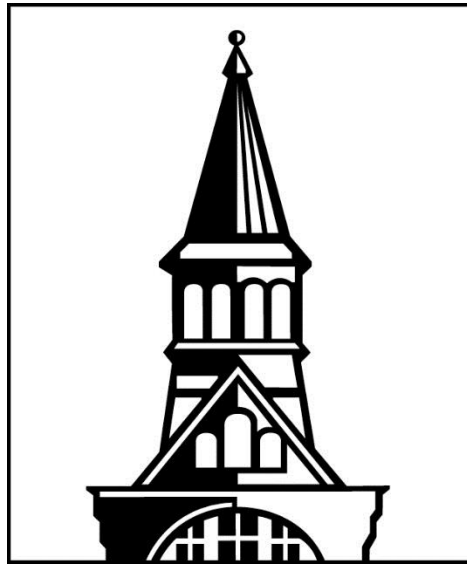


**THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT  
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2013-2014*



*The UVM History Review* is a yearly publication of the University of Vermont History Department. It seeks to publish scholarly essays and book reviews of an historical nature from current and past UVM students.

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**Cover:** Photograph of University of Vermont Students in full theatrical (cross-)dress for a production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, circa 1900.  
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## **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to present to you the *2013-2014 University of Vermont History Review*, which collects the very best historical work composed by the UVM undergraduate and graduate student body. Within you will find a host of interesting and well-researched articles that reflect the diverse talents of our students in their broad geographic, thematic and temporal range.

I am very proud to have worked with such an excellent editorial staff over the course of the past year. The editors of the *History Review* offered each author extraordinarily thoughtful consideration of their submissions. If not surprised, I was profoundly grateful that each editor took the time to provide both intellectually astute and meticulous critiques. I owe them a considerable debt of gratitude.

As senior editor, I would like to thank each author and editor for his or her contributions to this year's publication. I would also like to give special thanks to Professor Sean Field, the publication's faculty liaison, for all of his help and amazingly prompt responses to my endless email inquiries. I am also grateful for the forbearance of both Kathy Truax and Kathy Carolin, who are always so helpful. I am indebted to Hope Greenberg for advice on resolving the mysteries of Microsoft word. Lastly, I am (as always) thankful that the University of Vermont Special Collections staff continue to let me to hang around, which in this specific instance facilitated the procurement of the lovely cover image.

Ruby Ray Daily,  
May 1, 2014



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## RECONSTRUCTING THE BATTLE OF TORBOLE: A NEGLECTED EPISODE IN THE HISTORY OF THE TENTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION IN WORLD WAR TWO

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SKYLER BALDWIN BAILEY

In the waning hours of April 1945, men of the elite 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division grappled with a German armored force for sixteen hours in a small Italian town on the shores of Lake Garda. The Battle of Torbole was fought after the signing of the armistice that ended World War Two in Italy. The fight was distinctive in a number of ways which further solidify the reputation of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain as one of the truly outstanding divisions of the Second World War. Despite these facts, this battle has been largely ignored in recent historiography. A wide range of sources must be consulted and synthesized in order to reconstruct the fighting for Torbole. The sources used for this purpose include oral histories, unpublished or self-published autobiographical accounts, and archived documents including company morning reports and citations for medals awarded to participants. First-hand accounts tend to be brief, incomplete and at times contradictory. Gaps and inconsistencies among the sources raise some important questions about what happened and how decisions were made. Careful analysis of a variety of sources brings the disparate accounts together into reasonably clear focus and places the Battle of Torbole into the larger narrative of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division's wartime experience.

In the middle of April 1945, the Allies launched a major offensive along the whole of the Italian Front, meant to destroy German Army Group C and liberate all of Italy from Axis control. The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division was the freshest division in the Mediterranean Theatre, and formed the leading edge of the assault. Aided by a large superiority in artillery, armored and air forces, and their substantial offensive striking power, they led the Allied armies out of the Apennines, across the Po River, and into the Alps. Late April found the remnants of Army Group C working to reinforce the "Blue Line" in the foothills of the Alps, that it might hold off the Allied push long enough for the Germans either to reorganize and reform, or escape to Austria.<sup>1</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division was to advance up the eastern shore of Lake Garda, outflank the western end of the Blue Line, and capture or destroy the German forces before they reached the Austrian border.

Lake Garda is a glacial formation, carved into sheer cliffs that come right to the water's edge.<sup>2</sup> The single road on the east shore passes through a series of tunnels numbered by the US Army in ascending order from south to north. The Germans had fortified some of these tunnels, and had collapsed others with explosives. The progress of the Mountain Division became slow and arduous, involving tortuous mountain traverses and amphibious operations on the lake to bypass the blown tunnels. By consequence, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry Regiment completely lacked artillery or armor support as it neared the town of Torbole, on the northeast corner of the lake.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> General Frido von Senger und Etterlin, *Neither Fear Nor Hope*, trans. George Malcom (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1964), 302.

<sup>2</sup> H. Robert Krear, *The Journal of a US Army Mountain Trooper in World War II* (Estes Park, CO: Desktop Publishing by Jan Bishop, 1993), 78.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

On 29 April, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moved out at 0600 after three hours of fitful sleep in intermittent rain on a mountainside above Lake Garda. They advanced in two separate columns. Companies I and K, reinforced with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, and part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon of Company M, made their way north along the mountainside.<sup>4</sup> Company L moved more rapidly on the road. By 1100 Tunnels 5 and 6 were captured. A German attempt to collapse Tunnel 5 with explosives failed when the demolition charge detonated too early.<sup>5</sup> Company L discovered a wrecked 20mm gun inside, and the pieces of possibly forty German soldiers scattered as far as fifty feet from the tunnel opening.<sup>6</sup>

L Company halted inside Tunnel 6 for cover from enemy artillery and a German 20mm gun, and to allow the rest of the battalion on the mountain to come abreast for a simultaneous advance on Torbole.<sup>7</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion command post was set up in Tunnel 4, as it was the only point from which radio contact could be maintained with both elements of the advance.<sup>8</sup> The battalion commander, Maj. William Drake, left the command post to attend a meeting of regimental officers inside Tunnel 5, leaving Capt. Everett Bailey of Company L in charge until his return.<sup>9</sup> The Germans had a sizeable number of 88mm artillery pieces at the northern tip of the lake, around the town of Riva. They kept up a warm harassing fire on the road. Company L left Tunnel 6, and headed north toward Torbole under the steady shelling. The fatigue of two weeks of nearly constant movement in combat conditions, and of three consecutive nights of little or no sleep, was becoming readily apparent. A man named Harris ran back into the tunnel several times for fear of being hit. His comrades did their best to extricate him, and finally compelled him to follow the rest of the company up the road.<sup>10</sup>

The north opening of Tunnel 5 pointed directly toward the German 88s. After several failed attempts, one of the German gun crews managed to fire an airburst directly into the tunnel. When it detonated inside, shrapnel, pieces of rock, and concussion killed seven men and wounded forty-four others, most of them of Company M.<sup>11</sup> Among the casualties were several officers of the regiment. Maj. Drake was wounded and evacuated for minor surgery.<sup>12</sup> The radio in the command post crackled with the message, "Send up all the litter teams you can get!", and Capt. Bailey relayed the message to the aid station down the road. Lt. David Brower was present, and recalled that "Lt. Butterwick, who came running back to our Command Post about then, was pale. A piece of shell fragment an inch across had ripped

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<sup>4</sup> US Department of the Army, *Company M, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment Morning Report*, 29 April, 1945, Box 12, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Appleby, e-mail messages to author, January 29-31, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Krear, *Journal of a US Army Mountain Trooper*, 83.

<sup>7</sup> US Department of the Army. *Company L, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment Morning Report*, 30 April, 1945, Box 11, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>8</sup> David Brower, *Remount Blue: The Combat Story of the Third Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, 10th Mountain Division* (Unpublished Manuscript, c. 1948, Digitized version edited and made available through the Denver Public Library by Barbara Imbrie, 2005), 52.

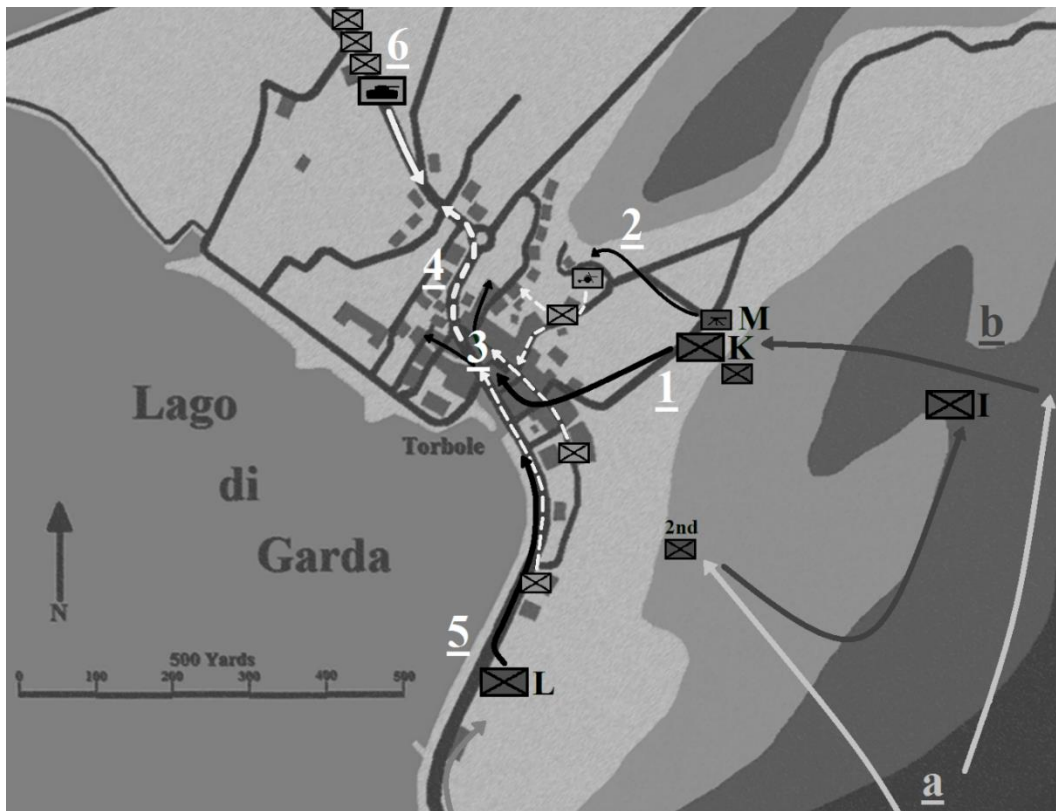
<sup>9</sup> Albert Meinke Jr., *Mountain Troops and Medics: Wartime Stories of a Frontline Surgeon in the US Ski Troops* (Kewadin, MI: Rucksack Publishing Company, 1993), 271.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Mooney, interview by Abbie Kealy, Italy, May, 2003, C MSS OH338, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Oral Histories, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>11</sup> Krear, *Journal of a US Army Mountain Trooper*, 84.

<sup>12</sup> Meinke, *Mountain Troops and Medics*, 271.





*a.* Company I attacks directly toward town while Company K moves to a reserve position on the heights.

*b.* Company I, leaving 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon at the base of the heights, withdraws to a reserve position while Company K moves to invest the town, and shelters in a grove of trees to await darkness.

*The situation between 2100 and 2200 hours, 29 April 1945.*

*1.* After dark, Company K advances into Torbole and becomes engaged in street-fighting with German infantry.

*2.* Part of Company M moves against the 20mm gun, which is then withdrawn to the town center.

