds. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 259.

the war Germany suffered from as many civilian casualties as military ones.<sup>16</sup> There was also what Vincent refers to as an “unraveling” of Germany’s moral fabric in the face of the struggle for basic subsistence, stating that it was “not surprising that accounts of girls selling themselves for bars of soap circulated.”<sup>17</sup>

By November 1918, the widespread starvation meant that civilian morale was virtually non-existent. As the military downfall became imminent, the government could no longer protect itself behind the distorted view of the war which had dominated propaganda since 1914. The situation was further compounded by addition of the despondency and anger which returning to their families struggling for survival incited in returning soldiers. Vincent sums up the resulting turbulent domestic environment with the following statement: “As the war approached its conclusion, the majority of Germany’s population seemed to be staggering between anarchy and starvation.”<sup>18</sup> It was under these circumstances that a new cabinet was formed on October 3, 1918 with Prince Max von Baden as Chancellor; this was a deliberate “revolution from above” to prevent a popular revolution. Yet, even as the November 11<sup>th</sup> armistice was arranged and the war officially ended, the anarchy which Vincent referred to came to fruition. On November 9, 1918, revolutionaries demanding the formation of a republic confronted the discredited government in Berlin. The announcement of the Kaiser’s abdication later that day had little to no effect on the rapidly intensifying situation. Ultimately, the revolution in Germany was the culmination of the long waning legitimacy of

---

<sup>16</sup> Matthias Blum, “Government decisions before and during the First World War and the living standards in Germany during a drastic natural experiment,” *Explorations in Economic History* 48 (2011), 557.

<sup>17</sup> Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger*, 145.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

the state, which had been undermined by its inability to win the war and to provide the necessities of life in exchange for sacrifices made by the civilian population.

Compounding the problems was the continuation of the blockade beyond the end of the military conflict, which exacerbated the suffering of the civilians and meant the new administration of Chancellor Friedrich Ebert did not gain the confidence of the population. Without even the limited avenues of trade that had existed under the blockade, the ability of the state to supply goods and foodstuffs was further undermined and the already dire situation of starvation and disease worsened. The British government chose to disregard the warnings of both the American administration and their own representatives who were still present in Germany that the degree of starvation was too severe to wait, and continued the blockade for the reasons outlined in the following report dated February 16, 1919: “while Germany is still an enemy country, it would be inadvisable to remove the menace of starvation by a too sudden and abundant supply of foodstuffs. This menace is a powerful lever for negotiation at an important moment.”<sup>19</sup>

The new German government was keen to make peace with the Allies and so was patient for the first few months, even refusing two trainloads of grain gifted to them by Russia in November 1918, an act which did not please the desperate civilians.<sup>20</sup> During the winter of 1918-1919 the daily caloric intake of civilians dropped to an average of 1,000. Coal was also extremely scarce, with only 54% of the previous year’s already

---

<sup>19</sup> Howard, “The Social and Political Consequences of the Allied Food Blockade of Germany,” 183.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.



low supply available.<sup>21</sup> German civilians were now faced with ever declining living conditions and high unemployment and inflation rates, all this in addition to suffering military defeat in the war which had been the reason for their hardships. The following is a quotation from a Bavarian woman regarding the overall feeling of hopelessness that gripped the population: “It is far worse than the war. During the war we had hope. We knew it must end one day. Now there is no hope.”<sup>22</sup> Even in defeat, there was very little sense of relief that the war was over at last because the overwhelming preoccupation with basic survival remained paramount.

Under the circumstances it is not surprising that Germany did not experience the same post-war escalation of birth rates which occurred in Paris and London. The situation of widespread disease and starvation became so dire that on March 7, 1919 the German government at last refused to continue negotiations for a peace settlement until shipments of foodstuffs were sent to Germany, which had been one of the conditions agreed to by both parties in the armistice.<sup>23</sup> The British agreed, but forced the Germans to pay 125 million gold marks for the first shipment alone.<sup>24</sup> The blockade only officially came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on July 12, 1919. Historian N.P. Howard placed the number of civil deaths during the blockade period at 245, 299 over the 1913 figure.<sup>25</sup> During the post-armistice blockade period there was a further drop in the

---

<sup>21</sup> Armin Triebel, “Coal and the Metropolis,” in *Capital Cities at War*, eds. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 201.

<sup>22</sup> Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger*, 132.

<sup>23</sup> Osborne, *Britain's Economic Blockade of Germany, 1914 – 1919*, 188.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>25</sup> Howard, “The Social and Political Consequences of the Allied Food Blockade of Germany,” 162.

standard of living for the civilians and the delays to the importation of foodstuffs did not garner popular support for the new government.

Its failure to adequately prevent or remedy the severe deterioration in civilian subsistence levels under the British blockade ultimately had detrimental ramifications for popular support of the Imperial German state. With the rationale that military victory would bring prosperity back to all Germans, the government diverted the shortages of the blockade onto its civilians who began experiencing a struggle for subsistence within the first year of the war. As the sacrifices they were called to make became more extreme, the standard of living was reduced to that of basic survival for many, and resulted in growing contempt at the government's ineffective efforts at equitable distribution of resources. In the final year of the war, as the blockade's effectiveness came to fruition, starvation and disease gripped the population. In the aftermath of military defeat in the war which had been the justification for four years of increasing sacrifice, the state's already fragile legitimacy collapsed.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

Dröege, Annie. *The Diary of Annie's War: The Diary of an Englishwoman in Germany during WWI*. London: Grosvenor House Publishing Limited, 2012.

Gläser, Ernst. *Jahrgang 1902 [Born in 1902]*. Translated by Jeffrey Verhey and Roger Chickering. Berlin, 1928, pp. 290-93.  
[http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=960](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=960)

### Secondary Sources

Blum, Matthias. "Government decisions before and during the First World War and the living standards in Germany during a drastic natural experiment." *Explorations in Economic History* 48 (2011), 556-567.

- Bonzon, Thierry and Belinda Davis. "Feeding the cities." In *Capital Cities at War*, edited by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, 305 –341. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Howard, N. P. "The Social and Political Consequences of the Allied Food Blockade of Germany, 1918-19." *Germany History* 11, no. 2 (April 1993): 161 – 188.
- Manning, Jonathan. "Wages and Purchasing Power." In *Capital Cities at War*, edited by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, 255-285. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Osborne, Eric W. *Britain's Economic Blockade of Germany, 1914 – 1919*. London: Frank Cass, 2004.
- Triebel, Armin. "Coal and the Metropolis." In *Capital Cities at War*, edited by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, 342 - 373. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Vincent, C. Paul. *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915 – 1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985.

\* Quotation from title:

C. Paul Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915 – 1919* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), 22.

## **Historiography of Survival Theory: African Culture in Religious Experience**

MICHAEL CRONK

*Theories on the transference of African culture into America's South through the Atlantic slave trade has a history of its own. This paper discusses the contributions of E. Franklin Frazier, Melville J. Herskovits, Albert Raboteau, Gayraud Willmore, Walter Rucker and others to the debate of African cultural survival versus African cultural desolation in America. It focuses on the part that evangelical Christianity played in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by giving African culture, and especially African religion, a venue for survival, adaptation and exchange. A short discussion is added regarding Creolization theory and New World historiography as methods to approach the discussion with a fresh perspective. The author suggests moving beyond regimented interpretations and toward a perspective which accepts a great exchange of culture despite African cultural suppression.*

Since the 1950s two schools of thought have prevailed concerning African cultural survival and its perceived influence with regard to religious experience in the 18<sup>th</sup> century American south. The first, pioneered by the African American Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century holds that slave culture, having lost all significant ties to African religious traditions, readily took to the new Christian tradition of their slave owners while reinterpreting it to meet their own needs. The other school, led by Melville J. Herskovits, claims that African religious culture did survive the Atlantic passage and exhibited its traditions on American soil. More recently scholars such as Raboteau, Wilmore and Rucker, have attempted to synthesize these interpretations. Their new perspectives have not brought about consensus as much as they have come to reflect the intricate matrix of influences which shaped both black and white religious experiences in America's south.

E. Franklin Frazier, African American sociologist and expert on the social conditions of slave families, argued in 1957 that the plantation structure in the south was highly effective in socializing slaves to their new lives. The psychological and physical damage which the slaves endured in transit was compounded by separation from their kinsmen, language groups and religions as they were assimilated into a melting pot and distributed across the vast south. Even if chance had it that two slaves shared the same language, they would likely be separated upon discovery.<sup>1</sup> Frazier thus argued that the white dominated plantation and community churches, which slaves were often allowed to attend, were simply another part of this assimilation.<sup>2</sup> He noted that as Methodist and Baptist Missionaries encouraged emotional conversion experiences, the slave culture took to the spiritual rites with new enthusiasm. Frazier regarded this attitude as a form of resistance against their captors' "formal type of social control."<sup>3</sup> Frazier built on earlier work by the influential American sociologist, and pupil of John Dewey; Robert E. Park. Park referenced William James with his 1919 proposal that the Negro experience was distinct within itself,<sup>4</sup> but that "the amount of African tradition which the Negro brought to the United States was very small" and that it was "very difficult to find in the South today anything that can be traced directly back to Africa."<sup>5</sup> Park accredited those superstitions which were observed among African American communities of the American south as no more

---

<sup>1</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957), 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Park, "The Conflict and Fusion of Cultures with Special Reference to the Negro," *The Journal of Negro History*, 4, no. 2 (1919): 115, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2713533>. (accessed March 16, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

than those which develop in any creative and rural communities. Park concluded that it is not even “part of Negro Christianity. It is with him, as it is with us, folk-lore pure and simple.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1958, the year after Frazier published his signature work, Anthropologist and African American studies pioneer Melville J. Herskovits reopened Park’s discussion. Herskovits agreed that what was once *uniquely* African culture may have been vanquished, but argued that the synthesis of language and culture which was viewed as “folklore” by Park was, as Park himself said, a period in the “various stages of cultural development”<sup>7</sup> and was therefore important to ongoing African-American history. <sup>8</sup> Using in-depth analysis of slave diaspora data Herskovitz developed interpretations which became the backbone of his revisionist work. <sup>9</sup> To support his cultural survival interpretation Herskovits explained how “political ferment in West Africa was something correlated with religious ferment, and brought about an interchange of deities which tended to give to the tribes in this part of Africa the gods of their neighbors.” When one tribe conquered another, gods would be appropriated creating “a conception of the relationship between comparative power of gods and the strength of those who worship them,” an important fact to remember when considering slave appropriation of their masters’ religion.<sup>10</sup> This inherently syncretic West African tradition was loosely defined by the word “fetish” because of its common use of magic charms.<sup>11</sup> Magic

---

<sup>6</sup> Park, “The Conflict and Fusion,” 116.

<sup>7</sup> Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, (Beacon Hill: Beacon Press, 1958), 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>11</sup> Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, (Beacon Hill: Beacon Press, 1958), 73

was not unfamiliar to Europeans either, Herskovits reminds. In a conflation of superstition was an opportunity for African traditions to acculturate instead of assimilate. Herskovits also supported his perspective through the study of West African funeral rites. This study was supported by professors of American religious history; Butler, Wacker and Balmer who noted in their 2000 work, *Religion in American Life*, that evidence for African funeral rites had been discovered from New York to Virginia.<sup>12</sup> Frazier's reply to Herskovits' arguments was that there were "fewer of these survivals, that they have become more attenuated, and that they are less easily recognized in the United States than in Brazil and the West Indies."<sup>13</sup>

Albert Raboteau, an African-American scholar whose work focused on African-American culture and African religion, offered a synthesis of Herskovits and Frazier with the publication of his dissertation on *Slave Religion* in 1978. His view was that African cultural survival could not be generalized, but that some areas of the South were clearly more conducive to it than others. Raboteau cited the ecstatic behaviour of laughing, jerking and fainting which were common in evangelical revivals, claiming that "[i]n this heated atmosphere slaves found sanction for an outward expression of religious emotion constant with their tradition of danced religion from Africa."<sup>14</sup> Raboteau saw the cultural exchange as primarily one directional, but that where

---

<sup>12</sup> Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 94.

<sup>13</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957), 239.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Raboteau, "Slave Autonomy and Religion," *Journal of Religious Thought*, 38, no. 2 (1981): 51-65, <http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=4974427&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2013).

permitted, remnants of African culture survived. Far from joining the Herskovits camp, however, he criticized some of Herskovits' doubtful leaps of logic, for instance the claim that ecstatic shouting in congregational worship ("shouting in the Spirit") was exclusively an African-American phenomenon, which it was not. Further, Raboteau criticized the suggestion that the survival of a particular tradition of water baptism in South Africa is evidence of African-American acceptance of the Baptist baptismal rite. He, instead, advances his own theory concerning slave conversion and baptism: that it promoted community leadership, affluence and education.<sup>15</sup> It was with this empowerment that African religious traditions could incubate and survive in the religion of the slave owners.

Dr. Gayraud Willmore, scholar of African American church history and theology wrote in 1974 that Black theology was from the beginning, different than mainstream religion, and instead grew out of traditions which preceded the Black church itself. According to Willmore, "Its first theologians were not theologically trained professors, but preacher-conjurers of the African priesthood."<sup>16</sup> He pointed to not only the first Black ministers but also to African-American revolutionaries such as Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner who he considered to be products of the Africanized Christian

---

<sup>15</sup> Albert Raboteau, "Slave Autonomy and Religion," *Journal of Religious Thought*, 38, no. 2 (1981): 57-58, <http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=4974427&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, "Black Theology," *International review of mission*, 63, no. 250 (1974): 214, <http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000743118&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2013).



experience.<sup>17</sup> That these revolutionaries were empowered by church networks and biblical rhetoric is a general consensus,<sup>18 19</sup> but Willmore argued that their authority was rooted in the soil of inherently African culture and religion.