*3.* Company K captures the town center after destroying the German 20mm gun.

*4.* With the town center captured, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons of Company K split up and advance into the remainder of Torbole. The last German defenders are driven out of the northern part of town.

*5.* As the fighting dies down, Company L advances into town, leaving its 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon in position just south of Torbole.

*6.* Three panzers and 150 German infantry launch a counterattack.

into, but had not entered, the top of his steel helmet, and was still embedded there, although he didn't know it. 'Major Drake's been hit,' he said to Bailey, 'and he wants you to take over. They got a direct hit inside the tunnel.'<sup>13</sup> Capt. Bailey thus assumed command of the American forces preparing to strike toward Torbole.

<sup>13</sup> Brower, *Remount Blue*, 57.

The traversing column, heavily loaded down with weapons and ammunition, had a difficult march through thick brush on the mountainside. At noon, Company I rounded a shoulder of the mountain and reached a point from which they looked directly down on Torbole. There they halted. During the march north they had lost radio contact with the battalion command post, which had moved by this time into Tunnel 5. Very few knew the scheduled plan of attack on the town, including many of the NCOs, and the column remained immobile.<sup>14</sup> The hesitation of Company I left Company L moving against the objective alone.<sup>15</sup>

There is evidence that Company L had to fight its way to the southern edge of Torbole. S/Sgt. William Morrison, who advanced with L Company, described passing a dead German lying next to an 88mm artillery piece by the roadside. When Capt. Albert Meinke moved through the following day, he recalled seeing “three dead German soldiers lying in the road about half way to the town...although they were wearing the German Army uniform, two of them were mere boys. I thought that they could not have been more than 15 years old.”<sup>16</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon of Company L reached the south side of town, where they encountered increased artillery and small arms fire. They crept northward under a steady shower of projectiles, and jumped a four foot cement wall along the roadside to take cover from the bullets. Pfc. Lloyd Fitch and his Sergeant were nearly hit by an incoming artillery round. The blast blinded the Sergeant, who leaped up and began to flail around in shock. Pfc. Lawrence Martinez saved him from enemy small arms fire.<sup>17</sup> Around 1230, finding themselves completely unsupported and exposed, Company L stopped and dug in just short of Torbole.<sup>18</sup>

When those at the battalion command post realized that radio contact with the traversing column had been lost, they made strenuous efforts to reestablish contact. The radio set was carried out of the tunnel into artillery fire of moderate intensity, but the road north of Tunnel 5 was too well sheltered by cliffs for any successful transmission.<sup>19</sup> With the breakdown in communications, and with the entire battalion in a state of exhaustion, Lt. David Brower remarked that “the will to attack seemed to be disintegrating into a stupor.”<sup>20</sup> Col. Cook, commander of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry, began to show signs of fatigue. He was reported to be acting strangely and issuing orders that made no sense. At 1400, Capt. Albert Meinke was called forward to examine him, and recalled that “he exhibited typical symptoms of battle fatigue...he didn’t know what day this was. The Colonel was very obviously in no condition to lead.” Capt. Meinke persuaded Col. Cook to relinquish command to Lt. Col. John Hay and go to the rear to sleep for eight to ten hours.<sup>21</sup>

Capt. Edgerton Hyde of Company M returned to the battalion command post from a stay in the hospital for treatment of a wound he had received on April 26. Seeing the problems of communication, he went forward through German artillery and mortar fire to establish

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<sup>14</sup> Dick Emerson, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 58.

<sup>15</sup> Krear, *Journal of a US Army Mountain Trooper*, 85.

<sup>16</sup> Meinke, *Mountain Troops and Medics*, 276.

<sup>17</sup> Lloyd Fitch, quoted in A.B. Feuer, *Packs On!: Memoirs of the 10th Mountain Division in World War II* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006), 52.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Wellborn, *History of the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment in Italy*, Edited by Barbara Imbrie in 2004 (Denver, CO: Bradford-Robinson Printing Co., 1945), 45.

<sup>19</sup> Brower, *Remount Blue*, 58.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Meinke, *Mountain Troops and Medics*, 274.

contact and organize the forward elements for the attack.<sup>22</sup> His efforts were apparently successful, and movement toward the objective soon resumed. Company I was to hike down the mountain and attack Torbole, while Company K remained in reserve on the heights. Lt. Elufson, the commander of Company I, met with his platoon leaders and NCOs to observe the situation and select a route of approach. At the bottom of the steep slope they could see a corridor of olive trees abutted by rock walls on either side, and determined to use that cover to get within striking distance of the town.<sup>23</sup>

The 148 men of Company I set off down the mountain in single file, on a diagonal course to enter the town from the southeast.<sup>24</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon led the column, followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Platoons, in that order. Largely due to their exhausted state, things quickly began to fall apart. They were spotted by German snipers in the town, who fired only two shots, both of which missed, before 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon radioed the company CO, “We’re pinned down by snipers!”<sup>25</sup> Machinegun sections were sent down from 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon to cover the advance. They hiked down, set up their weapons and opened fire, but the column did not move. It would seem that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon commander suffered from battle fatigue and yielded command to T/Sgt. Clayton Staley, who took charge of the Platoon. The machineguns barked to life again, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons moved carefully down the slope, the men making use of what cover they could for protection from sniper fire.<sup>26</sup>

As the sun began to hang low over the mountains to the west, radio contact with 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was lost. Lt. Rivers of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon led a radioman down to reestablish communications, but the radioman was hit by one of the snipers very soon after they set out. A group of Germans was observed 1500 yards away, dragging a howitzer into position on the other side of Torbole. They opened an accurate fire on the trail and inflicted several casualties with a series of well-placed rounds. Word was sent back up the trail for mortar support, and 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon dispatched three mortar crews. Several of the men were hit by snipers as they hiked down with their cumbersome tubes, and the mortars were never used.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> US Department of the Army, Headquarters 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. *Citation for Silver Star Awarded to Egerton F. Hyde, for Gallantry in Action on 30 April 1945*, by command of Major General Hays. #GO-162, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>23</sup> Emerson, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 58.

<sup>24</sup> US Department of the Army. *Company I, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment Morning Reports*, 29 April, 1945, 710, Box 11, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>25</sup> Emerson, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 58.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



*Capt. Everett Bailey took this photograph of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion command post by the edge of Lake Garda around midday 29 April 1945, as the rifle platoons made their initial approach to the edge of Torbole.*

The head of the column reached the base of the mountain, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was stopped there by two panzers northeast of Torbole. At 1752, the Germans drove self-propelled guns to the east side of town and opened fire at point blank range.<sup>28</sup> The slow, hesitant approach of Company I had given the Germans time to reinforce their position. What had at first been a small force that might have been attacked and overrun was by this time comprised of armor, artillery and enough infantry that it was beyond the assault capabilities of two rifle platoons.<sup>29</sup> The attack of Company I had come to grief. The order came to withdraw, but the exhausted men of 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon had found good cover at the base of the heights and would certainly sustain further casualties moving back up the slope. They received permission to hold where they were, and took no further part in the battle. The rest of Company I retraced their steps to the top of the trail.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear that at this time a new attack plan was devised, though how the decision was made, and at what command level, is unknown. Company K, which had remained in reserve on the mountainside, was to move down the slope to assault the town by a more direct route. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Platoons of Company I reassembled on the high ground to act as support.<sup>31</sup> The second attempt to capture Torbole was made by the 189 men of Company K, as well as the

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<sup>28</sup> Wellborn, *History of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Krear, *Journal of a US Army Mountain Trooper*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> Emerson, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 59.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59.

elements of Company M that were with the column, perhaps an additional forty men.<sup>32</sup> Lt. Bernard Walcuz took over command of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Company I, which also followed in the movement toward the objective.<sup>33</sup> In total, the attack was made by a force of approximately 255 men.

Their descent from the heights began at 2015. As the sun set behind the sharp mountains to the west, Allied planes bombed and strafed the German positions, and the infantry was able to move down the hillside undetected and without casualties.<sup>34</sup> It would seem that the Allied air sorties caused the Germans to withdraw their armored vehicles. No sources make any mention of the panzers and self-propelled artillery that had barred Company I from advancing into the town being present by this time. Had the armored vehicles maintained their positions they would equally have blocked the approach made by Company K, but the second attack encountered only infantry. A German withdrawal of their armored forces in response to the allied air attack provides a reasonable explanation for their disappearance, though they may have run out of ammunition.

En route to Torbole, the K Company column crossed a large, barren, rocky plateau before making the final descent toward town. There they were pinned down by fire from three German snipers and two men with MP40 submachine guns. By rushing from rock to rock, they were able to gain the cover of a grove of trees at the base of the hill. S/Sgt. William Holbrook of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon of Company K nearly jumped into a foxhole before discovering that it was already occupied by a German soldier, who was then made a prisoner. Upon interrogation, the German revealed that there were three tanks and eighty infantry from a number of different units in the immediate vicinity. The prisoner was sent to the rear, and Company K organized to move on the objective.<sup>35</sup>

It was after dark when the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons of Company K advanced from the grove of trees to the edge of town, and immediately lost contact with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Platoons. They searched and cleared the first house they encountered, and established the company command post and aid station inside. 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon headed into the town itself, followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. In the dark streets, eight figures were seen walking up the road from the direction of the tunnels. Company L was expected to attack from that direction, so the men held their fire until the group's continued approach revealed them to be German soldiers. Company K opened fire, which the Germans immediately returned, and a firefight developed.<sup>36</sup>

Alerted to the infiltration, Germans began shooting from every direction. A machinegun held up one portion of the advance, and T/Sgt. Claude Ford ran forward alone to eliminate the gunners with hand grenades. While running up to throw a grenade, he was caught by a burst from the machinegun and died almost instantly.<sup>37</sup> S/Sgt. Faulkner recalled that

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<sup>32</sup> US Department of the Army. *Company K, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment Morning Report*, 29 April, 1945, 644, Box 12, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>33</sup> Emerson, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Faulkner, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 59.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> US Department of the Army, Headquarters 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. *Citation for Silver Star Awarded Posthumously to Claude S. Ford [Ford], for Gallantry in Action During the Period 20 February 1945, to 30 April, 1945*, by command of Major General Hays, #GO-141, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

“again the 20mm fire from the ridge we were to take opened up on us.”<sup>38</sup> His wording seems to indicate that some part of his account, now lost, included testimony that the 20mm gun had fired on them earlier, though this is the earliest extant reference to the use of the weapon in the fight for Torbole. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. James Church led the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon of Company M on a flanking movement toward the ridge that juts into the northern part of town, with the goal of taking a firing position on the heights that could dominate the German emplacements. They were discovered and brought under an intense and accurate fire by the 20mm gun. Undeterred, Lt. Church continued to place his machineguns and mortars, which delivered an effective fire that silenced the German gun.<sup>39</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon of Company K penetrated Torbole as far as the town square. A German 20mm gun stopped them there and inflicted several casualties.<sup>40</sup> Sgt. Robert Smith of 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon set up a machinegun at the corner of one of the buildings surrounding the square, which his men worked by reaching around the corner to press the trigger in order to place suppressing fire on the German gun crew.<sup>41</sup> Aided by Sgt. Smith’s efforts, Pfc. John Martin was able to expose himself long enough to aim and fire his bazooka, which destroyed the gun and inflicted heavy casualties on its crew.<sup>42</sup> There is reason to believe that these two incidents involved the same German gun. Although 20mm guns were usually paired in sections of two, the wrecked gun found in Tunnel 5 may have been the section-mate to the weapon used in Torbole. Further, if a gun had been destroyed on the ridge, the citation for the Silver Star Lt. Church won for his flanking maneuver would likely have said that, but it did not. It is therefore a reasonable conclusion that only one 20mm gun was engaged, that it was first used in defense of the north edge of town, and was withdrawn to the town center as a result of the flanking maneuver of elements of Company M.

With the town center captured, Company K allocated its advance so that 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon moved into the right side of Torbole, while 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon advanced against the left. The town fell silent, and the troops began searching the buildings. The rising moon was nearly full, and part of the town was burning, so the streets were sufficiently lit for observation.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, inside the buildings there was so little light that the search was conducted, according to S/Sgt. Faulkner, “mostly by pawing around with our hands in all the houses.”<sup>44</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon became embroiled in a firefight with a German squad in their allotted district, but the Germans slowly withdrew and almost the entire town fell to 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. The exhausted men of Company K then established a defense and looked forward to the possibility of finally getting some sleep.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Faulkner, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 59.

<sup>39</sup> US Department of the Army. Headquarters 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, *Citation for Silver Star Awarded to James W. Church, for gallantry in Action on 29 April 1945*, by command of Major General Hays, #GO-141, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>40</sup> US Department of the Army. Headquarters 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, *Citation for Silver Star Awarded to John L. Martin, for gallantry in Action on 30 April 1945*, by command of Major General Hays, #GO-109, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>41</sup> Faulkner, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 59.

<sup>42</sup> US Department of the Army, *Citation for Silver Star Awarded to John L. Martin*.

<sup>43</sup> US Department of the Army. Historical Division. *Fifth Army History: Part IX, Race to the Alps*, October 21, 1947, 184.

<sup>44</sup> Faulkner, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 59-60.

<sup>45</sup> US Department of the Army. *Company K, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment Morning Report*, 30 April, 1945, 644, Box 12, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

Torbole appeared to be firmly in American hands by 2200, and Company L moved up the road, leaving all or part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon in reserve south of town.<sup>46</sup> Within an hour Company L was beginning to take up a defensive posture alongside Company K. Placement of the machineguns was almost complete when the enemy returned.<sup>47</sup>

The moment the German counterattack began was a memorable one, for several sources vividly describe their experience of it. One unidentified soldier of Company K recalled that “as Sgt. Relyea came up to see about setting up his other two machineguns and began to give orders, two tanks, up the road about 75 yards, began to fire on the buildings we were in. Until now everyone had been merely standing around; now we raced upstairs and took up firing positions in the windows.”<sup>48</sup> Sgt. Carroll Provost of Company L had lost most of his memory by the time he was interviewed in 2003, but he was able to relate that “it was pitch dark, and then we could hear a German tank rattling up the street, and then it stopped in front of the house we were in, and then you could hear the turret squeaking around and all of the sudden, BOOM. They fired a round right into the building we were in, and luckily none of us got hurt.”<sup>49</sup>

Although the unidentified soldier of Company K reported seeing two tanks, all other sources refer either to three, or at least three. Albert Meinke, who spent the night in Tunnel 5, reported that they were Tiger tanks. S/Sgt. Faulkner was in Torbole, and he said they were Panzer Mark IVs. There are reasons to believe Faulkner. By 1945, most Mark IVs included extra armor plating around the turret that gave them a decidedly Tiger-like appearance.<sup>50</sup> More conclusively, the last Tiger tank in Italy had been destroyed on 28 April 1945 in the British zone of Operation Grapeshot.<sup>51</sup> Sgt. Provost’s account of the turret “squeaking” as it rotated may indicate that the tank he described was a Panzer Mark IV Ausf. J, which lacked the electric powered turret of other models.<sup>52</sup> Its turret was traversed manually, without the characteristic hum of the electric traversing mechanism.

After the initial shock of the German counterattack, the accounts diverge in a manner clearly indicative of a great deal of confusion among the rapidly fragmenting American forces. The evidence devolves into wild inconsistency, and it becomes difficult to reconstruct events with any reliable degree of accuracy. One portion of Company K apparently retired to the town center almost immediately. S/Sgt. Clarence Faulkner recalled that “we heard a clatter of tanks and several loud reports. Everyone began to head for the hospital, a large building down by the lake’s shore; but the two lieutenants got together and decided we could stop a counterattack more easily in the village square. So everyone took off like a herd of turtles for the town square.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Krear, *Journal of a US Army Mountain Trooper*, 86.

<sup>47</sup> Faulkner, quoted in Brower, 59.

<sup>48</sup> Unidentified Soldier of Company K, quoted in Brower, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Carroll Provost, Interview by Abbie Kealy, Italy, May, C MSS OH344, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Oral Histories, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO (2003).

<sup>50</sup> Hilary Doyle and Tom Jentz, *Panzerkampfwagen IV Ausf. G, H and J 1942-45*, Illustrated by Tony Bryan (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2001), 15.

<sup>51</sup> Alan Hamby, “Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504,” Tiger I Information Center, Unit Histories, accessed April 14, 2013. <http://www.alanhamby.com/unithist.shtml>.

<sup>52</sup> Doyle and Jentz, *Panzerkampfwagen IV Ausf. G, H and J 1942-45*, 28-29.

<sup>53</sup> Faulkner, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 59.

Other men of Company K fought in place until the Germans threatened to separate them from the rest of the company and forced their withdrawal. Pfc. John Martin was placed in an alley between two houses with his bazooka, covered by another man with a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). As the first panzer in line edged by, Pfc. Martin fired a round that penetrated the tank's side armor, and it ground to a stop. The BAR man then opened fire on the German soldiers riding on and following behind the tank.<sup>54</sup> The German attack was temporarily halted while the crippled panzer was removed from the roadway.<sup>55</sup> One man named Canfield with a rifle grenade, and another named Blair with a BAR, both of Company K, maneuvered to fire on the second panzer in line. Canfield's grenade hit the tank, which then began to withdraw making noises as though one of its tracks had been damaged. Its 75mm gun remained fully serviceable, and it continued to fire actively.<sup>56</sup> To guard against further attack from the many narrow alleyways, the panzers moved forward slowly, pausing repeatedly to fire at buildings while the estimated 150 German infantrymen fanned out to protect their flanks.<sup>57</sup>

The men of Company K found themselves at the mercy of the tanks. Sgt. Faulkner's platoon had very little ammunition left, no rifle grenades, and no bazooka rounds. Bullets were collected from the riflemen and loaded into belts to keep the machineguns firing. Faulkner later recalled that "the village square was pretty well protected by buildings in front of it, so the tanks had a hard time getting direct hits. But when they did, they really scored, because of our crowded condition in the different houses. We had two men at each window..."<sup>58</sup> Another man from Company K recounted that,

after that, things went from bad to worse. We were beginning to be surrounded and unfortunately we had only one bazooka round left. To top it all off, we found that we couldn't make contact with the first squad in the next building. Then the order came to withdraw by way of the hospital... We couldn't find some of the guys, and some of them had taken off; we didn't know who had done what, and it would have made too much noise to yell for them; so after one quick look through our buildings we all took off. Back at the center of town we let L Company take over for a while<sup>59</sup>

With K Company's withdrawal to the eastern edge of Torbole, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion yielded over half the town.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>55</sup> US Department of the Army, *Citation for Silver Star Awarded to John L. Martin*.

<sup>56</sup> Unidentified, quoted in Brower, 60.

<sup>57</sup> Faulkner, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 60.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>59</sup> Unidentified, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 60.

<sup>60</sup> Meinke, *Mountain Troops and Medics*, 275





*Lt. David Brower (left) and Capt. Everett Bailey (right) pose together in Italy in 1945.  
(Bailey Photo Collection)*

The German panzers and infantry continued their measured advance. Company L lacked sufficient time to extricate itself, and was sliced in two. One portion, comprised of the Headquarters Platoon and parts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Platoons, was cut off from the rest of the battalion.<sup>61</sup> Though surrounded, the isolated portion of Company L solidified its position. Lt. William McClintock had become L Company CO when Capt. Bailey assumed command of the Battalion. He organized the roughly seventy besieged men into a defensive posture to hold out until they might be relieved. He made his way under fire among the scattered elements of his command, personally directing the setting up of machineguns and aiding in firing anti-tank weapons. They were able to mount a skillful defense that successfully held the Germans at bay.<sup>62</sup>

On several occasions while he had been commander of Company L, Capt. Bailey had rushed to points of crisis to personally direct operations, but battalion commanders were typically expected to remain near the reserve company. With 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion in serious trouble, a portion of his old company fighting for its life, and no longer content to direct the battalion by radio, Capt. Bailey left the command post and made his way through artillery and small arms fire into the town. Once there, he moved under fire among the different platoons and companies to organize a stable defense, and began making arrangements to attempt the relief of Lt. McClintock's men.<sup>63</sup>

About this time, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion lost the support of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on their right. It had moved to capture the town of Nago, one mile north of Torbole, but German planes suddenly appeared overhead. They bombed and strafed American positions on the heights. One bomb

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<sup>61</sup> US Department of the Army. *Company L, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment Morning Report*, 1 May, 1945, Box 11, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>62</sup> US Department of the Army. Headquarters 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, *Citation for Silver Star Awarded to William C. McClintock, for gallantry in Action on 30 April 1945*, by command of Major General Hays, #GO-162, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>63</sup> US Department of the Army. Headquarters 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, *Citation for Silver Star Awarded to Everett C. Bailey, for gallantry in Action on 19 and 30 April 1945*, by command of Major General Hays, #GO-34, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

fell on Company B, still 200 yards short of their objective. Nine men were killed and 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion fell back to the heights, where they remained for the rest of the night.<sup>64</sup> Gen. George Hays, commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, radioed the regimental command post at 0125 with orders to withdraw 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion from Torbole. Col. Cook (by this time returned from the nap prescribed by the Battalion Surgeon) and Lt. Col. Hay believed that the town could be successfully defended. The details of this series of communications are uncertain, as no sources describe their contents. It is unclear what contact Col. Cook and Lt. Col. Hay had with the troops in Torbole, or whether Capt. Bailey participated in the decision-making process. It is unknown if Col. Cook was aware that seventy men were already trapped by the Germans, or whether that was communicated to Gen Hays. All that is known is that the Colonels suggested a delay in the withdrawal order, and that Gen. Hays gave his approval.<sup>65</sup>

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry Regiment now arrived on the heights east of Torbole and Col. Cook ordered ammunition and the bazooka teams of Company H into the town.<sup>66</sup> This reinforcement of anti-tank weapons robbed the panzers of much of their offensive power. They were forced to operate more closely with, and under the cover of their infantry support. By 0222, the momentum of the German counterattack had been broken, and the mountain troops stabilized their defense.<sup>67</sup> L Company remained in their divided positions in the southern portion of town, while Company K held a solid defensive position in the houses of the northeastern quarter.

3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was able to return to the offensive, and began to make slow and methodical progress. As the fighting continued the Germans ran low on ammunition, and likely slowed their rate of fire to husband what remained. Company K was able to recapture the town center, taking prisoner many of the German defenders.<sup>68</sup> Around 0430, L Company managed to break through to Lt. McClintock's beleaguered men.<sup>69</sup> Still listening from the battalion aid station in Tunnel 5, Capt. Albert Meinke reported that the sound of the fighting abated. The Germans, having run out of ammunition, withdrew from Torbole and headed west toward Riva, taking at least two captured American riflemen and a medic with them.<sup>70</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon of L Company moved into town at 0500.<sup>71</sup>

The rising sun revealed the extent of the battle damage done to the beautiful village of Torbole. One K Company soldier recalled that "formal gardens had shell craters in them, trees were shattered, and shops had been blown open and merchandise scattered in the street."<sup>72</sup> A thorough search of the town was begun at 0830. The companies and platoons reorganized and collected their men, some of whom had been unable to withdraw during the counterattack and had hidden themselves in houses. They had remained undetected throughout the battle, even when the Germans searched the buildings they were in.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Wellborn, *History of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry*, 46.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> US Department of the Army. *Company M, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment Morning Report*, 30 April, 1945, Box 12, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>69</sup> Krear, *Journal of a US Army Mountain Trooper*, 86.