Walter Rucker, professor of African and African-American Studies at the University of North Carolina argued in his 2006 work on African American ethnography that some 45 percent of Africans brought to Virginia from identifiable regions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century came from a particular part of South Africa: the Bight of Biafra.<sup>20</sup> Rucker considers it important to understand that significant numbers of slaves in 18<sup>th</sup> century Virginia were from the same cultural region of Africa. As a consequence, of this, Rucker argues that African culture and religion survived and manifested themselves in slave revolts.<sup>21</sup> In his 1800 revolt, Gabriel Prosser was able to rally a number of slaves to his cause of emancipation through his election as spiritual and military leader. Gabriel was able to take leadership, Rucker argued, because of “his employment and embodiment, conscious or not, of cultural metaphors and cultural spaces that enslaved Igbo [African people group] and others would find familiar and inspirational.”<sup>22</sup> Rucker argued that Denmark Vesey’s 1822 revolt attempt showed how pan-African connections linked slaves together in resistance and that “[one] of the most effective and ubiquitous of these links was the various Afro-Atlantic religious

---

<sup>17</sup> Wilmore, "Black Theology," 214.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>19</sup> Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 226.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Rucker, *The River Flows On*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 125-26.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Rucker, *The River Flows On*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 129, 163, 187.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

impulses that helped inspire slave revolts throughout the Americas.”<sup>23</sup> One of Vesey’s most influential supporters was African born conjurer, Gullah Jack Pritchard, whose power was respected by many who participated in the uprising. Gullah Jack had rebels place crab claws in their mouths as charms of invincibility;<sup>24</sup> an example of what Herskovits’ explained about Fetish religion. “That not one slave questioned the validity of Jack’s powers” argued Rucker, was “singular testament to the continuing connection they had to African spiritual beliefs and values. Vesey also drew heavily upon the Christian Old Testament for inspiration,<sup>25</sup> but it is hard to differentiate his Christian religion from the older traditions to which it was obliged. Rucker also argues that Nat Turner, leader of the 1831 slave rebellion, was a “[s]lave conjurer” even though many scholars have considered him a zealous Christian,<sup>26</sup> and so, quoting W.E.B. Du Bois, agreed that Turner represented at once a “bard, physician, judge and priest.”<sup>27</sup> In short, Rucker holds that Nat Turner represented the early black church as a “religious middle ground inhabited by numerous slave exhorters, preachers and prophets... [who] bridged the two spiritual worldviews while not completely belonging to either.”<sup>28</sup> Rucker also quoted British historian and expert in American slavery, Philip Morgan, who asserted that “African and American-born slaves were neither *tabula rasas* nor victims of a collective spiritual holocaust.

---

<sup>23</sup> Rucker, *The River Flows On*, 163-64.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-65.

<sup>25</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, (Garden City: Doubleday & company, Inc., 1972), 80-81.

<sup>26</sup> Rucker, *The River Flows On*, 187.

<sup>27</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, quoted in Walter Rucker, *The River Flows On*, 187-88.

<sup>28</sup> Rucker, *The River Flows On*, 188.

Instead, they crafted a dynamic and functional culture, despite the denial of their humanity.”<sup>29</sup>

Raboteau’s and Rucker’s syntheses made any measurement of the amount to which African culture was retained or lost increasingly elusive. Raboteau held that neither survivalism nor desolationism could be theories of absolutes. African belief could have been altered and synthesized by contact with Europeans even as “European traits could have been shaped and reinterpreted by the slaves in the light of their African past.”<sup>30</sup> Those practices which were most easily retained were also those which were most similar to the practices of their neighbours. This being the case, it made the difference between integration and assimilation difficult to measure.<sup>31</sup> If Raboteau was correct in asserting that African-Americans found meaning in Evangelical religious rites, to what extent was the inverse also true? Did evangelical white culture also adapt elements of African religion?

After Nat Turner’s slave rebellion, black churches and black leadership in mixed-race churches were considerably controlled if not outlawed. The result was an increased internalization of African-American worship. The secretive venues that slaves set up on plantations to conduct their own worship became known as Hush Harbours and served a more exclusively African-American expression of spirituality. Without the supervision or presence of slave owners they became the religious venues where slaves could express their frustration and angst.<sup>32</sup> The period leading to this was marked by increased

---

<sup>29</sup> Rucker, *The River Flows On*, 151.

<sup>30</sup> Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution of the Antebellum South*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://lib.myilibrary.com/Open.aspx?id=90784> (accessed March 18, 2013), 58-59.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>32</sup> Albert Raboteau, "The secret religion of the slaves," *Christian History*, 11,

repression; however, there was enough peaceful slave autonomy and proximity to white worshipers to allow African forms of religious expression to impose themselves on the white evangelical psyche.

Raboteau points to the “ring shout” which musicologists have considered “a particularly strong example of African-influenced dance style in the United States.”<sup>33</sup> He calls it “a convincing example of Herskovits’ theory of reinterpretation [with regard to] African traditions.”<sup>34</sup> The camp-meeting revivals were another venue of belief transmission which “presented a congenial setting for slaves to merge African patterns of response with Christian interpretations of the experience of spirit possession”<sup>35</sup> Historian of black and religious history Mechal Sobel wrote that shouting was by no means a foreign concept to the ecstatic religious culture of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A certain chest chanting shout or “singing exercise” however, which was observed among whites, appears to have developed “under the unconscious influence of black practices. . . . It [was] clearly an African form which was brought to America and penetrated by Christian meaning.”<sup>36</sup> Hart and Anne Nelsen and Raytha Yokley added that the “religious growth of millions of men, even though they be slaves, [could not] be without potent influence upon their contemporaries,”<sup>37</sup> instead there was, inevitably, a great exchange of culture and superstition. <sup>38</sup>

---

no. 1 (1992): 42-46,

<http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9604291019&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 68.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 140.

<sup>37</sup> Hart Nelson, Anne Nelson, and Raytha Yokley, *The Black Church in*

Atlantic Studies is an emerging discipline of historical work which begins to look beyond tradition or modernity as “winners” in a period and geography so replete with crossings of religion, race and heritage. Creolization has become a term to explain this phenomenon. It assumes that the experience of African-Americans is marked by a dynamic overlapping and reinvention of human culture. On one hand, Professor of African American studies at Duke University, J. Lorand Matory, argued in 2000 that much of what appeared to be survivals of African culture in America have been “in fact shaped by African or African-American cultural politics that long post-dated the slave trade.”<sup>39</sup> By looking at cultural, historic, and political factors, Matory argued that with enough pressure a culture emerged which was neither African nor American in essence. Rather “Africa and its American diaspora reflect the effects of an enduring dialogue and a dialectic of mutual transformation over time.”<sup>40</sup> In contrast James Sidbury, professor and specialist in slave and Atlantic studies, argued in 2007 that in view of the diversity of eighteenth century slavery, one brush could not possibly paint a pan-Atlantic picture. He instead advocated a localized approach that would go beyond a debate of cultural change vs. cultural survival, looking instead toward “a much messier picture in which different African peoples came together in different settings to develop a range of cultural responses to New World slavery.”<sup>41</sup> The same effect can

---

*America*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), 31.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>39</sup> J. Matory, "Surpassing "Survival": On the Urbanity of "Traditional Religion" in the Afro-Atlantic World," *The Black Scholar*, 30, no. 3/4 (2000): 41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41068897> (accessed March 19, 2013).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> James Sidbury, "Association, Globalization, Creolization, and the Not-So-Peculiar Institution," *The Journal of Southern History*, 73, no. 3 (2007): 629-630, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27649484> (accessed March 19, 2013).

be applied to the European-American experience. Migration historian Anthony Pagden described it well in a 2003 article; “[f]or many it has been a cathartic experience, a forced recognition that the Creole nations that have evolved out of the disappearance of the old European empires have never been one and united.”<sup>42</sup>

In 2001 Historian Canizares Esguerra released his book on New World historiography, which called into question the historical debates and the value systems by which we critique them. He aspired to “assume that the emphasis in traditional historiography on identities as oppositional binaries... misses many of the actual interactions,” paving the road for a more even historical evaluation. Every age has its historians with individual viewpoints, biases, methods and resources. It is through their lenses that the student of Atlantic migration must assess the historiography of African survivalism in religious experience. Departing from the survivalist theories of Herskovits and the desolationist precedent of Frazier, a Creolization theory has been tentatively approached, but with criticism from historians such as Sidbury, who holds that the picture is highly diverse and needs further localized research. That an African religious heritage influenced the African-American church in America’s south in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century has been accepted in recent syntheses of Frazier and Herskovits, however, the extent to which this affected white evangelical congregations is harder to measure due to African-American repression. What is clear is that culture is not static and that much more can be said in this conversation between absolutes.

---

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Pagden, *Peoples and Empires: A short History of European Migration, Exploration, and Conquest, from Greece to the Present*, (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 164.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Butler, Jon, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer. *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Esguerra, Canizares. *How to Write the History of the New World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Frazier, E. Franklin. *Black Bourgeoisie*. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957.
- Herskovits, Melville. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Beacon Hill: Beacon Press, 1958.
- Matory, J. "Surpassing "Survival": On the Urbanity of "Traditional Religion" in the Afro-Atlantic World." *The Black Scholar* 30, no. 3/4 (2000): 36-43 . <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41068897> (accessed March 19, 2013).
- Mitchell, Henry. *Black Church Beginnings: The Long Hidden Realities of the First Years*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans publishing co, 2004.
- Nelson, Hart, Anne Nelson, and Raytha Yokley. *The Black Church in America*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971.
- Pagden, Anthony. *Peoples and Empires: A short History of European Migration, Exploration, and Conquest, from Greece to the Present*. New York: Modern Library, 2003.
- Park, Robert. "The Conflict and Fusion of Cultures with Special Reference to the Negro." *The Journal of Negro History* 4, no. 2 (1919): 111-133. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2713533> . (accessed March 16, 2013).
- Raboteau, Albert. "Slave Autonomy and Religion." *Journal of Religious Thought*. 38. no. 2 (1981): 51-65.  
<http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=4974427&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2013).
- Raboteau, Albert. *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution of the Antebellum South*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.  
<http://lib.myilibrary.com/Open.aspx?id=90784> (accessed March 18, 2013).
- Raboteau, Albert. "The Secret Religion of the Slaves." *Christian History*. 11. no. 1 (1992): 42-46.  
<http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9604291019&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2013).
- Rucker, Walter. *The River Flows On*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.
- Sidbury, James. "Association, Globalization, Creolization, and the Not-So-Peculiar Institution." *The Journal of Southern History*. 73. no. 3 (2007): 617-630. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27649484> . (accessed March 19, 2013).
- Sobel, Mechal. *Trabelin' On: The Slave journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979.

Wilmore, Gayraud. *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*. Garden City: Doubleday & company, Inc., 1972.

Wilmore, Gayraud. "Black Theology." *International review of mission*. 63. no. 250 (1974): 211-231. <http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0000743118&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2013).



## The Emergence of Gender Role Anxieties in the Weimar Republic

SARAH FITTERER

*In response to Richard McCormick's examination of the portrayal of male gender anxieties in film in Weimar Germany, this article examines the evolution of the patriarchal identification of masculinity in Weimar Germany, with a particular focus on various social factors that contributed to the development of the sense of uncertainty about the role of German men that McCormick examines in cinematic media. Beginning with the Great War and its influence on frontline troops, the article continues on to examine psychological and economic forces that undermined the traditional idea of male identity as a separate phenomenon from the emergence of the modern, liberated 'New Woman' in Weimar society.*

In the nineteenth century, household structure in Germany was still determined by the social ideology of patriarchy, with “wives and children [remaining] under the all powerful thumb of the *Übervater*,”<sup>1</sup> Anti-feminist organizations were formed in the late Wilhelmine years with the goal of cementing “the most basic of propositions...that women were properly confined to the domestic sphere of home and family,” and that the “functions of the private sphere were...subordinate to those of the public,” that is, the realm occupied by men.<sup>2</sup> However, following the First World War, a crisis of traditional gender roles emerged in the Weimar Republic. In his article “Private Anxieties/Public

---

\* Meaning “father figure.”

<sup>1</sup> Tom Taylor, “Images of Youth and the Family in Wilhelmine Germany: Toward a Reconsideration of the German Sonderweg,” *German Studies Review* 15, German Identity (Winter, 1992): 55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1430640>.