<sup>70</sup> Unidentified, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 60.

<sup>71</sup> US Department of the Army, *Company L, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment Morning Report*, 1 May, 1945.

<sup>72</sup> Unidentified, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 60-61.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

Torbole soon became the target of a warm German artillery fire which diminished throughout the day, largely silenced by the US Army Air Corps. DUKW amphibious landing craft arrived at the town marina to deliver artillery pieces and evacuate the wounded by water.<sup>74</sup> The Germans pulled out of Riva that afternoon, and headed for the Alpine passes and the Austrian border. That evening, after a long period of quiet, the Germans fired a parting shot from an 88mm gun. It detonated above a group of officers in conference beside the marina, wounding several, and killing Sgt. Maj. Evans and Col. William Darby, of Darby's Rangers fame.

The shell that killed Col. Darby has received far more attention from modern historians than the sixteen hours of battle that preceded it. Two major books about the division have been published in recent years; McKay Jenkins' *The Last Ridge*, and Peter Shelton's *Climb to Conquer*. Each gives a somewhat detailed description of the advance along Lake Garda. Between them, three paragraphs are devoted to the immediate circumstances surrounding the death of Col. Darby. In contrast, Shelton's work includes only one vague sentence fragment about the fighting for Torbole, and Jenkins' account omits the battle entirely.<sup>75</sup>

The following explanation may be offered to account for the neglect of the Battle of Torbole in recent historiography. The primary sources present several challenges. The men who took part were physically and mentally exhausted, and the nature of the battle was fragmented and confused. Additionally, those who collected accounts from the veterans were primarily interested in the division's earlier exploits in the Apennine Mountains. Consequently, very few questions were asked about the fight for the northern end of Lake Garda. The resulting disparate body of fragmentary and contradictory evidence requires analysis and synthesis to draw forth a comprehensible reconstruction of events. Recent 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division historiography has thus far maintained a broad focus, encompassing the history of the entire division to include its formation, recruitment and training, as well as its combat record overseas. The broad approach taken by historians combines with the challenges of reconstructing events likely deemed unnecessary given their focus, and results in the neglect of the Battle of Torbole.

In the wake of the preceding reconstruction, several important questions remain. The composition of the German force at Torbole is unclear. One K Company soldier recalled that "they were not combat troops, but men from air and service forces."<sup>76</sup> The area around the north end of Lake Garda had been appropriated by the Luftwaffe for production and recreation, and some of the German forces were likely from that service. Sgt. Krear relates that the remnants of the premature explosion of demolition charges in Tunnel 5 were a 20mm gun and the bodies of forty SS troops, which raises the possibility that the 20mm gun used in the defense of Torbole was manned by men of the SS. The use of snipers, machineguns, and especially panzers would tend to contradict any claim that the German force was comprised entirely of "air and service forces."

By 1945 the Wehrmacht had developed standard organizational practices for handling emergency situations with decimated and fragmented units. The forces at hand were formed into ad hoc military units called *kampfgruppen*, and several of these were formed in the Alpine

<sup>74</sup> Wellborn, *History of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry*, 45.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Shelton, *Climb to Conquer: The Untold Story of WWII's 10th Mountain Division Ski Troops* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 207.

<sup>76</sup> Unidentified, quoted in Brower, *Remount Blue*, 60.

foothills at the end of April.<sup>77</sup> One such outfit, Kampfgruppe Bosco, was tasked with holding the western flank of the Blue Line from Lake Garda east through the Adige Valley.<sup>78</sup> It was commanded by Oberst (Colonel) Rudolf Böhmler, and was comprised of the remnants of the 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, reinforced by the faculties and students of a German paratrooper school and an SS mountain school, and by three replacement battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Fallschirmjäger Divisions.<sup>79</sup> A picture emerges wherein the Germans initially encountered at Torbole were a conglomerate force, comprised of some combination of air and service troops, students from the war schools, likely tempered with numbers of veterans from several divisions who were banded together as an emergency expedient. The intelligence provided by a German prisoner that the initial German force consisted of “about eighty men from different outfits” lends weight to this interpretation. Additionally, the bodies of two SS men lay on the slope east of town after the fighting, and a third was discovered nearby as late as 1979.<sup>80</sup>

The counterattack may have been made by reinforcements from the veteran 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. In response to an alarm, that division sent a battalion-strength force to the north end of Lake Garda, where they were engaged with US forces.<sup>81</sup> A set of maps included with the *Combat History of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division: 1944-45* was used in several works authored by veterans. One such map contains an image of a “Battle Group Fischer” moving from the direction of the 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Headquarters at Rovereto toward Torbole, confronting the mountain troops there.<sup>82</sup> That division’s 194<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Battalion was commanded by Major Joachim Fischer.<sup>83</sup> A circumstantial claim can be made that this battalion, or reinforced remnants of it, comprised the forces sent.

Due to the ad hoc, conglomerate nature of the German force and the resulting breakdown in record keeping, German casualties at Torbole may never be known with any certainty. The Gruppo Culturale Nago-Torbole relates that over one hundred Germans fell, with a dozen more captured.<sup>84</sup> This figure likely includes those killed in the botched demolition of Tunnel 5, leaving something over seventy Wehrmacht troops killed, wounded or captured during the fighting in Torbole. A fairly accurate estimate can be made of the casualties sustained by the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry Regiment. Excluding the round that felled Col. Darby, casualties by company were as follows; I Company: 2 killed, 17 wounded; K Company: 1 killed, 18 wounded, 3 captured (some of those captured may be among those counted as wounded); L Company: 18 wounded.<sup>85</sup> Casualties from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Headquarters

<sup>77</sup> Senger und Etterlin, 302.

<sup>78</sup> Luca Valente, *Dieci giorni di guerra: 22 aprile – 2 maggio 1945: la ritirata tedesca e l’inseguimento degli alleati in Veneto e Trentino* (Verona, Italy: Cierre edizioni, 2006), 214.

<sup>79</sup> “Ritterkreuzträger Rudolph Böhmler, Oberst, Fallschirmjäger,” *Die Ritterkreuzträger der Deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS 1939-1945*, accessed December 28, 2013. <http://www.ritterkreuztraeger-1939-45.de/Luftwaffe/B/Bo/Boehmler-Rudolf.htm>.

<sup>80</sup> Gruppo Culturale Nago-Torbole, “Nago e Torbole 1940-1945: La Ritrovamento di un SS,” *La Giurisdizione di Penede*, no. 5 (Dec. 1995), 286.

<sup>81</sup> Bernhard Steinmetz, *Erinnerungsbuch der 94. Infanterie Division an die Kriegsjahre 1939-1945: Lieferung 4, 1943-1945, Einsatz in Italien* (Hannover, Germany, 1973), 33.

<sup>82</sup> Meinke, 355-365.

<sup>83</sup> Bernhard Steinmetz, *Erinnerungsbuch der 94. Infanterie Division*, 37.

<sup>84</sup> Gruppo Culturale Nago-Torbole, “Nago e Torbole 1940-1945: La Ritrovamento di un SS,” 286.

<sup>85</sup> “3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Killed and Wounded in Action,” Excel spreadsheet provided in 2013 by Archivist Dennis Hagen, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Resource Center, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

Company, and from Companies M and H cannot definitely be distinguished from those suffered when the German 88mm airburst detonated inside of Tunnel 5. A reasonable estimate of the total American losses in the battle is approximately seventy men.

On the evening of May 2, the news of the surrender of Army Group C arrived at 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion headquarters. Excited relief soon gave way to a subdued mood. There is evidence of some bitterness among the troops when they discovered that the armistice had been signed at 1400 hours on April 29, and that the entire battle for Torbole transpired after the signing of the armistice.<sup>86</sup> In writing about that fact, Lt. Brower commented that “an ironical, terrible smirk crept over the face of Fate,” and that the end of the war had come “four days too late.”<sup>87</sup> Bob Krear stated in an interview that “a lot of good men could have been saved if the war had ended right then, and I’m not quite sure why it didn’t.”<sup>88</sup>

Regardless of any sense that their victory at Torbole had been a hollow one, it was in many ways the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion’s finest hour. Exhausted, lacking sufficient ammunition, out-gunned, and with seventy men cut off and surrounded during a determined counterattack, they had repulsed a German armored force in fierce street fighting. In so doing, they had unhinged the last German defensive line in Italy. No fewer than five men of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry were awarded Silver Star Medals for gallantry displayed during this action. Capt. Everett Bailey recalled that for weeks afterward Col. Cook complimented him every time they saw each other on his handling of the battalion in the Torbole action.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout their combat experience in Italy, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division held some combination of four major advantages; a large superiority in artillery, overwhelming air support, direct cooperation with friendly armored units, and the offensive striking power of being the freshest unit on the front. The mountain troops fighting for Torbole were deprived of all of these advantages. The collapsed tunnels prevented any allied armor or artillery from directly supporting their advance. Two weeks of constant combat and movement, compounded by three consecutive sleepless nights, left the mountain troops in a fatigued state that severely hampered their operational effectiveness. As night fell on April 29, darkness brought an end to allied tactical support from the air. The Germans were not hampered in any of these regards. Their artillery support was substantial and effective. Their panzers directly engaged the mountain infantry and nearly succeeded in forcing 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion from the town. Had they done so, it would have all but ensured the destruction of Lt. McClintock’s besieged men. Even the long defunct Luftwaffe reappeared as if from nowhere, and played a major role in the course of the fighting on the ground.

Despite the arduous and unique character of the fight for Torbole, modern historians have all but deleted it from the narrative of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. It is unfortunate that such has been the case. The Battle of Torbole was the last major action fought by the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division during the Second World War. It took place after the signing of the armistice between the Allies and German Army Group C. It unhinged the flank of the last German defensive line in Italy, and forced their immediate withdrawal toward Austria. The Germans exploited important tactical advantages previously held by the mountain troops, and

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<sup>86</sup> Ernest F. Fisher Jr., *Cassino to the Alps: United States Army in World War Two: The Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, Book 4*, ed. Maurice Matloff (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 523-524.

<sup>87</sup> Brower, *Remount Blue*, 62.

<sup>88</sup> H. Robert Krear, interview by Abbie Kealy, 2003, C MSS OH336, 10th Mountain Division Collection, Oral Histories, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO.

<sup>89</sup> Everett C. Bailey, letter to Doris J. Bailey, 17 May 1945.

it was the only instance of prolonged street fighting in the division's experience. Instead of being ignored, the Battle of Torbole ought to take a place alongside Riva Ridge, Mount Belvedere, Rocca Roffeno, and other battles by which the Mountain Division gained and maintained its reputation as one of the best American fighting units of World War Two. On 3 May 1945, General Hays gave a speech to the men in praise of their outstanding performance during the war. Standing on the back of a DUKW amphibious vehicle parked in the rubble-strewn streets of Torbole, he said of the division, "Never in its days of combat, did it fail to take an objective, or lose an objective once it was taken. Never was so much as a single platoon surrounded and lost."<sup>90</sup> Were it not for the bravery and determination displayed in the narrow streets of that small Italian lakeside town, none of those statements would have been true.



*This photograph was taken during Gen. Hays' speech in Torbole on May 3, 1945. Though the streets have been cleared for traffic, a wrecked vehicle and extensive damage to buildings from tank shells and small arms fire are clearly visible.*

*(Used with permission of Denver Public Library)*

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<sup>90</sup> Brower, *Remount Blue*, 63.