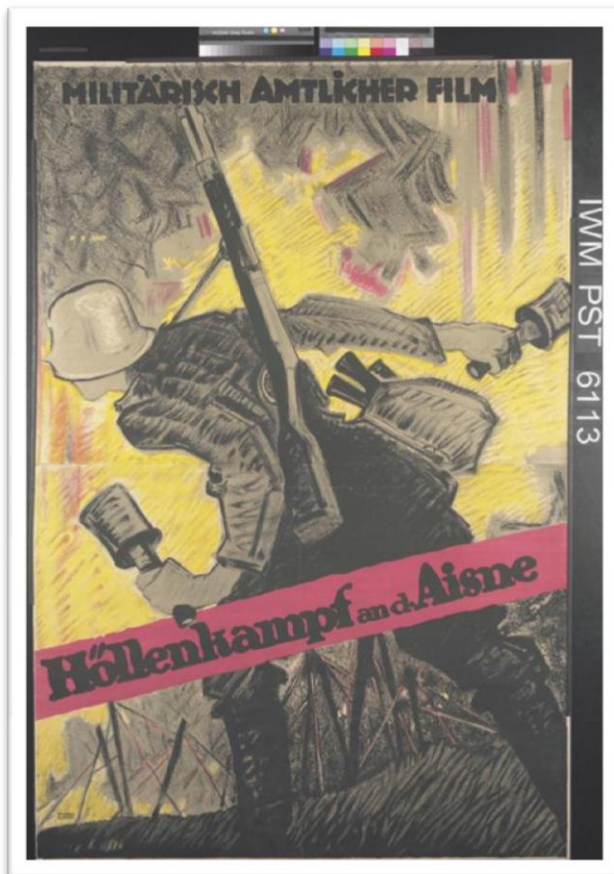
<sup>2</sup> Roger Chickering, “‘Casting Their Gaze More Broadly’: Women’s Patriotic Activism in Imperial Germany,” *Past & Present*, 118 (Feb., 1988): 156-157, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650834>.

Projections: ‘New Objectivity,’ Male Subjectivity, and Weimar Cinema,” Richard McCormick examines the use of film during the cultural era known as ‘New Objectivity’ as a tool to express male anxieties regarding changing gender roles in the Weimar Republic. He argues that the modernized technology of cinema acted as a “[tool] for examining and controlling precisely the destabilization that women were seen to represent...”<sup>3</sup> In particular, McCormick focuses on the ‘New Woman’ and he examines how this unfamiliar, independent, and liberated creature was the focus of these gender insecurities that plagued German men in the Weimar Republic. This paper does not endeavor to prove or disprove McCormick’s argument. Rather, this paper seeks to explore the causal factors that fostered the development of those private anxieties that McCormick observes in culture in the Weimar period. Male gender insecurities in Weimar Germany were not generated by the emergence of a new definition of femininity. Men in the Weimar Republic did not suddenly feel threatened as women became more visible in the public sphere. Male anxieties about gender roles in the Weimar Republic originated from the erosion of the traditional German sense of masculinity. A series of political, social, and economical factors, independent of women, combined to challenge the conventional order of life that men were used to, which resulted in the undermining, or perhaps redefining, of the traditional role of a German man. As post-war men embodied the weakness of the Weimar Republic, the arrival of women into the public eye signified a correlation between the decline of the dominant German male and the rise of a new type of woman. This paper shall examine the forces that challenged the German

---

<sup>3</sup> Richard W. McCormick, “Private Anxieties/Public Projections: ‘New Objectivity,’ Male Subjectivity, and Weimar Cinema,” *Women in German Yearbook* 10 (1994): 8, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20688794>.

understanding of masculinity. It shall then look at how the sudden visibility of women confronted German men with physical manifestation of their internal fears about changing gender roles in the Weimar Republic; however, it was the combination of external forces eroding the traditional ideal of masculinity that enabled the emergence of an emancipated woman to have such profound effect on the security of the identity of German men in the Weimar Republic.



**Figure A:** Hans Rudi Erdt, *Höllenkampf an der Aisne* [Desperate Battle on the Aisne], Poster collection at Imperial War Museum, London. <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/8641>.

The Great War had a devastating effect on the men of Germany. The modernization of military technology had given birth to a new kind of warfare where soldiers spent days imprisoned in the trenches, showered by bombs dropped by a faceless enemy.<sup>4</sup> According to Susan Funkenstein, the popular image of the ideal German man that was perpetuated during World War One, by artists such as Otto Dix, was of a “hoped-for leader of the masses.”<sup>5</sup> However, as the war dragged on, soldiers were forced to adopt a more inactive role as they cowered in the ground, which contradicted the image of the stoic hero that was being perpetuated on the home front through media publications and political endorsements.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the representation of the active soldier in combat [Figure A], the soldiers in the trenches were dominated by the new mechanics of battle. The brutal conditions of the front eroded away at the widely held image of masculinity, as the war of attrition resulted in the inability for men to participate actively in their circumstances. The industrialized nature of warfare and the inability to control their circumstances forced soldiers to adopt a passive role. The war was in every way a male event. Yet, in an environment in which women were completely absent, German masculinity was challenged. Because of the new nature of warfare, the soldiers were unable to initiate action; they had to shift into a more

---

<sup>4</sup> Jason Crouthamel, “Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 1 (Jan., 2008): 67, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30114369>.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Laikin Funkenstein, “A Man's Place in a Woman's World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany,” *Women in German Yearbook* 21, (2005): 170, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20688251>.

<sup>6</sup> Dora Apel, “‘Heroes’ and ‘Whores’: The Politics of Gender in Weimar Antiwar Imagery,” *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 3 (Sep., 1997): 368, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3046258>.

dependent role. In this masculine environment, the idealized role of men as active leaders was undermined by the circumstances of trench warfare.

The psychological effects of the war contributed to the erosion of masculinity amongst the German soldiers. The heroic men who had gone marching to the front in 1914 stumbled home in 1918, reeling from their defeat. The humiliation of loss would be heightened in 1919 by the addition of the war guilt clause to the Treaty of Versailles. This blow was further exacerbated by the increase of perceived sexual disorders amongst men returning from the front. Medical professionals portrayed returning soldiers as “as sadistic and sexually deviant men who transmitted immorality and brutality learned at the front to German society.”<sup>7</sup> This image was promulgated in popular culture. The famous artist Otto Dix, who served as a soldier on the front, drew the disturbing image of a soldier raping a nun, which suggested that the violence of the war was being transposed into the sexual practices of former soldiers.<sup>8</sup> According to Jason Crouthamel’s analysis of German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld’s study *Sexual History of the World War*, the heightened atmosphere of the front provided an ideal environment for male same-sex acts to be expressed “as a necessary bonding between men.”<sup>9</sup> The apparent spread of sadism and homosexuality, resulting from what Hirschfeld had labeled “war neuroses” in his 1941 publication undermined the popular belief that logic and rationale dominated a man’s sexual drive.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Hirschfeld associated the homosexual with a

---

<sup>7</sup> Crouthamel, “Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma,” 78.

<sup>8</sup> Apel, “‘Heroes’ and ‘Whores’,” 372.

<sup>9</sup> Crouthamel, “Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma,” 72; Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sexual History of the World War*, trans. unknown (New York: Cadillac Publishing Co, 1941).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-65, 71.

“caretaker who [belonged] in the private sphere...[doing] women’s work,” serving to further isolate struggling soldiers from an identity of masculine strength.<sup>11</sup> The manifestation of these sexual abnormalities, or at least the perception that such psychological trauma was present amongst veterans, was evidence of the lack of control that German men returning from the front had over their identity. The nature of trench warfare forced men out of their role as leaders and into a position of submissive followers as they waited in the trenches. The same brutality that had forced these men to be passive seemingly damaged a primary psychological and biological function that was an identifiable sign of proper masculinity: their heterosexuality. This psychological trauma was directly correlated to the experience of the war front, which, as stated above, was an atmosphere devoid of women. The increasing insecurity of masculinity in Weimar Germany was rooted in a lack of control that men had over their situation on the front, which was then further eroded by the psychological trauma suffered as a result of the brutality of warfare.

The sense of a lack of control that German men experienced at the front and the challenge to the German definition of masculinity was manifested in visible forms following the Great War. The November Revolution of 1919 resulted in the establishment of a new democratic republic whose inability to maintain political stability resulted in the turnover of

---

<sup>11</sup> David James Prickett, “The Soldier Figure in Discourses on Masculinity in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany,” *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 44, no. 1 (Feb., 2008): 70, <http://utpjournals.metapress.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/content/p1n23/t1888403127/?genre=article&id=doi%3a10.3138%2fseminar.44.1.68>

fourteen different governments between 1920 and 1932.<sup>12</sup> The weakness of the Weimar Republic reflected the weakness of the returning soldiers, as both struggled to establish a strong identity within Germany. The 1920s in Weimar Germany were bookended by hyperinflation and economic depression. As a result, the Mark collapsed in 1923 and the ensuing depression resulted in the unemployment of over six million people by 1932.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the identity of the man as a breadwinner and provider was threatened in the years following the Great War. The emotional and psychological attacks on German masculinity were now exacerbated by the political and financial threats that were jeopardizing the traditional role that German men had held in society prior to the Great War. These external forces had challenged the ideal of German masculinity without the influence of women. Therefore, the emergence of women into new social positions within Weimar Germany did not create these insecurities, but added further strain to an already fractured male population.

As men became increasingly insecure as their roles changed, they became increasingly aware of the presence of women in the public sphere. The visibility of women in the public sphere can be attributed as a response to the absence of men. Catherine Dollard observes that “women had to do their part to fill the spaces left behind by killed or mutilated men.”<sup>14</sup>The

---

<sup>12</sup> Ruth Henig, *The Weimar Republic 1919-1933*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 27.

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas H. Dimsdale, Nicholas Horsewood and Arthur van Riel, “Unemployment in Interwar Germany: An Analysis of the Labor Market, 1927-1936,” *The Journal of Economic History* 66, no. 3 (Sep., 2006): 778, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3874859>.

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Dollard, “Marital Status and the Rhetoric of the Women's Movement in World War I Germany,” *Women in German Yearbook* 22 (2006): 223, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20688270>.

percentage of women in the workforce between 1907 and 1933 increased very slightly from 33.8% to 35.6% of the total female population; however, the percentage of women in white-collar employment, such as office administrative positions, almost doubled between 1907 and 1925.<sup>15</sup> The increase of women in posts traditionally held by men was a response to their absence. Their movement into the public eye was not intended as a challenge to the role of men in society. It was borne out of necessity. However, for defeated soldiers returning home, the increased visibility of women in the public professional sphere was a new and unfamiliar change on the home front. German soldiers had spent the Great War trapped in their trenches, while women had gone out into society and actively participated in the economy. While this new phenomenon was not a causal factor for male anxieties, the appearance of women in white-collar employment contributed to uncertainties about the shifting roles of both men and women in Weimar Germany.

McCormick examines Weimar filmography in order to identify the “destabilization” that women seemingly represented; namely, they were portrayed as a threat to the “stable, rational, scientific modernity” that was associated with the ideal male identity”.<sup>16</sup> However, the unstable nature of the Weimar Republic was a result of the actions and policies of men. The Great War had been started, fought, and ended by men. The resulting psychological and social trauma that occurred originated in the trenches, a place completely devoid of women. The fractured governments of the Weimar Republic that were unable to steer Germany out of economic disaster were all led by men. As the

---

<sup>15</sup> Günter Berghaus, “Girllkultur: Feminism, Americanism, and Popular Entertainment in Weimar Germany,” *Journal of Design History* 1, no. 3/4 (1988): 193 & 195, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1315711>.

<sup>16</sup> McCormick, “Private Anxieties/Public Projections,” 8.



roles of men in the Weimar Republic were being challenged due to economic crises, a ‘New Woman’ emerged, one who had achieved “economic independence...through gainful employment.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, this ‘New Woman’ adopted a more traditionally masculine appearance. Gunter Berthas describes her as having a “garçon-like figure” and “bobbed hair.”<sup>18</sup> This new type of femininity embodied traditional elements of masculinity, from their physical image to their role in the public sphere. The emergence of the ‘New Woman’ in Weimar Germany can therefore be seen as a response to the weakness of German men and to the fractured, unpredictable nature of society in the Weimar Republic. This modern femininity coincided with the decline of conventional masculinity. The blossoming of the modern woman in the Weimar Republic can be attributed to the physical vacancies left by deaths of thousands of German soldiers, as well as the ideological and psychological changes resulting from the Great War. This strong and unfamiliar woman did not begin to undermine the sense of identity for German men; their weakened position within Weimar society provided room for her to grow. In 1929, writer Elsa Herman stated “the woman of today [was] oriented exclusively toward the present.”<sup>19</sup> After the Great War, it was apparent that the future was unpredictable and the return of psychologically traumatized soldiers indicated that the traditional structure and roles of German society were

---

<sup>17</sup> Elsa Herrmann, 1929, “This is the New Woman,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, (1994): Source accessed at *German History in Documents and Images* database, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=4779](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=4779).

<sup>18</sup> Berghaus, “Girllkultur,” 210.

<sup>19</sup> Elsa Herrmann, 1929, “This is the New Woman,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, (1994): Source accessed at *German History in Documents and Images* database, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=4779](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=4779).

uncertain, and it was in this environment that the ‘New Woman’ flourished. The gender insecurities that German men wrestled with were not caused by the emergence of a new masculine woman. The traditional understanding of a German male identity had already deteriorated as a result of the barbarity of the Great War, its psychological effects, and the socio-economic factors in the Weimar Republic in the post-war years. The evolution of the ‘New Woman’ was a reaction to this deterioration and, while the ascendancy of a new kind of femininity heightened the insecurities of men the Weimar Republic, the ‘New Woman’ was not the cause of male anxieties over gender roles.

This is not to say that men did not have anxieties about the changing roles of men and women in Weimar Germany. However, their fears were not simply a response to a new strong woman. Their fears stemmed from the erosion of their own identity, which in turn was exacerbated by the change in women’s roles and identities. During the Great War, German soldiers were confined to their own private sphere in the trenches, forced to wait as modern technology replaced hand-to-hand combat with anonymous killing through shellfire. The unexpected violence and carnage in the war was seen to have disturbed ‘healthy’ male sexuality, which only served to emphasize the belief that that the idealized and promulgated concept of German masculinity, as discussed earlier, was shifting. These insecurities were fostered in male-dominated surroundings; the disintegration of the traditional definition of German masculinity occurred in the absence of females. The humiliation of defeat furthered their insecurity, as the image of the heroic German soldier disseminated through society was shattered. Practically, the typical role of men in society was challenged by the economic catastrophes of postwar Germany, which combined with the effects of the Great War to undermine the traditional identity of German men. The

appearance of women in the public view, and the emergence of a new type of femininity, was not the causes of male gender anxieties in the Weimar Republic. Male gender anxieties in the Weimar Republic began with the erosion of traditional male roles and identities as a result of the external forces of war, barbarity, and postwar political and economic instability. An unfamiliar and independent woman emerged in the Weimar Republic in response to the economic and social voids created by the destabilizing of the traditional order of society in Germany. The ‘New Woman’ did not cause the gender anxieties that McCormick observes in the cultural media of ‘New Objectivity’; her emergence was in conjunction with the decline of the conventional definition of masculinity.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

Erdt, Hans Rudi. *Höllenkampf an der Aisne [Desperate Battle on the Aisne]*. Poster collection, Imperial War Museum, London. <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/8641>.

### Secondary Sources

- Apel, Dora. “‘Heroes’ and ‘Whores’: The Politics of Gender in Weimar Antiwar Imagery.” *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 3 (Sep., 1997): 366-384. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3046258>.
- Berghaus, Günter. “Girllkultur: Feminism, Americanism, and Popular Entertainment in Weimar Germany.” *Journal of Design History* 1, no. 3/4 (1988): 193-219. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1315711>
- Chickering, Roger. “‘Casting Their Gaze More Broadly’: Women’s Patriotic Activism in Imperial Germany.” *Past & Present*, 118 (Feb., 1988): 156-185. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650834>.
- Crouthamel, Jason. “Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 1 (Jan., 2008): 60-84. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30114369>.
- Dimsdale, Nicholas H., Horsewood, Nicholas, and van Riel, Arthur. “Unemployment in Interwar Germany: An Analysis of the Labor Market, 1927-1936.” *The Journal of Economic History* 66, no. 3 (Sep., 2006): 778-808. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3874859>.

- Dollard, Catherine. "Marital Status and the Rhetoric of the Women's Movement in World War I Germany." *Women in German Yearbook* 22 (2006): 211-235, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20688270>.
- Funkenstein, Susan Laikin. "A Man's Place in a Woman's World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany." *Women in German Yearbook* 21, (2005): 163-191. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20688251>
- Henig, Ruth. *The Weimar Republic 1919-1933*. London: Routledge, 1998. <http://lib.myilibrary.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/Open.aspx?id=32981>
- Hirschfeld, Magnus. *Sexual History of the World War*. Translator unknown. New York: Cadillac Publishing Co, 1941.
- McCormick, Richard W. "Private Anxieties/Public Projections: "New Objectivity," Male Subjectivity, and Weimar Cinema." *Women in German Yearbook* 10 (1994): 1-18, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20688794>..
- Pricket, David James. "The Soldier Figure in Discourses on Masculinity in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany." *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 44, no. 1 (Feb., 2008): 68-86, <http://utpjournals.metapress.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/content/p1n23t1888403127/?genre=article&id=doi%3a10.3138%2fseminar.44.1.68>
- Taylor, Tom. "Images of Youth and the Family in Wilhelmine Germany: Toward a Reconsideration of the German Sonderweg." *German Studies Review* 15, German Identity (Winter, 1992): 55 -73, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1430640>.

## **The Public Face of the Royal Canadian Air Force: The Importance of Air Shows and Demonstration Teams to the R.C.A.F.**

LUKE F. KOWALSKI

*This article examines the history of Royal Canadian Air Force (R.C.A.F.) air show participation and demonstrations teams, and argues these teams have provided many important services and benefits to the R.C.A.F. The article draws on information from oral history interviews of three retired R.C.A.F. officers conducted by the author. The interviewees refute common criticisms of demonstration teams, such as being prohibitively expensive or as being glorifications of war. They provide examples that detail how these teams are an important tool used to display the skill and professionalism of the force, and are also a significant part of public relations and recruiting. Based on these testimonies, and supporting secondary sources, the article concludes that demonstration teams, such as the Snowbirds, are an integral part of today's R.C.A.F.*

For almost as long as Canada has had an air force, it has had demonstration flyers displaying the skill and daring required to be a pilot.<sup>1</sup> From the first formation flight in 1919 on, demonstration teams have played an important role in keeping the Royal Canadian Air Force (R.C.A.F.) engaged and interacting with the Canadian public.<sup>2</sup> Examining the history of R.C.A.F. air show participation and demonstration flying reveals that Canadian demonstration teams regularly faced adversity and criticisms, such as being too expensive or having ulterior motives other than public interaction, despite the fact that they have provided many important services and benefits to the R.C.A.F.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dan Dempsey, *A Tradition of Excellence: Canada's Air Show Team Heritage*, (Victoria, B.C. High Flight Enterprises, 2002), 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

R.C.A.F. participation at air shows is not only an important way to demonstrate the skill and professionalism of the force, but also a significant part of public relations and a vital recruiting tool. For these reasons, today's 431 Squadron Snowbirds are an integral part of the Canadian Forces.

Rather than relying on secondary sources, this paper's argument will primarily be supported by the information drawn from three oral history interviews conducted by the author of this paper. Reliable sources on the topic of Canadian air shows and demonstration flying is limited, and, as military historian Edward M. Coffman points out, if one seeks information "you must seek it among the impressions which can be obtained only from those who have lived a life amid particular surroundings."<sup>3</sup> The three interviewees are Major General Scott Eichel (Retired), former base commander and Chief Air Doctrine officer;<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Dempsey (Retired), former Snowbird lead and author of *A Tradition of Excellence*;<sup>5</sup> and Captain Gary Brown (Retired), a former pilot instructor and civilian air controller at the Dubai International Air Show.<sup>6</sup> The strength of these interviews lies in the vast combined experience of all three R.C.A.F. men, as well as in air show functions and organization. However, all three being former R.C.A.F. officers suggests a possible bias to their opinions on the subjects raised in the paper. For this reason, the paper will use their accounts to answer criticism that have

---

<sup>3</sup> Edward M. Coffman, "Talking About War: Reflections on Doing Oral history and Military History," (*Journal of American History*, Vol.87, No.2, Sept. 2000), 591.

<sup>4</sup> Maj. Gen. Scott Eichel, interview by Luke F. Kowalski, 14 March 2013, (Recording, University of Victoria Oral History Collection, Victoria).

<sup>5</sup> Lt. Col. Dan Dempsey, interview by Luke F. Kowalski, 18 March, 2013, (Recording, University of Victoria Oral History Collection, Victoria).

<sup>6</sup> Capt. Gary Brown, interview by Luke F. Kowalski, 18 March 2013, (Recording, University of Victoria Oral History Collection, Victoria).

been levelled at R.C.A.F. demonstration teams and air show participation, and will use their anecdotal experience to back up claims made by other sources such as official histories and government documents.

While the entity that is currently the R.C.A.F. has changed designations multiple times since its inception as the Canadian Air Force in the 1920s, this paper will solely use the term Royal Canadian Air Force (R.C.A.F.).<sup>7</sup> This is to avoid confusion and to incorporate all of the interviewer's information seamlessly. It is also important to note that the historical section of this paper will rely largely on Lt. Col. Dan Dempsey's book *A Tradition of Excellence*. There is a lack of scholarly literature concerning the topic of R.C.A.F. demonstration flying, and Dempsey's book is often cited as the seminal source on the subject. For example, the author of one of the most detailed histories of Canada's Air Forces, Larry Milberry, states that, "*A Tradition of Excellence* eclipsed all books covering the topic."<sup>8</sup> Both the official and popular histories of the R.C.A.F. also contain sparse accounts of the importance of air shows and demonstration teams. The literature that does exist on the topic is either from celebratory popular sources, self-produced by the R.C.A.F., or by anti-war and peace movement writers and thus is largely unreliable for scholarly use. For these reasons, *A Tradition of Excellence* stands alone as a well-researched and accountable source.

To explain the importance of demonstration flying teams to the R.C.A.F., it is necessary to understand the historical significance that demonstration flying has had since the Force's

---

<sup>7</sup> Richard Oliver Mayne, "Royal Matters: Symbolism, History, and the Significance of the R.C.A.F.'s Name Change, 1909-2011," *The Royal Canadian Air Force Journal* (Vol. 1, No. 4, Fall 2012), 22.

<sup>8</sup> Larry Milberry, *Canada's Air Force: At War and Peace*, V.3, (Toronto, Ontario: CANAV Books, 2000), 130.

inception. February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1909 marked the first instance of powered flight in Canada.<sup>9</sup> Soon after, aviation enthusiasts were inspired to create aeronautics clubs and began hosting display meets where they showed off their inventions and daring tricks to a curious Canadian public.<sup>10</sup> Military interest in demonstration flying would not take form until after the First World War, when war heroes like Billy Bishop and William Barker –both national celebrities by this point— returned home to Canada, and were encouraged and delighted to perform aerial demonstrations in front of crowds across the country.<sup>11</sup> These “barnstormers” put on aerobatic displays for civilians who wanted to see what the pilots had done in the war, demonstrating the skill and daring required to be an R.C.A.F. pilot.<sup>12</sup> The first official R.C.A.F. demonstration team, “The Siskins”, would be formed in 1929, and would tour the country during a Trans-Canada air pageant performing for hundreds of thousands of Canadians.<sup>13</sup> It was at these pageant events that Air Force officers noted the “positive effect the pageant had on public opinion.”<sup>14</sup> Officially disbanded in 1932, The Siskin’s would make occasional performances at various events, but costs and lack of equipment would keep them grounded; Canada would not have another official team until after the Second World War.<sup>15</sup>

After the Second World War, Canada had the fourth largest allied air force, a considerable reputation, and a wealth of

---

<sup>9</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 12

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 22.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Vance. “The Royal Canadian Air Force and the Campaign for Air-mindedness.” *Canadian Aerospace Power Studies, V. 3: Combat If Necessary, But Not Necessarily Combat*, (Ottawa, Department of National Defence, 2011), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 25-37.

<sup>14</sup> Vance, “The Royal”, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 40.



experienced personnel and equipment.<sup>16</sup> Flying combat capable and contemporary aircraft, various R.C.A.F. demonstration teams would fly Supermarine Seafires, Grumman Avengers, and P-51 Mustangs at events across Canada.<sup>17</sup> The first jet powered Canadian team, the “Blue Devils,” would fly the De Havilland Vampire in 1948, showing just how important it was for the R.C.A.F. to demonstrate its new equipment to the public.<sup>18</sup> Captain Brown recounted the impact of this demonstration flying on his small town in Saskatchewan: “One person from our town was on a demonstration team way back, and he flew a jet over our small town when I was a kid, and I remember that. I thought ‘by gar I’d like to do that someday’.”<sup>19</sup> Dempsey refers to the 1950s as the “Fabulous Fifties” in which a wealth of jet powered teams flew the newest aircraft and generated “great fame for Canada’s military services, at home and abroad.”<sup>20</sup> The year 1959 saw the formation of the R.C.A.F. Golden Hawks, flying the Canadair Sabre and who “represented everything that was glorious about the R.C.A.F.”<sup>21</sup> Air shows of the period set out to inspire Canadians, and Dempsey himself recounted in interview how his interest in the R.C.A.F. was inspired by demonstration flying.

[My interest] was fostered at a very young age, and it happened to be fostered at the first air show I ever went to and that was the 6th of June 1959. It happened to be at R.C.A.F. station Rockcliffe in Ottawa where my dad was posted at the time, and it also happened to be the first air show for the R.C.A.F. Golden Hawks ... I was quite

---

<sup>16</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 43.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-57.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>19</sup> Brown, interview.

<sup>20</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 79.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

mesmerized, even as a 6 year old boy, by the Golden Hawks, by the Red Knight, and by all the other aircraft that flew.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, air demonstrations played an integral part in Lt. Col, Dempsey's R.C.A.F. enlistment. No doubt there were others like young Dempsey who were inspired by the air show teams of the fifties to join the R.C.A.F. as well.

The Golden Hawks would be disbanded in 1964, again due to budgetary concerns, and because the Sabre was being retired from combat duty.<sup>23</sup> The "Red Knight" was a series of aircraft painted in a distinct bright red paint scheme that continued the tradition of demonstration flying; however, it would also get axed due to budgetary concerns in 1970.<sup>24</sup> Other famous teams such as "The Golden Centennaires" flying the Tutor jet trainer, would face similar fates, although they were widely received and revered by the public.<sup>25</sup> Demonstration flying was not dead in Canada at this point; however, no teams would gain the fame of these past flyers until the inception of the Snowbirds.

The Snowbirds first took flight in 1971, and after seven years of continual crowd amazement they became an official permanent squadron in 1978, when they were inaugurated as the 431 Demonstration Squadron.<sup>26</sup> According to the official history on the Snowbirds website, this inauguration "was a milestone in the history of Canada's formation teams", as 431 was the first

---

<sup>22</sup> Dempsey, interview.