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## TO BE OR NOT TO BE? APPROACHES TO GERMAN JEWISH SUICIDES DURING THE THIRD REICH

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MEAGAN INGALLS

To be or not to be, that is the question, whether 'tis nobler  
in the mind to suffer the slings of arrows of outrageous fortune,  
or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them?  
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Against the backdrop of Nazi racial policy, nearly 10,000 German Jews made the decision to end their own lives.<sup>1</sup> After each major step in the program against the Jews, beginning with the Jewish boycott of April 1933 and ending with the deportations, numbers of Jewish suicides climbed. What emerges is a distinguishable pattern of German-Jewish suicide directly correlating with Nazi racial policy. What can these suicides communicate about Jewish life in Nazi Germany? Might their deaths provide some insight into their lives?

The stigma associated with suicide in contemporary society is difficult to separate from the historical context, evoking emotions such as despair, hopelessness, mental illness, and even cowardice. How, then, are historians to reconcile the phenomenon of Jewish suicides as a response to Nazism? Exercised by thousands of German Jew during the Third Reich, suicide defied archetypal psychological patterns and socially defined taboos. As historian Marion Kaplan suggests, German-Jewish suicides under the Third Reich do not fit with the “typical psychological profile, that of anger and aggression against an unloved self.”<sup>2</sup> Rather, suicide became less a *psychological* issue and more a *sociological* issue.

Suicide represents an under-researched yet particular response to Nazi persecution. With the extensive statistical analysis provided by historian Konrad Kwiet, historians are able to deduce a pattern directly linking Nazi racial policy to suicide.<sup>3</sup> This paper traces the trajectory of German-Jewish suicide, allowing us to assess the influence of Nazi policy on Jewish men and women from all over the Reich. Ultimately, this work asks how far, if at all, Jewish suicide was a desperate act reflecting panic, fear, and hopelessness, and to what extent it was an act of opposition and non-conformity. The term “opposition” requires some clarification and is not to be confused with “resistance.” The difference between the two may be a matter of opinion, and has been debated at length by Holocaust historians. For purposes of this study, I adopt Kwiet’s interpretation of resistance, namely that resistance was an organized program seeking to reach and mobilize certain sections of the community in order to bring about change.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, I would characterize opposition as any expression of individual non-cooperation, large or small, or disapproval of Nazi expectations.

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<sup>1</sup> Konrad Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge: Suicide in the Jewish Community under the Nazis,” in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 29 (1984): 157.

<sup>2</sup> Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 181.

<sup>3</sup> Konrad Kwiet and Helmut Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand: Deutsche Juden in Kampf um Existenz und Menschenwürde 1933-1945* (Hamburg: Christians Verlag, 1986); Konrad Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge: Suicide in the Jewish Community under the Nazis,” in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 29 (1984).

<sup>4</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 137.

In his work *On Suicide: A Discourse on Voluntary Death*, Holocaust survivor and essayist Jean Amery analyzes suicide from the point of view of those who are or have been suicidal. Amery adamantly rejects the pejorative words for suicide, especially the German word *Selbstmord*, which translates to self-murder. Rather, he refers to suicide as “voluntary death.”<sup>5</sup> According to Amery, suicide is the most extreme affirmation of one’s agency, freedom, and dignity. Rather than endure an existence filled with physical or emotional pain, helplessness, isolation, or degradation, he suggests that people commit suicide to maintain their dignity. His work, in a sense, is a plea for the understanding and “recognition of the humanity of their situation, rather than giving them the status, socially or politically, as victims.”<sup>6</sup>

Amery’s theories on suicide as “voluntary death” are useful in understanding motivations for Jewish suicide at each stage of Nazi policy. The first spike in the trajectory of the suicide phenomenon came only months after Hitler’s rise to power. The anti-Jewish boycott of 1 April 1933 marked the first measures of “organized persecution” against the Jews, and, accordingly, deeply impacted the Jewish community. Kwiet estimated that between 300 and 400 German Jews committed suicide as a direct result of the Nazi-organized boycott.<sup>7</sup> Frequent instances of Nazi brutality against Jews coupled with the onset of Aryanzation of Jewish businesses caused panic and humiliation in those Jews who had considered themselves Germans for decades. Subsequently, the Law for the Renewal of the Professional Civil Service, enacted only six days later, removed many Jews from their professional status in positions such as law and medicine.

As historian Saul Friedländer writes in his work *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, “for the first time since the completion of the emancipation of the German Jews in 1871, a government, by law, had introduced discrimination against the Jews.”<sup>8</sup> The April legislation began the removal of Jews from the public sphere but was rarely fully implemented. The number of Jews in the civil service was relatively small, and due to an extremely broad definition of Jewish origin, “the initial application of the law was relatively mild.”<sup>9</sup> Despite this, the April legislation marked the beginning of a slow and steady process of impoverishment and humiliation of the Jews in Germany, and these laws may best be understood by the “symbolic statements they expressed and the ideological message they carried.”<sup>10</sup>

The ideological implications of the April boycott and other anti-Jewish measures in mid-1933 drove many Jews to take their own lives. Dr. Hans Bettmann, a Jewish lawyer in Heidelberg, shot himself after being dismissed from court on 3 April 1933. Just over a hundred miles away in Marburg, Professor Jacobsohn committed suicide on 28 April 1933 after being dismissed from his university.<sup>11</sup> Faced with the humiliation of being removed from their professional positions in society, these two Jewish professionals, along with hundreds of others, made the calculated decision to end their lives.

It would be impossible to pinpoint the exact reasons why Jews in this early stage of Nazi policy chose to commit suicide, and yet the implications of the April laws may provide

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Amery, *On Suicide: A Discourse on Voluntary Death* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Amery, *On Suicide*, xii.

<sup>7</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 147.

<sup>8</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 28.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Christian Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 97.



some insight into this complex issue. Surely, the onset of the Jewish boycott and dismissals from the civil service inspired panic amongst Jews whose financial welfare and middle-class standing were threatened. Interestingly, historian Christian Goeschel cites humiliation as the primary motivating factor for the two aforementioned suicides. These professionals “thought of themselves as Germans and not as Jews.”<sup>12</sup> It is also important to note that at this stage in Nazi policy, “very few German Jews sensed the implications of the Nazi laws in terms of sheer long-range terror,”<sup>13</sup> perhaps indicating that these suicides were acts of opposition to a regime and its exclusionary agenda, not acts of despair or fear.

Also worth noting here is that of the estimated 18,723 suicides in Germany in the year 1933, 13,104 were committed by men.<sup>14</sup> In his statistical analysis, Kwiet notes that it is impossible to entirely distinguish Jewish suicides from non-Jewish suicides, but the fact that a staggering 73% of suicides in Germany during this time were committed by men may shed light on their motives. In the early 1930s it was overwhelmingly the highly assimilated Jewish civil servants and businessmen just recently dismissed from their positions who took their own lives, mainly lawyers, and physicians, but also Jewish merchants and artists.<sup>15</sup> Kwiet has found references to victims’ occupations, and citing a statistical study from 1933-1936, he discovered that out of 52 cases of suicide where occupation is stated, “we find 13 businessmen, 10 lawyers, 9 medical men, 9 artists/journalists, 7 civil servants, 2 livestock dealers, 1 bank manager, and 1 commercial employee.”<sup>16</sup> It would appear, then, that these suicides were undertaken as a response to specific Nazi policies against Jews. Whether they were committed out of despair or opposition, however, still remains unclear.

The suicide note of Fritz Rosenfelder in the summer of 1933<sup>+</sup> is often cited in connection to the rising tide of suicides in the wake of the April boycott. Rosenfelder, a Jewish businessman from Stuttgart, was an active member of a local gymnastics association, yet after the April Boycott, he, along with his fellow Jewish members, was about to be kicked out. Keenly aware of this impending action, he shot himself at Bad Cannstadt after drafting a farewell letter:

My dear friends!

Herewith my final farewell! A German Jew could not stand living with the feeling that the movement with which the German nation wants to be saved regarded him as a traitor. I depart without hatred and resentment. An inner desire inspires me—may reason return in due course!...What a Jew feels—you may understand from my action. I have chosen a voluntary death in order to shock my Christian friends into awareness. How much I would have preferred to sacrifice my life to my Fatherland! Don’t mourn—but try to enlighten and to help the truth become victorious.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>13</sup> Friendländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 33.

<sup>14</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 147.

<sup>15</sup> David Lester, *Suicide and the Holocaust* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005), 89.

<sup>16</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 165.

<sup>+</sup> Historians are not in agreement regarding the date of Rosenfelder’s suicide. Friendländer (1997) places it on 5 April 1933, where Kwiet (1984) and Goeschel (2009) place it sometime in the summer of 1933.

<sup>17</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 147.

Though very little is known of Rosenfelder, his final farewell gives us a glimpse into his character and his motivations for taking his own life. While his letter clearly expresses his feelings of stigmatization and disapproval of the Nazi regime, it is important to note that it does not outright condemn the Nazi regime, nor does it incite others to do so. He departs “without hatred and resentment,” only with the hope that others may someday understand the reasons for which he felt compelled to end his life. Rosenfelder’s physical safety is not being threatened at this early stage in 1933; he is simply *unable* to live in a Germany where he and his Jewish brethren are “regarded as traitors.” The tone and language of his farewell letter suggests that his carefully planned suicide was not the result of utter despair or fear, nor was it a final act of resistance. Rather, Rosenfelder’s suicide is best characterized as an act of opposition to the Nazi regime.

In a tragically ironic move, Rosenfelder’s suicide note was taken up by radical antisemite Julius Streicher, editor of the extreme antisemitic Nazi newspaper, *Der Stürmer*. Streicher ran the letter on the front page of the July 1933 issue with the addendum:

If the Jew Fritz Rosenfelder wanted to contribute to a change of the attitude of Germans toward the Jews, he died in vain. We think of him, now that he is dead, without any feelings of ‘hatred and resentment.’ On the contrary, we feel happy for him and would not mind if his racial comrades sent their regards in the same way. Then, ‘reason will have returned to Germany,’ with the Jewish question solved in a simple and peaceful manner...<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted that the majority of the Nazi regime did not share Streicher’s extreme attitude towards Rosenfelder’s suicide or suicide amongst the Jews in general. On the contrary, the Nazis valued order and public opinion. In the early years of the Third Reich, Hitler was very sensitive to public opinion, especially after the April boycott was met coolly with ordinary Germans displeased with the disruptions to their daily routines.<sup>19</sup> Thus, a visible rise in Jewish suicides would have been “bad publicity” that the Nazis could ill afford as they worked to win over the German people.

Shortly after the April 1933 boycott, the surge in German-Jewish suicides subsided and would only rise again slightly with the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor criminalized sexual relationships and banned marriage between Jews and non-Jews as of 15 September. In the wake of the Nuremberg Laws, one Jewish doctor, Hertha Nathorff, made note of the rise of suicides at the Berlin hospital where she worked. In late September she wrote in her diary: “A victim of the Nuremberg Laws! Poor girl. She did not have anything but her relationship with the Aryan man...and now this relationship must be broken off. Therefore, she took Veronal. And such cases happen every day.”<sup>20</sup>

Alarmed by the growing number of Jewish suicides in Berlin by 1937, the Jewish community undertook a study to formally investigate these deaths (especially suicide) and to correlate them to Nazi persecution. Goeschel outlines the findings of this study, stating that between 1932 and 1934, there were 70.2 Jewish suicides per 100,000. This was a sharp increase

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<sup>18</sup> Julius Streicher, *Der Stürmer*, no 30, July 1933.

<sup>19</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, The Germans, and The Final Solution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 156.

<sup>20</sup> Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 99.

from the 1924-1926 figures where there were 50.4 Jewish suicides per 100,000.<sup>21</sup> The study also took into account age and gender demographics in the Berlin Jewish community, concluding that as more and more young Jews emigrated, those left behind were older Jews, and, historically, suicides have always been and remain the highest among the elderly (age 65 on).<sup>22</sup> The results of the study caught the eye of the Gestapo in late 1937, which ordered the suicide statistics be removed from the study as the correlation between the increase of Jewish suicide and the Nazi's racial policy was plain. Though banned from publication in Germany, the results were eventually circulated in the Dutch press in November 1937.

The year 1938 saw another distinct surge of suicides, first with the Anschluss, or annexation of Austria into the Reich, of March 1938, and later the Kristallnacht pogrom in November. Up until this point, most German-Jewish suicides were undertaken quietly and relatively peacefully, with the majority of Jews choosing a more dignified manner with which to end their lives.<sup>23</sup> The situation in Austria, specifically Vienna, differed greatly, where it appears suicides were motivated more by desperation than political opposition. Unlike in Germany, where anti-Jewish policy crept into the Jewish community incrementally over the course of five years, the Austrian Jews felt the full force of Nazi antisemitic brutality almost overnight as "the different stages of Nazi anti-Jewish policy and actions came together in a tremendous outburst of violence."<sup>24</sup> Immediately, the Austrian Jews were faced with a rapid campaign of antisemitism. Processes of Aryanization of Jewish property unfolded with unprecedented speed as the Nazis urged Austrian Jews to emigrate.<sup>25</sup> Theft, extortion, and extreme brutality against the Jews occurred on a massive public scale. In a sense, it was "open season" against the Jews in Austria, where violence and humiliation were everyday occurrences and all pretenses of subtlety were abandoned.<sup>26</sup>

The Austrian Jewish community was overwhelmingly shocked by this treatment, and suicide became a routine phenomenon. In just ten days (12-22 March), at least 96 Viennese Jews took their own lives.<sup>27</sup> Kwiet provides figures of Jewish suicides in Austria for the months of February, March, and April, and unmistakably, the spike in suicides in March is indicative of the Nazi Anschluss. In February, 62 Jews committed suicide, in March 213, and in April 138.<sup>28</sup> The immediate rise in Jewish suicides in March is important, for it may reflect the most common motivation for committing this final act at that time. As seen in Germany in the earlier years, suicides were often carefully planned and thought out. Quite regularly, Jews left final farewell letters to loved ones and neighbors explaining their decisions and airing grievances. The methods for administering death were most often peaceful and non-violent, with the victim procuring, in advance, Veronal, potassium cyanide, sleeping pills, or other barbiturates to end their lives. Their acts, it may be argued, were carefully executed in response to Nazi policy against the Jews.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Nisbert, "Age and Lifespan, in *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology*," ed. Alan L. Berman et al. (New York: Guilford Press, 2000): 138.

<sup>23</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 183.

<sup>24</sup> Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 100.

<sup>25</sup> Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 247.

<sup>26</sup> Hans Safrian, "Expediting Expropriation and Expulsion: The Impact of the 'Vienna Model' on anti-Jewish Policies in Nazi Germany, 1938," in *Holocaust: From the Persecution of the Jews to Mass Murder*, ed. David Cesarani and Sarah Kavanaugh (New York: Psychology Press, 2004): 36.

<sup>27</sup> Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 100.

<sup>28</sup> Kwiet, "The Ultimate Refuge," 149.

What little information that exists regarding Jewish suicide in Austria paints an entirely different picture. There is no recorded evidence of Austrian Jews leaving behind suicide notes or final farewells to those who would find their bodies, possibly indicating a hasty exit from life. In many cases, Viennese Jews took their lives in a violent manner. Prominent philosopher and historian Egon Friedell committed suicide by jumping from his apartment window on 16 March 1938 upon seeing two SA men arriving by car outside his building.<sup>29</sup> And in perhaps the most violent suicide on record from this time, one Jew ran into a coffee house in Vienna, shouted “Heil Hitler!” and cut his own throat in front of the patrons.<sup>30</sup>

The violent measures undertaken by these two Jews in the wake of the Anschluss certainly indicate a level of desperation facing the Austrian Jews in contrast to German Jews. Friedell’s leap from his apartment window upon seeing the Nazi car seems an impulsive and desperate action. The SA had not even arrived at his door before he made the quick decision to surrender his life. Fear, terror, and desperation were clearly motivating factors for this instance of suicide. However, the latter case is less clear. This Jew wanted his action to be public and shocking. His final act before brutally ending his life was to shout “Heil Hitler!” It would appear to be a clear definition of suicide as an act of opposition, and yet the brutal and violent manner in which his suicide was committed also implies a degree of desperation. For many Jews in Austria in the months after the Anschluss, the only way out of persecution was emigration or suicide. In some cases, Nazi officials “forced Viennese Jews to sign a declaration committing themselves to their imminent emigration and then told them that ‘the way to the Danube was always open,’”<sup>31</sup> marking a major shift in Nazi attitudes towards suicide. As discussed earlier, aside from the occasional rant from radical antisemites like Streicher, the Nazi party did not publically encourage Jewish suicide for fear of upsetting public opinion both domestic and foreign. By 1938, faced with an additional 190,000 Jews as a result of the Anschluss, significant steps were taken towards the Nazis long-term goal: the complete removal of Jews from the Reich. In Austria, where a myriad of experimental measures against the Jews were executed, subtlety became less and less important.

Persecution of the Jews culminated again months later after Kristallnacht, prompting another mass suicide phenomenon in Germany. Amidst the burning synagogues, looted shops, and mass arrests, Jews took their own lives in startling numbers. Kwiet estimates that in the wake of the November pogrom, roughly 300-500 Jews committed suicide.<sup>32</sup> The shock of public, state sponsored violence against the Jews shook the Jewish community to its core, and further exclusionary acts were introduced cementing the complete erasure of Jews from society. Nearly 30,000 men were arrested and transported to concentration camps in Germany in the wake of the pogrom, undoubtedly instilling fear and terror in those that had not been arrested. The events of Kristallnacht and the following days made it clear that there was no future for Jews in Germany.

In this atmosphere of uncertainty, Jews expressed agency in one of the few ways left available to them, viewing suicide as a socially acceptable way out of the despair. This despair can be seen in the final act of Martin C., a 47-year-old Jewish musician hiding out in the bedroom of a flat belonging to an Aryan doctor. When the Gestapo arrived days after

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<sup>29</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 59.

<sup>30</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 149.

<sup>31</sup> G Warburg, *Six Years of Hitler: The Jews Under the Nazi Regime* (London: Routledge, 2010), 105.

<sup>32</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 149.

Kristallnacht to arrest C., he locked himself in the bedroom and refused to open the door for the landlady. Eventually, she broke the glass panel on the door and unlocked it from the inside. As the Gestapo flooded into the room, a panic-stricken C. leapt from the window to his death.<sup>33</sup> The fear of the unknown had driven him frantic and, seeing no other way out, he ended his life. Kaplan provides a chilling account of a similar act of despair committed in the wake of the November pogrom. One Jewish woman, sensing the hopelessness of her family's situation, begged her husband to accompany her into voluntary death. Her husband refused and both made an agreement that the only way they would commit suicide would be together. Yet when her husband was arrested on a trivial matter, she grew increasingly distressed and gassed herself in her home. Her final letter to her husband and children is filled with anxiety:

Please try to understand me. I am desperate, crushed without hope. I can't continue to breathe. I am afraid of the prison walls which await me...Forgive me that I leave you like this. I am powerless...My heart is tearing apart. I am perspiring with fright day and night.<sup>34</sup>

The tone and language is unmistakably that of a distraught woman. Her action is not an effort to maintain dignity or communicate her non-cooperation with the Nazis. Rather, it is an act of despair and utter hopelessness.

Yet suicide in late 1938 was not solely an act of despair and fear. There were other more calculated suicides that may fall under the category of opposition and non-conformity. The suicide and farewell note of Hedwig Jastrow is an example of such a suicide undertaken in response to her dissatisfaction with Nazi policy. Only weeks after Kristallnacht, the 76-year-old former teacher took her own life after learning she would be evicted from her flat. Before her final act, she drafted this poetic farewell letter:

Nobody must undertake any attempts to save the life of someone who does not want to live! It is not an accident, nor an attack of depression. Someone leaves her life whose family has had German citizenship for one hundred years, following an oath and always kept this oath. For forty-three years, I have taught German children and have helped them in all misery and for much longer, I have done welfare work for the German *Volk* during war and peace. I don't want to live without a Fatherland, without *Heimat*, without citizenship, without a flat, being outlawed and defamed...<sup>35</sup>

Like Fritz Rosenfelder, Jastrow is unable to live under the current regime. The shame of being evicted from her apartment and home, physically and symbolically, was too much for her to bear. Ultimately, Jastrow's suicide is the manifestation of her refusal to be removed from the society that she loves, and that has been her family's home for "one hundred years." It is a final act of "self-assertion of her right to keep control over her life and body."<sup>36</sup>

In yet another respect, Jastrow's suicide bears similarity to Rosenfelder's. She makes sure that others know that her suicide was "not an accident, nor an attack of depression." Her

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<sup>33</sup> Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 103.

<sup>34</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 182.

<sup>35</sup> Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 103.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

final words emphasize her commitment to her German Fatherland and the work she has done to secure its freedom and ensure its future. Nowhere in the letter does she condemn the Nazi regime for her position. Though it is certainly passionate and poetic, the tone is not accusatory or desperate. Rather, she expresses that she “*does not want*” to live, not that she “*could not live*,” a difference that may seem pedantic but in actuality bears significant difference. Jastrow departs voluntarily, not as an act of despair, but an act of opposition to a regime whose legislation has threatened her personal freedom and dignity.

It may now be prudent to return to Amery’s theory of suicide as “voluntary death,” as it can aptly be applied to the phenomenon of German-Jewish suicide at certain stages of Nazi policy. The idea of suicide as “voluntary death” is reflected in Rosenfelder and Jastrow’s final acts and letters. Rosenfelder clearly states that he leaves “without hatred or resentment,” because he can no longer stand to live in a society where he is “regarded as a traitor.” Jastrow mirrors similar sentiments, claiming she “doesn’t want to live without a Fatherland, a *Heimat*, a flat, etc.” Rosenfelder’s and Jastrow’s personal dignity had been threatened, and thus both make the conscious decision to choose a “voluntary death.”

By far, the most “acute epidemic of suicides occurred during the deportations between 1941 and 1943.”<sup>37</sup> Every Jewish community across Germany experienced a dramatic rise in suicides. However, it was in Berlin that this phenomenon reached epidemic proportions, with an estimated one in four Jewish deaths.<sup>38</sup> This wave is reflected quite clearly Kwiet’s study, where the number of Jewish suicides increased by 70.2 percent from 1940 to 1941. In late 1940, an estimated 94 Jews committed suicide in the Reich, and by the third quarter of 1941 the number had risen to 160. Astonishingly, the number rose even higher to 850 just three short months later, putting the total increase of suicides since late 1940 at 516 percent.<sup>39</sup> In total, Kwiet puts the number of Jewish suicides during the years of deportation at a shocking 3,000-4,000.<sup>40</sup> The transition from “social death” to actual death seemed near complete, and the notice of impending removal from their homes for deportation “signified the loss of the last remnant of life in a familiar environment.”<sup>41</sup> There was little illusion left as to what awaited the Jews as the deportations began in full swing.