<sup>23</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 187.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>26</sup> "Snowbirds: Full History," Royal Canadian Air Force, Department of National Defence, Government of Canada, Date Modified: 9 December 2008, <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/snowbirds/page-eng.asp?id=1568>, (accessed 29 March 2013).

acrobatic team to be granted full squadron status.<sup>27</sup> Existing to this day, the Snowbirds perform “before millions of spectators across North America, and are honoured to carry on the fine traditions established by their forerunners.”<sup>28</sup> The squadron’s official mandate is “to demonstrate the skill, professionalism and teamwork of the Canadian Forces personnel for public relations and recruiting purposes.”<sup>29</sup> The Snowbirds have cemented a place for themselves in R.C.A.F. history, and Major General Eichel feels that they have gone “from being an Air Force aerobatic team to a national icon.”<sup>30</sup> This reputation has been retained even though critics of the Snowbirds, and of demonstration flying in general, still exist.

Throughout this history, it is stated that Canadian demonstration teams have been expected to display the skill, training, and abilities of the R.C.A.F.’s pilots and machines to the public. Government sources on air shows support this. The air show section on the current R.C.A.F. website claims that air shows “allow Canadians a firsthand look at the equipment, training and specialized skills of the men and women of the air force” and that “crews demonstrate their precision flying... putting their skills and training to the test.”<sup>31</sup> When asked if this was the case, Captain Brown wholeheartedly agreed: “when you watch the Snowbirds, and you see the precision they operate with, you understand just how professional those guys are, and I think that any Canadian that views a demonstration team like that is

---

<sup>27</sup> “Snowbirds: Full history.”

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 567.

<sup>30</sup> Eichel, interview.

<sup>31</sup> “Air Shows”, Royal Canadian Air Force, Department of National Defence, Government of Canada, Date Modified: 21 December 2011, <http://www.rcf-arc.forces.gc.ca/v2/page-eng.asp?id=54>, (Accessed 27 March 2013).

proud.”<sup>32</sup> Lt. Col. Dempsey also agreed that “the opportunity to demonstrate the skill, and professionalism of the Canadian Forces is also an opportunity, and I’ve seen this so many times, to inspire young people - and they don’t have to be inspired to join the military...it’s an inspiration to go and perhaps better their own lives.”<sup>33</sup> Participating in air show demonstrations allows the air force an opportunity to display these attributes, and although this is the official statement on why R.C.A.F. demonstration teams fly, they perform other important functions as well.

One of these important functions is direct public relations. Air shows provided a way for the R.C.A.F. to interact directly with the Canadian public. Maj. Gen. Eichel feels this is important so that “it’s not just a bunch of faceless people flying airplanes for your entertainment like a circus, those are real people.”<sup>34</sup> This is reflected in today’s demonstration team’s modus operandi. The organizer’s package for those wishing to book an R.C.A.F. demonstration team states that “to truly act as Ambassadors for Canada and the Canadian Forces we encourage, where possible, public appearances.”<sup>35</sup> It also explains interview procedures, autograph opportunities, VIP access to the crews, and potential fly-alongs for community members.<sup>36</sup> The R.C.A.F. stresses that direct public interaction be incorporated into any event, particularly in the case of the Snowbirds team.

---

<sup>32</sup> Brown, Interview.

<sup>33</sup> Dempsey, interview.

<sup>34</sup> Eichel, interview.

<sup>35</sup> “Canadian Air Division Air Display Organizer Package,” Royal Canadian Air Force, Department of National Defence, Government of Canada, Section 7: Public Appearances, [www.airshows.forces.gc.ca/Documents/OrganizerPackage/AirDisplay-Organizers-package-eng-20120329.pdf](http://www.airshows.forces.gc.ca/Documents/OrganizerPackage/AirDisplay-Organizers-package-eng-20120329.pdf), (Accessed 27 March 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Snowbirds pilots are not just expected to fly, but to continuously interact with the public on the ground through flying and through ground shows; they also maintain public relations through interviews, event participation, autograph signings, and visits to schools, hospitals, and other public places.<sup>37</sup> Being “first and foremost” a public relations tool, personality is of the utmost importance, and the air demonstration is “just a means to an end.”<sup>38</sup> The ability to go out and represent the R.C.A.F. professionally is central to being a Snowbird team member, and hopeful tryouts for the team have been dismissed on the basis of their personalities.<sup>39</sup> According to Lt. Col. Dempsey, flying ability is secondary to having the necessary “trust and personality” required to interact with other team members and the public.<sup>40</sup> When asked about the importance of face-to-face interaction with the public, Dempsey felt that “in many respects you could argue that that’s one of the most important things we do. It’s that personal one on one interaction, where people get to realize these are just average young Canadians doing a great job at what they do.”<sup>41</sup> This public interaction is an important factor in keeping the R.C.A.F. in touch with the Canadian public, and putting a human face on the organization.

Some peace movement publications have criticized R.C.A.F. motives for attending air shows as thinly veiled glorifications of war. An example of this is the entire issue of the journal *Press for Conversion* titled “Canada’s Military Air Shows; Reaching New Heights in the Glorification of War.” Containing articles such as “Military aircraft: Symbols with

---

<sup>37</sup> Dempsey, *A Tradition*, 664.

<sup>38</sup> Dempsey, interview.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Diverse Meanings” and “Concerned Citizens: opposing Military Air Shows,” the publication makes a number of arguments against Air Shows and their intended objectives.<sup>42</sup> The Publication claims that by displaying military aircraft in an entertaining light, the R.C.A.F. is deceiving the public of their true destructive and violent capabilities.<sup>43</sup> When presented with these criticisms, all three interviewees rejected the validity of these arguments. Lt. Col Dempsey dismissed the opposition by saying,

We’re not there to glorify war and we don’t. We’re there to entertain people, we’re there to motivate people, we’re there to inspire young kids to do something special with their lives, so yeah I hear the peace movement side of it, I just don’t agree with them.<sup>44</sup>

Gary brown likewise scoffs at the argument.

When you say ‘peace movement’ I’ve got nothing against peace but... To say that air shows are promoting war is to say that the Grenadier Guards in front of Buckingham palace are promoting war because you’ve got military troops with guns on their shoulders marching back and forth... A military display is of interest to the public because they are professional, and they are precise, and they have precision shows, so that’s the entertainment value. It isn’t promoting war; I don’t think anybody promotes war.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Richard Sanders, “Canada’s Military Air Shows: Reaching New Heights in the Glorification of War,” *Press For Conversion*, #48 (July 2002), [http://coat.ncf.ca/our\\_magazine/links/issue48/issue48.htm](http://coat.ncf.ca/our_magazine/links/issue48/issue48.htm) (Accessed 27 March 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Sanders, “Canada’s Military Air Shows.”

<sup>44</sup> Demspey, interview.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, interview.

Maj. Gen. Eichel took a more understanding approach. “Some people think that even talking about the military is glorifying war; nobody hates war like the warrior”, but he acknowledges that “I can see the other side of that coin. I just don’t accept it.”<sup>46</sup> Roundly dismissing this criticism, all three interviewees disparaged the validity of these accusations by pointing out that entertainment is the primary function of demonstration teams, and that making the assumption that the military ‘glorifies war’ is a preposterous claim.

Another criticism levelled against Canadian Air Shows is that they are less about demonstrating military prestige and public relations than about being a commercial venue for the military to sell equipment.<sup>47</sup> Captain Brown, whose experience at the Dubai International Air Show affords him credible experience, felt that this should not be a shock.

All air shows have one purpose to my mind, and it’s to sell something or other. You might be selling the military if it’s a local air show at the local base, but civilian air shows...are designed for manufacturers to show off their aviation equipment, be it airframes, engines, equipment, safety equipment, electronics, pilot training, simulator building; everybody wants to show off their products to the rest of the world to sell.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, Brown feels that the commercial aspects of shows are not something that should be discouraged or disparaged. Brown also pointed out that in the case of the Snowbirds, “[They] use the

---

<sup>46</sup> Eichel, interview.

<sup>47</sup> David Thiessen, “Air show Canada: Canada’s Pacific Arms Show,” *The Ploughshares Monitor*, June 1996, Volume 17 Issue 2, [http://ploughshares.ca/pl\\_publications/airshow-canada-canadas-pacific-arms-show](http://ploughshares.ca/pl_publications/airshow-canada-canadas-pacific-arms-show), (accessed 27 March 2013).

<sup>48</sup> Brown, interview.

Tutor now, and we don't manufacture the Tutor anymore, so we don't have an airplane to sell. It is just the fact that we are demonstrating the professionalism of our air force to the general public, and that's a good thing."<sup>49</sup> The Tutor is an outdated jet trainer that is solely flown by the Snowbirds, and has little military value. The R.C.A.F. is 'selling' their image at air shows, not their equipment. Lt. Col. Dempsey echoed this statement when asked whether military sales occur at Canadian air shows he said "None. Zero. You could make that argument for military air shows in the United States, because that's where your big military manufacturers are. But we don't have those military manufactures in Canada anymore."<sup>50</sup> Eichel also dismissed this idea based on the fact that the Snowbirds fly the Tutor, and that the military has nothing to sell at air shows.<sup>51</sup> Air shows, particularly the commercial ones, are about demonstrating equipment; however R.C.A.F. attendance of the shows is not about selling equipment, but about selling the virtues of the force.

Another important function of the R.C.A.F. demonstration teams has always been recruitment. One Department of National Defence source lauds the 431 squadron Snowbirds as an "important public relations and recruiting tool."<sup>52</sup> Another similar document planning R.C.A.F. operations into 2035 stresses the importance of recruiting to the R.C.A.F., as "The Air Force must aggressively recruit and develop its most precious

---

<sup>49</sup> Brown, interview.

<sup>50</sup> Dempsey, Interview.

<sup>51</sup> Eichel, interview.

<sup>52</sup> *The Aerospace Capability Framework: A Guide to Transform and Develop Canada's Air Force*. 1st ed. (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2003), 41.



capability... people".<sup>53</sup> According to Lt. Col. Dempsey, air shows and demonstration teams provide a way for the R.C.A.F. to advertise to the public and recruit on a national scale.

There is no other medium in our entire nation where you can expose the Canadian forces to a larger population than an air show. For a couple of reasons, they're very popular... and two, air shows are mobile because we can fly to every corner of Canada, including the North. It's easy to reach out to people right across Canada, to every community large and small.<sup>54</sup>

The scale of participation and mobility of air show teams are what makes them the best recruiting tool. Dempsey also points out that "recruiting teams will always be there" for all branches of the Canadian Forces at air shows, and that inspiration can let people "live vicariously" through the pilots. Just as he was inspired to join the air force by a jet demonstration, Captain Brown also argues that demonstration teams are "especially effective as recruiting devices for young people... when they see a demonstration team fly they say 'you know what, I'd like to do that.' It gives them an interest."<sup>55</sup> According to the Snowbirds website, upwards of six million people a year see the Snowbirds perform.<sup>56</sup> This supports the statements of Dempsey and Brown by demonstrating the vast numbers of people that the R.C.A.F can interact with at these events where recruitment can potentially take place. Advertising the skills of the air force, and the chance

---

<sup>53</sup> Andrew B. Godefroy, *Projecting Power: Canada's Air Force 2035*, (Ottawa: Canadian Forces Aerospace Warfare Centre, Department of National Defence, Government of Canada, 2009), 48.

<sup>54</sup> Dempsey, interview.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, interview.

<sup>56</sup> Snowbirds: Full history.

to inspire crowds of that size, clearly provides a valuable recruiting venue for the R.C.A.F.

Despite the Snowbirds being an important public relations and recruitment tool, their operating cost and their value are often put into question. One of the many examples from the media, a 2004 *Globe and Mail* editorial, stated that “the aerobatic team should be disbanded. It's both inordinately expensive and a luxury, at a time when the Canadian military can ill afford either.”<sup>57</sup> The article also asked, “does it make sense to spend a small fortune to keep the Snowbirds aloft?”<sup>58</sup> When confronted with these questions and statements, Maj. Gen. Eichel recounted his time as a senior staff officer.

I used to sit at tables in Ottawa in my roles, and when budget cutting would come up and there were all kinds of people who would say you're spending too much money on those Snowbirds. My argument was look at how little money you spend for the value you get... and to say that you would save ten million dollars, or seven million, or whatever number you want to put on it by disbanding the Snowbirds, is not entirely accurate anyway, as that includes personnel costs. Which are in my view kind of sunk costs anyway; those personnel would not go away.<sup>59</sup>

Eichel argues that the Snowbirds are valuable in a “cost-benefit” ratio, and that the money spent on the Snowbirds receives its best return in relation to other expenditures by the Department of National Defence.<sup>60</sup> He stressed that the public affairs aspect of demonstration flying is vital, as it allows the R.C.A.F. to show the

---

<sup>57</sup> "The Snowbird Costs." *The Globe and Mail*, 15 December 2004, *Proquest*, (accessed 2 April 2013).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Eichel, interview.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

Canadian public that “this is where your taxpayers dollar is going, we would like to show you it is well spent, we hope you think it’s well spent, and here is the things we can do that underline that. It’s public affairs writ large.”<sup>61</sup> Captain Brown, when asked about air shows expenditures, explained that “nobody puts out money they don’t think they’re going to get payback for... governments who supply their military have their reasons, and they are P.R. reasons, or demonstrating their capabilities, so they figure they’re going to get payback.”<sup>62</sup> Rather than seeing this as a frivolous luxury, he understands that the R.C.A.F. gains important benefits from this investment.<sup>63</sup> Brown also cited the quality of the Snowbirds as an important factor in their costs.

I have seen many demonstration teams over my years as I mentioned. I’ve seen the R.A.F. Red Arrows, the Italian Frecca Tricolorie, the French team [Patrouille de France], those are the big ones...and I’ve seen the Snowbirds, and...the United States Blue Angels and their Thunderbirds and to my way of thinking the Snowbirds put on the best show.<sup>64</sup>

Captain Brown posits that the Snowbirds are the best of the major demonstration teams and this is a reflection of money well spent. The benefits that the Snowbirds provide to the R.C.A.F., and the sheer quality of their display, are important are strong arguments put forth for continuing their operation.