Yet even in their precarious and seemingly hopeless situation, German Jews were able to exercise agency. Refusing to leave her home in May 1942 after receiving her deportation notice, Ida Levy ended her own life, most likely by starvation.<sup>42</sup> Her method of suicide is noteworthy for it implies rationality and strategy, rather than desperation and impulse. Her simple action cries out that she would not go willingly. Though she did not leave a farewell note explaining her decision, we may view Levy’s suicide as an act of opposition against a regime that threatened what was surely the last thing she had left. A similar instance occurred three months later when Heinrich Mugdan assisted his 83-year-old grandmother with her suicide. His diary entry about the event sheds light on her motivations.

She told me of the early days, of her happy childhood, of her wonderful lovable mother... then she talked about her own dear little ones...on one occasion she

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<sup>37</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 180.

<sup>38</sup> Bruno Blau, “The Last Days of German Jewry in the Third Reich,” in *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* (1953), 200.

<sup>39</sup> Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 107.

<sup>40</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 155.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

asked for Thekla's monologue and we looked for the place in Wallstein... 'I learned a hundred of Schiller's poems by heart, and I still know them all more or less...' And then she washed herself very thoroughly...put on her final garments, plaited her hair, removed her false teeth and lay down...then she took a large quantity of sleeping tablets...in the end she fell asleep.<sup>43</sup>

The old woman's final moments, as observed by her grandson, are without fear and desperation. She recalls happy moments of her childhood and her children, reading passages from beloved German classics and reciting poetry. Each action she undertook had a purpose, from washing to "plaiting her hair." While it may seem irrational to wash and coif one's hair in the moments before a planned suicide, we can understand these actions to be taken in an effort to maintain semblances of normalcy, agency, and dignity. Her decision to die by her own hand with her dignity intact is her final opposition to the Nazi regime that would deny her this peaceful end.

Many more instances of Jewish suicides in Germany reflect Amery's assertion that suicides or "voluntary deaths" were often carried out in order to maintain human dignity. Kaplan writes of a German Jew who committed suicide only after pinning every medal he had ever earned in the German military on his suit, "perhaps in hopes of shaming the Nazis who would find his body."<sup>44</sup> This deliberate act emphasized his "Germanness," the pride he felt in his German identity, and his refusal to die a "Jewish" death. This sentiment was shared by many assimilated Jews who chose to take their own lives rather than face the humiliation and degradation of being labeled "Jewish." Dora G., a pensioner from Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin, gassed herself in her kitchen on 4 March 1943 after receiving her deportation notice. Her farewell note was left on the kitchen table.<sup>45</sup>

For forty long years I have been married to Aryans...had no contact with Jews, brought up the children in an Aryan way and took them to holy Communion, exercised no Jewish influence on them...did not marry according to Jewish faith...never did any harm to anyone, and always worked (as a girl and as a woman). I like to die, there I am safe.<sup>46</sup>

Dora G.'s suicide note communicates her feelings clearly: she had never identified with her Jewish heritage and did not intend to start now. Her letter emphasizes her commitment to Germany and her pride in her German identity. Her action, as indicated by this letter, does not appear desperate. Rather, it is a carefully calculated expression of her refusal to cooperate with Nazi policy. Suicide, for G., is a way of opposing the regime that has relegated her to a class of people she cannot identify with. With her final line, "I like to die, there I feel safe," she emphasizes her desire to assert self-control, specifically the feeling of personal safety.

Still, there were several cases of suicide during the wave of deportations that were undoubtedly motivated by extreme desperation and terror. In late August of 1943, Sophie Z. heard the doorbell ring in her Berlin apartment. Two Gestapo officers had arrived at her building. When she refused to open the door, the officers proceeded to break it down. Terrified

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>44</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 183.

<sup>45</sup> Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 111.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

of being deported, she leapt from the lavatory window and died on the way to the hospital.<sup>47</sup> In examining the way in which Z. took her own life, it is easy to assume that her act was motivated by sheer terror and desperation. Her decision to commit suicide appears to be a hasty and spontaneous decision as the Gestapo began breaking down her door. Facing certain arrest, her options must have seemed limited to deportation or death by her own hand. The violent act of jumping out of the window is a direct contrast to the typical means of suicide among German Jews who mostly tried to end their lives in a peaceful and dignified manner, and undoubtedly reflects a measure of despair.<sup>48</sup>

Motives behind German-Jewish suicides, especially between the years 1941 and 1943, are not generally a clear either/or classification. At this desperate stage in Nazi policy, Jews were often driven to commit suicide by feelings of hopelessness and despair as well as a desire to oppose the Nazi regime and retain their personal agency. One such example can be found in the deaths of Joachim Gottschalk, one of Germany's most beloved actors, and his Jewish wife, Meta Wolff. Because of his stardom and popularity in the Reich, he and his wife avoided the harshest measures of Nazi Jewish policy. One evening in November 1941, Gottschalk took Wolff to a social function where numerous Nazis were present.<sup>49</sup> Upon learning this, Joseph Goebbels issued a decree ordering him to divorce her. When he refused, Goebbels personally organized the deportation of Gottschalk's wife and their son Michael, a half-Jew, to Theresienstadt, giving them only one day to prepare. Gottschalk protested, refusing to be separated from his family, and asked to be deported alongside them. Goebbels denied his request and instead ordered him to join the Wehrmacht. Just ten minutes before the Gestapo was expected to arrive at the family's home on 6 November 1941, Gottschalk and his wife sedated their young son and committed suicide together as a family by gas poisoning.<sup>50</sup>

The tragedy of the Gottschalk/Wolff suicides in November 1941 is important, for it demonstrates both of the motivations discussed here. Gottschalk blatantly opposed the Nazis when he refused to divorce his wife. Their opposition is further emphasized in their final act, when he and his wife refuse to be parted, kill their son, and commit suicide as a family. Their refusal to be separated, demonstrated by their joint suicide, violates two direct Nazi orders: that Meta Wolff and Michael be transported to Theresienstadt, and that Gottschalk be inducted into the German Army for service to the Reich. Yet, it would be foolish to confine the Gottschalk/Wolff suicides to merely a politically motivated act. Their final act must also be considered one motivated by a degree of despair. This family refused to be separated legally, and ultimately, physically.

It is not a coincidence that, of the four cases discussed of suicide in response to the deportations, three are women. As previously mentioned, the overwhelming demographic of suicide in the early years of the Reich is male, particularly those civil servants and businessmen. In stark contrast, however, the vast majority of Jewish suicides between the years 1941 and 1943 were women. Furthermore, suicide was most prevalent among Jewish women middle-aged or older. There are several reasons for this, with the most obvious being that by the time deportations began in 1941, more Jewish women remained in Germany than Jewish

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>48</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 183.

<sup>49</sup> Howard K. Smith, *Last Train From Berlin: An Eye Witness Account of Germany at War* (New Haven: Phoenix Press, 2000), 202.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 203.



men.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps even more telling was that, of these older Jewish women left in Germany, many were widowed and this increasing social and physical isolation is clearly visible in their high numbers of suicide. Their children and grandchildren, like much of the Jewish youth, had more opportunities to emigrate before the ban in October 1941, and those who were not able to do so had a better chance in hiding than their parents or grandparents. Middle-aged and elderly Jewish women were also less apt to leave their homes and the familiarity that, in most cases, was all they had left. Their inability to “start over” limited their options dramatically, and as their situation gradually became clear, more and more Jewish women exercised agency in the only way available to them. As demonstrated, their motivations ranged from despair to opposition, specifically a desire to maintain human dignity and assert self-control.

With each wave of exclusionary measures leveled against the Jews of Germany, suicides occurred by the hundreds and, eventually, by the thousands. Responding to Nazi policy, peaks of Jewish suicide directly correlated with events such as the anti-Jewish boycott in April 1933, the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, the Anschluss and November pogrom of 1938, and finally, the deportations beginning in 1941. While it is clear that there exists a distinguishable pattern of Jewish suicide during the Third Reich, less clear are the motivations behind the phenomenon. Whether motivated by an extreme desire to express agency and retain their dignity, or by fear and despair, more than 10,000 German Jews took their own lives from 1933 to 1945.<sup>52</sup>

The study of German-Jewish suicides offers a unique window into the social psyche of an entire community and their response to Nazi persecution. As Goeschel suggests, German Jews who took their own lives during the twelve years of Nazi persecution were “not simply alienated from society; they were convinced that the society in which they could exist had been destroyed.”<sup>53</sup> Suicide, then, what seems the embodiment of a choice-less choice, presented Jews with a rare opportunity to control their own fate, and thus, was a viable and desirable alternative to Nazi persecution.

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<sup>51</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 182-3.

<sup>52</sup> Kwiet, “The Ultimate Refuge,” 167.

<sup>53</sup> Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 117.

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## THE MASSACHUSETTS'S BODY OF LIBERTIES AND THE SPIRIT OF THE PURITANS

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DILLON BAKER

The relationship between law and the individual is constantly in flux. The law reflects the values of, asserts values on, and dictates the daily actions of everyone that falls under its own self-constructed jurisdiction. It is a powerful force, not only through the temporary influence of its enforcement but also as a record of how the society it governed functioned and perceived itself. When a group of people come together and agree to live under a prescribed set of rules and laws, a careful examination of what exactly those rules and laws are can provide a valuable insight into the concerns, beliefs and ideals that the society possesses. These rules are constantly changing as the people themselves change, and as the conditions that once beset them fall away and new challenges arise. Much like popular literature, laws are documents that innately reflect the time and place in which they are written. By analyzing and tracking the changes of these laws, one can gain a greater appreciation not just of a broad sense of historical chronology, but also of the individuals that constituted the society and changed with the flow of time.

For the Puritans of Colonial Massachusetts, law played a particularly important role in their quest to build a “city on a hill,” wherein their religion and way of life could flourish. The creation of a legal system that could properly support and mold society to help accomplish their idealistic goals was of utmost importance to many of the early Massachusetts Bay Colony leaders such as John Winthrop, John Cotton, and Thomas Dudley, among others. One can look at the famous argument between John Cotton and Roger Williams, immortalized in such works as *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution*, as further evidence of just how seriously the Puritans took the role of law. They were especially concerned with the particulars of jurisprudence, which took on a special significance in this formally “savage” and “lawless” land that many now hoped to shape into a Puritan Eden. David Konig lays bare the importance of the legal system for the Puritans quite clearly in his work *Law and Society and Puritan Massachusetts*: “Its strength lay in the broad popular awareness of its importance: its availability and effectiveness in assuring social stability and resolving community conflicts were highly valued by Puritans in England, and were no less appreciated in a wilderness.”<sup>1</sup> Statistics also back up the notion that the legal system was of great importance to the Puritans, not just for the leaders, but for the people as a whole: “litigation in Essex was so common that the county courts... heard literally thousands of cases during their existence under the colonial charter.”<sup>2</sup> Given this context, the first code of laws in colonial New England, Nathaniel Ward’s 1641 *Body of Liberties*, takes a place of considerable value for dissecting the legal, societal, and individual history of the time.<sup>3</sup> It is surprising, then, that this document has yet to produce a dedicated scholarly work. Why exactly there has yet to be such an analysis is difficult to understand. This

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<sup>1</sup> David Thomas Konig, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts: Essex County, 1629-1692* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1979), 34.

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

<sup>3</sup> John Ward Dean, *A Memoir of the Rev. Nathaniel Ward, A.M., Author of The Sample Cobbler of Agawam in America. With Notices of His Family* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1868), 62.

work, then, is meant remedy this oversight, namely by elucidating much of the context surrounding the creation of this document, its role as a reflection of Puritan values and dilemmas, and the significance of its use as a constantly evolving and often employed early bill of rights. As a whole, this analysis will attempt to fill an otherwise mostly empty hole, as well as expose at least some of the Puritan character in this all-important early stage of American history.