The Snowbirds are an important means through which the R.C.A.F. advertises and recruits, but when asked if they are a necessary part of the Canadian Forces, Captain Brown admitted

---

<sup>61</sup> Eichel, interview.

<sup>62</sup> Brown, interview.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

that they were not. However, they are very important regardless of their necessity.

No, we would still have a Canadian Air Force that was combat ready to go anywhere in the world if we didn't have the Snowbirds; however, would it be as good? Would we have attracted the very best without the Snowbirds? ...I think the Snowbirds attract the cream of the crop that you're going to get.<sup>65</sup>

Raising an important issue, Brown demonstrates how although the Snowbirds are not necessary, they are essential for recruiting the best people, and for maintaining the high standards of R.C.A.F. personnel.

Lt. Col Dempsey was expectedly adamant that the Snowbirds are an "integral component of the Canadian forces", because "they're absolutely fundamental to where we want to go in the future in terms of public relations and recruiting for the Canadian military. You have to have a body out there to interact with the Canadian public...and the Snowbirds are the public face of the Canadian Forces."<sup>66</sup> Regarding costs, Dempsey argued that "the Snowbirds have been a bargain for this country since the day they started. Even though the Snowbirds fly nine aircraft, their budget is about one tenth of each of what the American teams [cost]."<sup>67</sup> Instead of seeing demonstration teams as a waste of money, Dempsey feels that "people deserve to know how their money is being spent, and be reassured that their money is being well spent, so that's where public relations comes in. The public relations are to both inform and to educate people as to what the military represents, what the mandate of the military is, and where

---

<sup>65</sup> Brown, interview.

<sup>66</sup> Dempsey, interview.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

the money is going and why it's going there.”<sup>68</sup> The Snowbirds, he posits, are the best vehicle for achieving this.<sup>69</sup>

All three interviewees see the benefits of the Snowbirds as outweighing the costs.<sup>70</sup> Strictly looking at the dollars spent does not tell the whole story, as just looking at the cost does not relate to value, or mean the costs could just be eliminated. Rather than being money that is “thrown away”, the demonstration teams gain a return in public relations, recruitment, and experience gained by the R.C.A.F.<sup>71</sup>

Throughout the history of the R.C.A.F., demonstration flying has been an important public relations and recruiting tool. Whether interacting with throngs of crowds while introducing the jet age to Canada in the 1950s, or today's Snowbirds visiting a children's hospital, the teams have been a way for the R.C.A.F. to demonstrate its skills and virtues to the Canadian public. They also help provide a human face to the force, allowing the R.C.A.F. to interact with the public on a face-to-face basis. Despite the obvious benefits, air shows and demonstration teams have often come under criticisms as being glorifications of war, military sales venues, or being too costly to operate. Through the explanations of the former R.C.A.F. officers Maj. Gen. Scott Eichel, Lt. Col. Dempsey, and Capt. Gary Brown, these criticisms are refuted on the basis that entertainment and inspiration is the sole purpose behind these teams, and that the benefits far outweigh the costs of operating a team like the Snowbirds. These men have lived and breathed the air force life, and even though there may be a bias in their answers, their interpretations provide information as valuable as any secondary source may through the

---

<sup>68</sup> Dempsey, interview.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Brown, interview. Dempsey, interview. Eichel, interview.

<sup>71</sup> Eichel, interview.

wealth of their experiences. Through these explanations, and the evaluation of the history of demonstration flying in Canada, it is undeniable that demonstration teams are an integral part of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Interviews

- Brown, Capt. Gary. Interview by Luke F. Kowalski, 18 March 2013.  
Recording, University of Victoria Oral History Collection, Victoria.
- Dempsey, Lt. Col. Dan. Interview by Luke F. Kowalski. 18 March 2013.  
Recording, University of Victoria Oral History Collection, Victoria.
- Eichel, Maj. Gen. Scott. Interview by Luke F. Kowalski, 14 March 2013.  
Recording, University of Victoria Oral History Collection, Victoria.

### Secondary Sources

- “Air Shows.” Royal Canadian Air Force, Department of National Defence, Government of Canada. Date Modified: 21 December 2011.  
<http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/v2/page-eng.asp?id=54> (Accessed 27 March 2013)
- “Canadian Air Division Air Display Organizer Package.” Royal Canadian Air Force. Department of National Defence. Government of Canada.  
[www.airshows.forces.gc.ca/Documents/OrganizerPackage/AirDisplay-Organizers-package-eng-20120329.pdf](http://www.airshows.forces.gc.ca/Documents/OrganizerPackage/AirDisplay-Organizers-package-eng-20120329.pdf) (Accessed 27 March 2013)
- Coffman, Edward M. “Talking About War: Reflections on Doing Oral history and Military History.” *Journal of American History*, Vol.87, No.2. (September 2000): 582-592.
- Dempsey, Dan. *A Tradition of Excellence: Canada's Air Show Team Heritage*. Victoria, B.C. High Flight Enterprises. 2002.
- Godefroy, Andrew B. *Projecting Power: Canada's Air Force 2035*. Ottawa: Canadian Forces Aerospace Warfare Centre. Department of National Defence, Government of Canada. 2009.
- Mayne, Richard Oliver. “Royal Matters: Symbolism, History, and the Significance of the R.C.A.F.’s Name Change, 1909-2011”. *The Royal Canadian Air Force Journal*. Vol. 1, No. 4. (Fall 2012): 22-37.
- Milberry, Larry. *Canada's Air Force: At War and Peace*. V.3. Toronto, Ontario: CANAV Books, 2000.
- Sanders, Richard. "Canada's Military Air Shows: Reaching New Heights in the Glorification of War." *Press For Conversion*. Issue 48, (July 2002).  
[http://coat.ncf.ca/our\\_magazine/links/issue48/issue48.htm](http://coat.ncf.ca/our_magazine/links/issue48/issue48.htm) (Accessed 30 March, 2013)

*The Aerospace Capability Framework: A Guide to Transform and Develop Canada's Air Force*. 1st ed. Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2003.

"Snowbirds: Full History," Royal Canadian Air Force, Department of National Defence. Government of Canada. Date Modified 2008-12-09. <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/snowbirds/page-eng.asp?id=1568> (Accessed 27 March 2013).

"The Snowbird Costs." *The Globe and Mail*, Dec 15, 2004. *Proquest*. (Accessed 1 April 2013).

Thiessen, David. "Air show Canada: Canada's Pacific Arms Show" *The Ploughshares Monitor*. June 1996. Vol. 17, No. 2. [http://ploughshares.ca/pl\\_publications/airshow-canada-canadas-pacific-arms-show/](http://ploughshares.ca/pl_publications/airshow-canada-canadas-pacific-arms-show/) (accessed 27 March 2013).

Vance, Jonathan. "The Royal Canadian Air Force and the Campaign for Air-mindedness." *Canadian Aerospace Power Studies. V. 3: Combat if Necessary, but Not Necessarily Combat*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence, Government of Canada; 2011: 6-16.

## **The Iranian Revolution, 1979: Memory, Desire, and a Search for Identity**

JESSICA SINGH

*The Iranian Revolution of 1979 is sometimes illustrated as a religiously motivated movement. This article attempts to deconstruct the notion of the Iranian Revolution as a “religious revolution.” It further reveals that the various religious actors who were ultimately able to topple the Shah in 1979 through their protests were not able to do so without the help of other actors. In this way, the Islamic Republic of Iran did not emerge from a drive for an ‘Islamic’ economic and social order as is sometimes presupposed. Rather, in addition to particular religious aspirations, the Revolution was transpired through various cultural, political, and ideological motives as well. This article will examine the multiplicity of reasons for which there emerged a mass revolutionary movement in Iran. In particular, it will focus on the effects that the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 and the Shah’s westernization measures had on the Iranian population.*

Numerous contemporary representations of the 1979 Iranian Revolution inadvertently suggest that the Islamic Republic of Iran emerged from a “drive for an ‘Islamic’ economic and social order.”<sup>1</sup> A close analysis of the intrinsic logic of the Revolution, however, reveals that the Republic was founded through a convergence of several distinct ideologies. Motivations for the Revolution were not solely political, economic, or religious; rather, in addition to a collective desire for a legitimate state authority, many Iranians were driven towards Khomeini’s revolutionary cause through a conflicting search for their own individual identity. In the years leading up to the Revolution, the Pahlavi Dynasty’s westernization and modernization processes

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen R. Humphreys, *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age*, updated ed., (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005). 35.



had resulted in conflicting views on the essence of “Iranian” culture and, in effect, they had created divides between the country’s “modern” and “traditional” residents.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, many Iranians were driven towards Khomeini’s revolution because they desired to be part of a community that not only represented their interests, but one that fought the kind of oppression that had ultimately led to Iran’s demise. For example, Ali Shariati had asserted that Shia Islam was “in its essence a religion of revolution and social transformation, of struggle against tyranny and economic oppression.”<sup>3</sup> In this way, Iranians who desired a collective sense of belonging to a distinct community, and those who opposed particular “modern” and Western elements found fertile ground in Khomeini’s revolutionary cause; the Shia Islamic activists’ notion of Shi’ism as a “religion of protest” stimulated many Iranians to pursue the kind of national identity that Khomeini’s movement was propagating. Concurrently, however, many of the individual actors who had united under Khomeini’s “anti-imperialist” and “anti-Western” umbrella sought an Iran in which one could simultaneously be “Iranian, Muslim, and modern.”<sup>4</sup> In this way, the Iranian Revolution is a example of how the fusing together of different political, cultural, and ethnic identities with religion, by virtue of the overarching banner of a particular “national identity,” creates complexities that are far beyond the reaches of resolution even to this day. Since 1979, Iran’s political and religious authorities have, for the most part, had divergent visions of what an “Islamic social order” should look like.<sup>5</sup> As this paper

---

<sup>2</sup> Elaheh Rostami-Povey, *Iran’s Influence: A Religious-Political State and Society in its Region*, (London and New York: Zed, 2010), 35.

<sup>3</sup> Humphreys, *Memory and Desire*, 201.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

will illustrate, the Islamic Republic of Iran's very existence was possible only through the "ideological confusions" that engulfed Iranian society around the time of the Revolution; more fundamentally, the Revolution transpired through a complex convergence of particular "memories and desires" in which different political, cultural, and ideological aspirations became problematized.<sup>6</sup>

The Iranian Revolution exemplified an instance in which secular nationalism became intertwined with religious activism to ultimately create a particular kind of religious nationalism. As Benedict Anderson has famously asserted, a nation is an "imagined community" in that it is artificially created and does not have ontological being.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the notion of "Iranianness" became imagined, re-imagined, and ultimately shaped and transformed into an entity that comprised the very nucleus of the revolutionary movement. For example, before 1979, "Iranian identity" was not one dimensional; it was a developing phenomenon that held a multiplicity of meanings for different groups of people, based on their unique individual interests. As Ansari asserts, fluidity and dynamism exist not only in the construction and composition of social groups, but also in the ideas that drive them.<sup>8</sup> It is true that for most Shia in Iran and elsewhere, Islam is an integral part of their individual identity. At the time of the Revolution, however, not all Iranians were striving solely for a national identity that represented Shi'ism above all. Rather, the Islamic Republic was born out of a multifaceted "mass popular protest movement" that, amongst other ideals,

---

<sup>6</sup> Humphreys, *Memory and Desire*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *Modern Iran: The Pahlavis and After*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2007), 13.

demanded an Iranian identity rooted in democracy, the severing of the state's ties with imperialism, and economic strength.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, two prominent ideologies were driving the 1979 Revolution: Islamic activism, as illustrated through Shariati's intellectual work and its influence within Khomeini's movement, and secular nationalism, as illustrated through the desires of many of the politically, socio-economically, culturally, and religiously diverse actors involved. Although most of these diverse groups ultimately converged under Khomeini's attractive anti-imperialist and anti-Shah umbrella, each one of them, including "the middle-class intellectuals, bazaar merchants, students, workers, left-wing activists, and Muslim clerics," originally had unique ideals for the kind of national identity that they hoped to see emerge through a successful uprising.<sup>10</sup>

In essence, many of the actors involved in Khomeini's movement had originally envisioned religion as a complementary rather than core component of "Iranian" identity. For example, most of the working class and the impoverished rural migrants in the cities had been driven by economic interests; through their involvement in the Revolution, these groups hoped to bring forth a governing body that would improve the abominable conditions of employment availability in the newly modernized cities, as well as alleviate the class and cultural divides that had emerged as a result of the incompetent policies of the Pahlavi Dynasty. For these actors, an Iran that gave them food, shelter, and employment was much more important than one that illustrated a unity of Shia brethren. Further, the young adult generation desired a fluid and progressive yet religiously textured Iran that would

---

<sup>9</sup> Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 35.

<sup>10</sup> David Greason, "Embracing Death: The Western Left and the Iranian Revolution, 1978-83," *Economy and Society*, v. 34, no. 1, (February 2004), 107.

hold an influential position in the Western-dominated arena of global politics. Thus, their version of an “Iranian” identity, in addition to encompassing a Shia element, held a uniquely modern and neoliberal essence.<sup>11</sup>

Whereas desired forms of national identity varied among the diverse groups of secular actors involved in the Revolution, Khomeini and his Islamic activist supporters imagined a rigidly specific form of Iranian identity. In contrast to some of the non-religious motivations driving many Iranians, Khomeini’s Islamic activist movement was primarily fuelled through religiously influenced anti-colonialist aspirations. Not only did these actors want to rescue Iran from the despotism of an incompetent monarch who had become a puppet of the West but they fundamentally wanted to reassert the region’s Shia identity which, in their eyes, had shamefully become a mere shadow under the Pahlavi Dynasty. In this way, Shariati’s notion of Islam as the “one true liberator” of a state that had suffered depravity under Western colonialism and capitalism was a key influence in the roles of the Islamic activists in the Revolution.

Iranians saw a fusion of two distinct ideologies, Islam and Marxism, within Khomeini’s religiously esoteric vision, with each ideology encompassing elements that pertained to unique individual and collective interests. Heavily influenced by Shariati’s writings regarding the supposed relationship between “Islam’s teachings on social justice” and “Marxist views on egalitarianism,” Khomeini’s ideology envisioned an Iran that not only held a legitimate Islamic identity but acted on the needs of the general population as a whole, within the fluid context of modernity.<sup>12</sup> Since 1962, Khomeini had charismatically

---

<sup>11</sup> Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence*.

<sup>12</sup> Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 30.

propagated his opposition to the Shah by condemning the decades of poverty and suffering many Iranians had experienced during his rule and by characterizing the Pahlavi regime as “undemocratic and heedless of the economic needs of the population.”<sup>13</sup> Iran was in serious financial distress in the 1970s as a result of the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 and the Shah’s incompetent economic strategies since his inauguration. The Shah’s increased oil revenues and his modernization program in several of Iran’s urban centers had resulted in the further enrichment of the country’s wealthy classes and the increased disenfranchisement of the poor. In this way, Iran’s Marxists and Marxist sympathizers found fertile ground in Khomeini’s vision even though the “majority of the population” could not identify with many of their radical leftist goals.<sup>14</sup> Further, the working classes and the traditional middle classes cemented their alliance with the Islamic activists because, as Rostami-Povey argues, the messages of the Islamic activists “expressed the feelings and aspirations” of the urban poor and working classes more effectively than did the liberal left and other political groups.<sup>15</sup>

In this way, several politically, culturally, and ethnically distinct groups of Iranians were able to unite under the unique platform of the Islamic activists not only because they saw Khomeini as a mullah who “usefully transcended” both the modern and the traditional but also because his movement expressed the same kind of anti-Shah sentiment that had engulfed Iranian society for decades.<sup>16</sup> As illustrated via the fusing together of several unique, sometimes conflicting interests under a particular banner of unity, Khomeini’s activist movement

---

<sup>13</sup> Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence*, 30.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Ansari, *Modern Iran*, 256.

solidified and acquired strength through the very “ideological confusions” that would lead to the Republic’s social and political problems later on.

In essence, the Iranian Revolution exemplified Humphreys’ notion of “memory and desire.”<sup>17</sup> Arguably, the Islamic activism demonstrated by Shariati, Khomeini, and their supporters was fuelled through the Shia “memory” of the martyrdom of Husain and the overall grievances that the *Shi’atu Ali* suffered at the ancient Battle of Karbala in 680. As Hamid Dabashi contends, the “politics of despair” are an inherent part of Shi’ism in that the religion necessitates a ceaseless anti-oppressive struggle for its own continuity.<sup>18</sup> As many Islamic scholars have argued, Khomeini’s movement was premised on this belief; by virtue of his own interpretation of the religion, Khomeini “personalized” particular aspects of Shia doctrine to galvanize Iran’s Shia population and stimulate their “internal sense” of protest and resistance.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Khomeini’s “revival” of the Shia population’s anti-oppressive attitudes was a determining factor for the way in which Iranians self-identified during the Revolution, and it continues to influence how they self-identify to this day. In recent years, for example, the Iranian government has explicitly illustrated the nation’s Shia identity and its “anti-oppressive” core via the contentious notion of an “axis of resistance.”<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Humphreys, *Memory and Desire*.

<sup>18</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *Shi’ism: A Religion of Protest*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 34.

<sup>20</sup> “Iran: Syria part of our ‘Axis of Resistance,’” CNN (August 7, 2012).

Accessed online on July 29, 2013 at

<http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/07/world/meast/syria-unrest/>

As illustrated, the convergence of the two very distinct ideologies of Islamic activism and secular nationalism occurred primarily through the interconnectedness and interweaving of some of the particular interests of the actors involved. As Humphreys alludes to, instead of advocating for an explicitly Shia identity, at the time of the Revolution most Iranians were “simply demanding the same rights of self-determination that European nations had long since demanded for themselves.”<sup>21</sup> In this way, many of the secular interests of the diverse groups involved came to be increasingly expressed in the Islamic activist movement, albeit for strategic reasons. Thus, in the Iranian Revolution of 1979, “memory” became intertwined with “desire” such that, “where Islamic symbols were allowed to creep in, they did so only as part of the larger cultural patrimony” of the Iranian people.<sup>22</sup> This means that beneath the overarching banner of the “Iranian” identity propagated by Khomeini and the Islamic activist movement, there were distinct non-religious desires that were oftentimes incongruent with Khomeini’s vision of the state’s future. However, these desires ultimately became submerged within the “Shia memory” that Khomeini had rigorously fought to revive. In essence, the “Iranian” identity that emerged through the Revolution was an amalgamation of different interests, but it was premised on a particular kind of understanding of the role of secular interests within an Islamic state. Furthermore, the “ideological confusion” brought forth by the convergence of Shia Islamic activism with Marxism gave Khomeini’s revolutionary movement the external form and internal solidarity that it needed to trample the despotic, despised rule of the Shah.

---

<sup>21</sup> Humphreys, *Memory and Desire*, 188.

<sup>22</sup> Humphreys, *Memory and Desire*, 188.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Benedict R. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006).
- Ansari, Ali M. *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Ansari, Ali M. *Modern Iran: The Pahlavis and After*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2007).
- Dabashi, Hamid. *Shi'ism: A Religion of Protest*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).
- Greason, David. "Embracing Death: The Western Left and the Iranian Revolution, 1978-83." *Economy and Society*, v. 34, no. 1 (February 2004): 105-140.
- Humphreys, R. Stephen. *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age*, updated ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).
- "Iran: Syria part of our 'Axis of Resistance,'" CNN (August 7, 2012). Accessed online at <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/07/world/meast/syria-unrest/>
- Kurzman, Charles. *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).
- Mirsepassi, Ali. *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- Rostami-Povey, Elaheh. *Iran's Influence: A Religious-Political State and Society in its Region*. (London and New York: Zed, 2010).



## **Performing for the State: Censorship of the French Theatre under Napoleon**

MARGARET SPROULE

*During Napoleon's fifteen years of personal rule over France, social control was key to maintaining power. As part of his plan to reinstate the hierarchal social structure that was overthrown by the 1789 Revolution, Napoleon imposed strict state control over the French theatre industry. In addition to mandating the physical location of theatres, all potential plots and characters had to be approved by censors before production. This allowed for the removal of Revolutionary ideology from this form of mass culture in its entirety. Imperial control over entertainment helped to create a hierarchy similar to that of pre-revolutionary France, solidifying Napoleon's place as unquestioned, absolute ruler.*

In the ten years prior to Napoleon's rule, French culture, including the performing arts, had gone through a major upheaval. The Bourbon monarchy had held a complete monopoly over the theatre and its production but, after the *Law of 17 January, 1791* that emancipated and allowed for the liberalization of the theatres of France, the number of theatres in Paris alone rose from four to over fifty.<sup>1</sup> Censorship in France expanded rapidly as a result of the paranoia and conspiracy theories imagined by the members of the new revolutionary government, referred to as the National Convention. In 1792, the Convention enacted a law that tightened censorship, limiting which plays were allowed to be performed. After becoming First Consul in 1800, Napoleon continued to increase governmental control over the theatre industry, "most commonly in the shape of a pre-

---

<sup>1</sup> Emmet Kennedy and Marie-Laurence Netter, in *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*, ed. Emmet Kennedy et al. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 87.

emptive measure,” legislating strict state control over the theatres of France and their productions.<sup>2</sup> In this paper I will discuss state control and censorship of French theatre under the Consulate and then the Napoleonic Empire.<sup>3</sup> Napoleon used the theatre as a means through which to control and influence the ideals and political affiliations of the French people by restructuring the theatre system and enacting and enforcing strict state control, reorganizing the theatre into a military-esque hierarchy with a chain of command intended to limit dissention.

Live theatre was one of the only large-scale sources of entertainment at the turn of the nineteenth century and was, therefore, an excellent medium through which to exert social control. Napoleon himself had a personal interest in theatre, having been introduced to the “accepted tastes and standards of the day” when he was a student in Brienne, which created for him an “enduring interest in the subject.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, his appreciation of theatre as a means of both entertainment and distraction was demonstrated by his decision to “send a troupe of comedians to Egypt” to entertain the French troops almost immediately after becoming First Consul in 1800.<sup>5</sup> Further, even before his reign, during his time as a general in the Italian campaign, “Bonaparte made a point of appearing regularly at the Opéra,”<sup>6</sup> and continued to attend throughout his emperorship, making more appearances

---

<sup>2</sup> Donald Roy, *Romantic and Revolutionary Theatre*, ed. Donald Roy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 262.

<sup>3</sup> Although he did not become a monarch until 1804 and therefore would be referred to by his last name, Bonaparte, until that time, for the sake of consistency I will refer to the Consul/Emperor as Napoleon throughout this paper.

<sup>4</sup> F.G. Healey, *The Literary Culture of Napoleon* (Genève: E. Droz, 1959), 79.

<sup>5</sup> Robert B. Holtman, *Napoleonic Propaganda* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 156.

<sup>6</sup> James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 167.

at the Opéra during his rule than Louis XV or XVI did in their considerably longer reigns.<sup>7</sup>

Napoleon recognized the political value of theatre as an “oracle of public opinion,” which he believed to be an important source of political power.<sup>8</sup> He was deliberate in his attempt to portray himself as a cultured patron of the arts, drawing attention to the theatre as a place to be seen for members of the upper classes. Moreover, Napoleon gauged his own popularity and the public’s interest in him based upon their reaction to his arrival at the theatre: once in power, he made a point of arriving late to performances so he could see the reaction of the crowd.<sup>9</sup>

As described by James H. Johnson, the press was always notified when Napoleon would be attending the Opéra, and at the pinnacle of his reign, the audience tended to pay more attention to his empty box than to the performers on stage. On at least one occasion, the ballet corps who had been performing left the stage upon his arrival to recreate a dance that he had missed.<sup>10</sup> This guarantee of his arrival, however, came close to having mortal consequences when a bomb plot was arranged that hinged upon his attendance at the Opéra. The Consul escaped the blast physically unharmed, but news of his death circulated around the theatre: upon his arrival the crowd erupted with a standing

---

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note difference between the theatre genre opera, and the Opéra of Paris, the physical theatre where operas and other types of theatre were performed. The Opéra’s name changed numerous times during the Revolution, also being known as the Académie Royale de Musique, the Académie d’Opéra, and the Théâtre de l’Opéra, to name a few. To avoid confusion, in this paper I have used the more general term ‘theatre,’ to refer to the various genres of theatre, including opera, and used the term Opéra only when referring to the physical theatre and the theatre troupe attached to it.

<sup>8</sup> Kennedy and Netter, *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences*, 90.

<sup>9</sup> Healey, *The Literary Culture of Napoleon*, 79, note 2.

<sup>10</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 165.

ovation, relieved that he had escaped unscathed.<sup>11</sup> Even during the busiest part of his rule, at the high point of the Empire, the ruler's interest in theatre did not wane, although it did become more directly political, and his attendance at performances "were frequent and only interrupted by the necessities of war."<sup>12</sup> Attendance at the theatre helped to humanize Napoleon to his subjects as it presented "a moving setting in which the sovereign could show himself and let his reactions be seen."<sup>13</sup>

Under previous revolutionary governments, French theatre was adapted and manipulated numerous times. Changes ranged from the removal of royal patronage in 1791 to the re-establishment of censorship and control by the government under the National Convention in the fall of 1793. The Convention advocated for the rapid elimination of class distinctions in all areas of society, including the creation of an equitable theatre-going experience. One example of this was a failed experiment at the Odéon theatre where members of the Convention attempted to "abolish the distinction between the [people of the] *parterre* (plain benches) and the *loges* (tiered boxes)" by renovating the interior of the theatre with the goal of de-emphasizing social differences.<sup>14</sup> Ideally, if all of the spectators were on even ground on a single platform, all views of the production would be the same, and thus the people would all be put on an equal social level. After the fall of the National Convention, the harsher, hierarchical Directory government saw these measures as "carrying Republicanism to an intolerable extreme," but no

---

<sup>11</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 165-167.

<sup>12</sup> Healey, *Literary Culture*, 81.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Martin Lyons, *France Under the Directory* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 134.

change was made to the codified state control of theatres.<sup>15</sup> Following the Coup of Brumaire in 1799, the Directory was replaced by a new three-man Consulate. This ultra-conservative government, with Napoleon at its helm, reversed many of the Convention's changes: architecture was restored to what it had been pre-revolution (with the addition of some Napoleonic imagery), private boxes were replaced, the Republican tricolour decorations were removed, and prices for seats were raised.<sup>16</sup>

One of the goals of the Consulate from its start was to unify society, so as to reduce and eventually eliminate civil unrest. One method of doing this was to normalize theatre audiences, between whom there had been frequent clashes due to class and ideological differences throughout the revolution. As the new leader of France, Napoleon appreciated the idea of class distinction and exclusivity, at least along the lines of designating the upper class notables, and had little interest in recalling the equality among all men touted during the Revolution, "since legitimacy no longer lay in the people but in the institutions of the new order [and the] dynastic character of the Empire."<sup>17</sup>

In lieu of attempting to prescribe equality for all men, Napoleon sought the unification of his new notables – the nobles of the *anci en regime* and former Revolutionaries, and demanded that they put aside their ideological differences to work for the common goal: security of the state.<sup>18</sup> To help facilitate this, changes were made to French theatre. By returning ticket prices to their pre-revolution level and eliminating state-sponsored

---

<sup>15</sup> Lyons, *France Under the Directory*, 134.

<sup>16</sup> Ben Jones, *Napoleon: Man and Myth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), 116-117.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Forrest, "Propaganda and Legitimation of Power in Napoleonic France," in *French History* 18, no.4 (2004): 434.

<sup>18</sup> Forrest, "Propaganda," 434.

performances made mandatory by the Convention, “attending the Opéra had again acquired an aura of wealth and prestige.”<sup>19</sup>

Napoleon developed a two-part plan to finalize his control of French theatre: rearrange the theatres of the nation into an easily controlled hierarchical structure with clear lines of command, and then limit the repertoire of each of these theatres. First, on 8 June 1806, an Imperial Decree declared that the emperor’s authorization was now required for any new theatre to be built in Paris, reversing the 1791 *Law of 19 January* that had liberalized the theatre profession. It was also announced that the Minister of the Interior was to be in charge of selecting which productions would be performed on Paris stages.<sup>20</sup> Less than one year later, on 25 April 1807, the remainder of Napoleon’s controls over French theatre were codified in the *Directive Concerning Theatres*.<sup>21</sup>

The *Directive* reduced the number of theatres in Paris to eight - four major and four minor - and regulated what type of production could be put on at each theatre, cutting short the expanded freedoms and the sheer number of theatres present since the National Convention’s 1791 liberation. The regulations of the four major theatres were:

- (1) *The Théâtre-Français (Théâtre de S.M. l’Empereur)* ...is to be devoted exclusively to tragedy and comedy...*The Théâtre de l’Impératrice* [Odéon] is to be regarded as an annexe of the *Théâtre-Français*, for comedy only. [...]
- (2) *The Théâtre de l’Opéra*...is devoted exclusively to singing and dance...

---

<sup>19</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 168.

<sup>20</sup> Victoria Johnson, *Backstage at the Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 194.

<sup>21</sup> Roy, *Romantic and Revolutionary*, 269.

(3) *The Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique*...is intended exclusively for the presentation of all types of comedy or *drame* interspersed with songs, ariettas and ensembles.<sup>22</sup>

The *Directive* then went on to name and regulate minor theatres in a similar way, and prescribes a genre to each. As well, all theatres were required to seek permission from the Ministry of the Interior for each play they wanted to perform. Part II of the *Directive* regulates theatres and plays performed in the departments, Part III regulates “*itinerant*” (travelling) companies, and Part IV states that proprietors should not have to give out free tickets beyond those required for police and security workers.<sup>23</sup>

This new *Directive* organized French theatre into a strictly dictated hierarchical structure with set amounts of theatres in each city. An area’s Prefect, with guidance from the Minister of the Interior, was in charge of granting permission to open a new theatre, as well as regulating which plays were to be produced. The Minister himself was charged with determining areas of operation for those theatre troops not connected with a specific theatre, as well as enforcing taxes on theatre production. And, of course, Napoleon had the right to veto or change any production as he saw fit.<sup>24</sup> This reorganization restored a modified version of the theatre of the *ancien régime*, “while infusing it with an almost military sense of strategic purpose.”<sup>25</sup>

As First Consul and later Emperor of France, Napoleon sought to increase and centralize governmental power through the imposition of propaganda and censorship. Napoleon “subscribed

---

<sup>22</sup> *Directive Concerning Theatres*, 25 April 1807, in Donald Roy, ed., *Romantic and Revolutionary Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 270.

<sup>23</sup> Roy, *Romantic and Revolutionary*, 270-272.

<sup>24</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 174.

<sup>25</sup> Roy, *Romantic and Revolutionary*, 270.

to the view that the Revolution had begun in salons,” and therefore felt the need to keep a close eye on intellectual organizations and social circles.<sup>26</sup> That being said, censorship as a method to control public opinion “was only one part of a multi-faceted and highly sophisticated propaganda offensive,” and the act of censorship itself risked jeopardizing “Napoleon’s rapport with the artistic and literary community on whom he depended.”<sup>27</sup> He had to tread lightly, and impose restrictions slowly, to avoid alienating the people he was attempting control.<sup>28</sup>

Under Napoleon the content of the performances themselves changed from revolutionary ideology to that of contemporary relevance. In the state-designated ‘major’ theatres, changes were made to ensure that the audience was formed mostly of Napoleon’s new notables, who were “hostile to revolutionary excesses but favourable to military glory,”<sup>29</sup> meaning that productions of contemporary relevance were well received.<sup>30</sup> In the minor theatres and those in the provinces, the potential of this new message was even more vital, as it “conveyed its message directly and unambiguously to the listening crowds – particularly when in these crowds there were so many who had never learned to read and were the more susceptible to the power of the spoken word.”<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Jones, *Napoleon: Man and Myth*, 117.

<sup>27</sup> Forrest, “Propaganda,” 429.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 161.

<sup>30</sup> It is important here to emphasize the difference between contemporary *relevance* and contemporarily *written* plays. The Napoleonic administration was not overly fond of plays written about specific contemporary events, but did appreciate plays that predated the revolution that could be applied with contemporary relevance.

<sup>31</sup> F.W.J. Hemmings, *Culture and Society in France, 1789-1848* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), 38.



In addition to secret police monitoring of salons and essentially every other aspect of life (both public and private) in Napoleonic France, strict censorship was imposed on newspapers, journals, and all other published works which, combined with an overhaul of the organization of the civil service, removal of noble titles, and creation of new ‘notable’ titles bestowed by Napoleon, gave the ruler significant control over French society. At this time, the two art forms “with potentially the largest and most popular audience” were theatre and contemporary architecture.<sup>32</sup> Due to financial constraints under the Directory and the early years of Napoleon’s reign, the government was forced to abandon major public works projects, and its architectural building projects were scrapped for the time being.<sup>33</sup> However, it did utilize theatre, the art form that remained financially accessible, to educate the French people in appropriate “morality and patriotism.”<sup>34</sup> While suppressing and censoring viewpoints opposing his regime, Napoleon also actively promoted his own image through numerous methods, including but not limited to publications, the arts, and, where finances allowed, some architectural additions and changes, most notably the *Arc de Triomphe* (whose foundation was laid under Napoleon, but was not finished until the 1830s).<sup>35</sup>

Unlike the revolutionary regimes before him, in regard to literary content Napoleon generally “preferred realism to allegory or appeals to classical antiquity.”<sup>36</sup> With this in mind, censors would generally encourage the creation of tragedies “because they afforded the best opportunity for the expression of elevated

---

<sup>32</sup> Lyons, *France Under the Directory*, 132.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Jones, *Napoleon: Man and Myth*, 116-117.

<sup>36</sup> Forrest, “Propaganda,” 439.

thoughts and tended to produce heroes<sup>37</sup> and drama because of its “appeal to the emotions of popular patriotism and of a male-centred code of honour.”<sup>38</sup>

In order for a play to be approved, all plots and characters had to be mythological or historical, the idea being that focus on these stories would prevent regressing to the contemporary focus of revolutionary works.<sup>39</sup> Automatically banned by censors was any play whose plot was taken from the Bible, referred to Napoleon himself (after 1810), as well as “all plays referring to the Bourbons...usurpation of a throne, punishment of a tyrant, or victory over France.”<sup>40</sup> To avoid further delays and conflict, plays were often altered in order to comply with the censorship rules before being presented to the censor himself. Robert B. Holtman discusses the example of the comedy *Carolin, ou le Tableau* wherein the phrase “*mille louis*”<sup>41</sup> had to be removed “because it might remind people of the King.”<sup>42</sup> Another example is that of Jean-François Ducis, “a contemporary adaptor of Shakespeare,” who rewrote *Othello* to have a happy ending for audiences who were weary of death.<sup>43</sup>

Within Paris, the police were charged with enforcing censorship of the theatre. Early in the Consulate the armed guards put in place at the Opéra by the National Convention had been removed, although surveillance was only removed overtly. Napoleon’s undercover police surveillance replaced the visible guard-monitors of previous regimes, and were known to make the

---

<sup>37</sup> Holtman, *Napoleonic Propaganda*, 153.

<sup>38</sup> Forrest, “Propaganda,” 441.

<sup>39</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 174.

<sup>40</sup> Holtman, *Napoleonic Propaganda*, 153.

<sup>41</sup> ‘*mille louis*’ refers to 1,000 *louis*, a form of pre-revolutionary currency named after the Bourbon monarch.

<sup>42</sup> Holtman, *Napoleonic Propaganda*, 152.

<sup>43</sup> Lyons, *France Under the Directory*, 137.

occasional arbitrary arrest or interrogation to make its point: “someone was watching.”<sup>44</sup> By monitoring both tensions between audience members and the reaction of the people to the productions, police agents working at the Opéra determined “that the sort of *esprit de parti* that divided audiences during the Revolution still existed,” as it was common for spectators to cheer loudly when lines that were delivered could be interpreted in any way in opposition to their political counterparts, as many anti-Jacobins had done during the Directory.<sup>45</sup> Police agents were consistently present to monitor audience reactions and, “if a play created a disturbance, it was banned.”<sup>46</sup> For example, during Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in July 1812, “the Ministry banned three plays about Russia ‘and any other work that might contain passages favourable to Russia or its rulers’.”<sup>47</sup>

A far more pressing concern was the “anti-governmental sloganeering” that would interrupt performances from time to time.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, audiences tended to state their political opinions by calling out to heckle or agree with lines in the show, or through the more dignified method of applauding. This was evident in an 1809 performance of *Muhammed* in Bordeaux, where the police observed that the audience “showed far too much enthusiasm in applauding lines that could be construed as anti-regime” in the port city, that was hard-hit by the Napoleonic wars.<sup>49</sup> These banned plays were often ones based upon

---

<sup>44</sup> Lyons, *France Under the Directory*, 137.

<sup>45</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 171.

<sup>46</sup> Holtman, *Napoleonic Propaganda*, 151.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Sibalis, “The Napoleonic Police State,” in *Napoleon and Europe*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer (Hockley: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 88.

<sup>48</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 171.

<sup>49</sup> Sibalis, “Police State,” 88.

controversial subjects where the government was concerned about audience reactions.<sup>50</sup>

By combining state censorship and patronage, the Napoleonic regime managed to create a unique style of theatre that combined the excesses of aristocratic pleasures while appropriating revolutionary standards, resulting in “a unique combination of revolution and reaction.”<sup>51</sup> This combination, in a theatrical setting, mirrored what Napoleon was trying to create society-wide: to combine radicals and reactionaries in order to prevent uprisings from both radical Jacobites and counter-revolutionaries.<sup>52</sup>

The France that Napoleon inherited from the Revolutionary governments was socially and ideologically fragmented, furthering dissention amongst the nobility and between the ranks of society. As an avid theatre-goer, Napoleon recognized the potential of theatre as a means through which to inculcate the public with the ideals of the Napoleonic society. In order to meet this goal, control over the industry had to be strengthened. Napoleon achieved this by reorganizing the French theatre industry into an organization with a hierarchy and command structure similar to his military, where theatre managers reported to prefects, who were in turn responsible to the Minister of the Interior. In addition, the Emperor regulated all aspects of the performing arts in France, including but not limited to the size and location of theatres, as well as which genres and specific works were to be performed. Adjusted ticket prices and the use of a seating plan reminiscent of the *ancien régime* created a hierarchy amongst theatre-goers and returned the elite status given to those who were able to attend. The newly structured

---

<sup>50</sup> Sibalis, “Police State,” 88.

<sup>51</sup> J. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 173.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

society helped to alleviate infighting amongst the upper classes and aided in unifying ‘the public’ that mattered to Napoleon. In order to solidify his reign, Napoleon required both support of and control over the French elites. The Emperor’s strict regulation of theatre helped him achieve this goal, partially by excluding the lower classes, and partially by influencing what the people were allowed to see.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Doyle, William. *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Accessed online <http://lib.myilibrary.com?ID=37497>.
- Forrest, Alan. “Propaganda and Legitimation of Power in Napoleonic France,” in *French History* 18, no 4 (2004): 426-445.
- Healey, F.G. *The Literary Culture of Napoleon*. Genève: E. Droz, 1959.
- Hemmings, F.W.J. *Culture and Society in France, 1789-1848*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987.
- Holtman, Robert B. *Napoleonic Propaganda*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950.
- Hunt, Lynn. *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Johnson, James H. *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Johnson, Victoria. *Backstage at the Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Jones, Ben. *Napoleon: Man and Myth*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977.
- Kennedy, Emmet and Marie-Laurence Netter. In *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*, edited by Emmet Kennedy, Marie-Laurence Netter, James P. McGregor, and Mark V. Olsen. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- Lyons, Martin. *France Under the Directory*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Roy, Donald. *Romantic and Revolutionary theatre, 1789-1860*. Edited by Donald Roy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Sibalis, Michael. “The Napoleonic Police State,” in *Napoleon and Europe*, edited by Philip G. Dwyer. Hockley, Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2001.