Before delving into the *Body of Liberties* itself, it is imperative to place it within a historical and legal context. Without this background, much of the implications and running themes addressed by the document lose much of the significance that they readily possess. Something like the emphasis placed on the power of the magistrates would make little sense outside of this context. Understanding the history of the document's formation also provides a valuable insight into exactly why it was created in the first place, something that was in no way guaranteed.

As an English colony made up of English men and women and legitimized by an English colonial charter, simply the notion of creating a separate code of laws in Puritan Massachusetts was in itself highly controversial. John Winthrop, perhaps the most influential legal figure of early Puritan New England history, feared the creation of a legal code would be "repugnant to the laws of England," a fear he undoubtedly was not alone in possessing.<sup>4</sup> Instead, "the initial decades of the Bay Colony's existence were the formative years during which, under the pervasive influence of Puritan doctrine, and with virtually no outside interference, the structure of the civil government took shape and was completed."<sup>5</sup> This was done largely through the power of local magistrates, who used a combination of common law practice and biblical law to create a legal structure that attempted to accurately reflect Puritan ideals and promote a largely hegemonic Christian lifestyle. Winthrop's rather authoritarian views on how to properly run a society greatly influenced these earlier years, as his governorship promoted the power of the magistrate and the clergy, the two biggest authority figures at the time, before individual rights. In fact, Winthrop believed that "government was principally limited by the ruler's conscience and self-restraint, and his insistence upon the virtue of the people's obedience to their betters continued to be a vital force in the administration of the colony's affairs during the first two decades."<sup>6</sup> Again Winthrop was not alone in his distrust of the masses, since democracy had yet to take the largely irreproachable place it currently possesses in contemporary American culture. Probably the most important, and surprising, figure that may have agreed with the above quote was the eventual writer of the *Body of Liberties*: Nathaniel Ward.

Though the *Body of Liberties* would in many ways curb the power of the magistrates and uphold individual rights, Ward expressed strong hesitance in the circulation of the document:

Among the towns, fearing, as he put it in a letter to Winthrop, that it 'will too much exauctorate [exaggerate] the power of the General Court to 'prostrate matters in that manner.' Ward doubted that 'it would be of God to interest the

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<sup>4</sup> Konig, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts*, 35.

<sup>5</sup> George Lee Haskins. *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts: A Study in Tradition and Design* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), ix.

<sup>6</sup> R. H. C., "The Rule of Law in Colonial Massachusetts" *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 108.7 (1960): 1001-1036.

inferiour sort in which should be reserved *inter optimates penese quos est sancire leges* [between the leaders that sanction the laws]<sup>7</sup>

Of course, Ward's views of the townsfolk as an "inferiour sort" may be more of a class-inspired scorn rather than a more concrete legal theory like Winthrop's. This may explain part of Ward's ability and willingness to compose the *Body of Liberties* in spite of his apparent belief in the inferiority of the common people, though it is an important notion to keep in mind when discussing potential biases within the document itself. Indeed, despite this widespread belief among many of the leaders of the colony, Winthrop's top-down power structure began to be "gradually supplemented by an increasing emphasis upon specific individual rights."<sup>8</sup> The author's use of "supplemented" is important to note, as it reminds us that this was not a sudden and revolutionary populist change of heart by the Puritan leaders by any stretch of the imagination. This is readily apparent in Ward and Winthrop's views on the common man as well as the relatively slow and polite manner in which the *Body of Liberties* was eventually created. Even with the *Body of Liberties* there remained a heavily authoritarian system at play, though certainly the document still represents an extremely significant shift in the legal and societal history of the colony. The reason for this gradual shift is quite simple: the magistrates had become too powerful for their own good. John Ward Dean writes in his *Memoir of the Rev. Nathaniel Ward* that "the people had early desired such a code; for so much power had been left with the magistrates, that they considered their liberties unsafe."<sup>9</sup> The focus on curbing the magistrate's power in the *Body of Liberties* undoubtedly gives credence to the fact that the Winthrop's belief in the limiting power of conscience and self-restraint of those in positions of power had quickly been disproven. The magistrates themselves had "deliberately impeded the preparation of a code," demonstrating even further that the code was meant at least partly as a restraint on their power.<sup>10</sup> It was not, however, simply the desire to curb the magistrates' power that led to the creation of the *Body of Liberties*; the increasing turmoil in England led to less and less fear of violating the colonial charter, and thus made the writing of a code of laws more and more conceivable. It is not coincidence that the code was passed only a year before the official beginning of the English Civil War. With the King's attention fully captured by the trouble at home, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was freed of its fear of imminent charter revocation and therefore of its need to remain within the general confines of borough corporation government. Massachusetts could create the institutional forms needed to continue its legal development along the path begun in 1629 but until now constrained by royal supervision.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed the colonizer's relationship with their mother country was always a delicate matter, one that spurred great anxiety for many that left their homeland for this new Puritan Eden. The Massachusetts Bay Colony was just that: a colony, and though they had deliberately separated from English soil they were still quite beholden to their homeland both legally and often culturally. It was no different here, as even with the literal passing of the *Body of Liberties* one can easily see the apparent caution the Puritan lawmakers possessed in going against their

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<sup>7</sup> David D. Hall, *A Reforming People: Puritanism and the Transformation of Public Life in New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 37.

<sup>8</sup> R. H. C., "The Rule of Law in Colonial Massachusetts", 36.

<sup>9</sup> Dean, *A Memoir of the Rev. Nathaniel Ward*, 55.

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

<sup>11</sup> Konig, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts*, 35.

colonial charter. Quite interestingly, and a matter of some confusion to scholars, the general court in fact “made no record of the adoption of the *Body of Liberties*.”<sup>12</sup> Dean notes very reasonably that the court may have in fact “ordered this omission” in order to avoid any future legal challenges from the crown. The document itself supports this conclusion, as James Hammond Trumbull, a 19<sup>th</sup> century historian, notes:

The *Body of Liberties* was framed with the evident design of avoiding this difficulty [going against the charter]; for it expressly directs that the ‘specified rites, freedoms, Immunities, Authorities and priviledges, both Civill and Ecclesastical are expressed onely under the name and title of Liberties, and not in the exact form of Laws or Statutes’<sup>13</sup>

In this way, Ward made a subtle but significant shift in the legal wording of this code of laws. Instead of terming this constitution as a code of laws, though for all intents and purposes it was, Ward defined the document under the umbrella term of liberties. This is doubly important considering that “The General Court... did not *enact* them, but did ‘with one consent fully authorize and earnestly entreat all that are and shall be in authority to *consider them as laws*,’ and not fail to inflict punishment for every violation of them.”<sup>14</sup> Here, it becomes apparent that Ward executed a clever sleight of hand in his work, most notably in the phrase “consider them as laws.” As has been previously discussed, the majority of Puritan society had been longing for a code of laws unique to their beliefs since leaving persecution in England. Given Ward’s knowledge of these facts, it can be inferred that he created this strange wording as a way to avoid easy persecution in the case of a quick Royal victory at home, while at the same time enacting a legal structure that still possessed authority and could be widely utilized, as it evidently was, through this consensual clause of “considering them as laws.” As the Puritans were united in their desire for a code, Ward could expect ready consent throughout the community. At the same time, he provided the colony with a quick defense in case of an English legal challenge: the colony itself is never given authority, the code is only given legitimacy through consent. Thus, the document manages to escape violating the colonial charter: it never asserts true constitutional authority and it is never officially enacted. These two legal loopholes, the general court’s deliberate omission and Ward’s clever consensual clause, demonstrate not only that the Puritan lawmakers were still quite wary of charter revocation even with the chaos in England, but also that they were astutely aware of the law and how to manipulate it. In the case of Ward, this represents the first of many proofs of the statement by Francis C. Gray, who discovered the first transcript of the document, that “‘The *Body of Liberties*... exhibits throughout the hand of the practiced lawyer.’”<sup>15</sup>

Despite the fear of English punishment evidenced by the cautions taken by Ward and the general court in the preparation of this code of laws, it was in fact much earlier that the initiative to create such a code was first taken. The first official step towards codifying a uniquely Puritan code of laws for the Massachusetts Bay Colony was taken in 1636, when it was recorded that “the Governor [Vane], Deputy-Governor [Winthrop], Thomas Dudley... Mr.

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<sup>12</sup> Dean, *A Memoir of the Rev. Nathaniel Ward*, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Dean, *A Memoir of the Rev. Nathaniel Ward*, 60.

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

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 63

Cotton... and Mr. Shepard were entreated... to make a draft of laws...”<sup>16</sup> This early date demonstrates both the long-standing desire for a codification as well as the deliberate and cautious pace the colony took in preparing this code. Interestingly, Nathaniel Ward was not included in the list of names originally “entreated... to make a draft of laws,” though as we will see he quickly became heavily involved. The general court then made the significant choice in ordering that:

The freemen of every town (or some part thereof chose by the rest) within this jurisdiction shall assemble together in their several townes, and collect the heads of such necessary and fundamental laws as may be suitable... [The] Governor, together with the rest of the Standing Council, and... Mr. Nathaniel Ward... may, upon the survey of such heads of laws, make a compendious abridgement of the same<sup>17</sup>

This distinctly democratic move is of particular importance in multiple ways. First, it gives greater credence to the ingenuity of Ward’s consensual sleight of hand earlier discussed: the document was formed via the suggestions of the people, and thus would of course be considered as laws by all under the colony’s jurisdiction. Second, it reveals the widespread desire for a codification of laws that were specifically Puritan in character. Thus, the code was not simply a top-down rejection of English authority, but instead an incredibly significant reflection of widely held Puritan values and worries the society wished to extol and combat. Through this survey, the *Body of Liberties*, though capably written by Ward, an individual, is in fact just as much a document influenced and indirectly written by all of Puritan society.

Though Ward from this point on was one of the main players in the creation of a code of laws, it was in fact John Cotton who took “the first concrete step in the direction of preparing a written code.”<sup>18</sup> Cotton was the first to take the general court’s call to “make a draft of laws” in 1636, and presented his own model to the court in October of 1636.<sup>19</sup> Though the code was never enacted, it is still intriguing that Ward’s version was preferred over Cotton’s in light of his exceptionally reverent societal and religious standing. Ward himself was awed by Cotton, reportedly telling Edward Winslow that he held himself was “not worthy to wipe his slippers for matters of grace, learning and industry in the worke of God.”<sup>20</sup> Given his occupation as a minister, and a highly respected one at that, it is of little surprise that his code was Biblically influenced to the extreme, an “important illustration of the strong religious influence which infused Puritan thinking about law and the administration of justice.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, although the code in a literal sense achieved nothing, its influence can certainly be felt in the *Body of Liberties*, particularly in relation to “crime and civil liberties.”<sup>22</sup> Why exactly Cotton’s code was not accepted by the general court may at first seem to be because the court still feared contract revocation in 1636, but Ward’s model was nevertheless chosen before Cotton’s in a reintroduction of both codes in 1639. Instead, many seemed to have thought “its capital

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<sup>16</sup> "Massachusetts Body of Liberties," *Mass.gov.*, State Library of Massachusetts.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 124.

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

<sup>20</sup> John Cotton, *The Correspondence of John Cotton*, ed. Sargent Bush (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), *Google Books*, 162-163.

<sup>21</sup> Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 125.

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

provisions... too severe... [and] it was not sufficiently comprehensive.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, Ward’s code, which apparently was the more "sufficiently comprehensive", was chosen by a committee consisting of “Gov. Winthrop, Deputy Gov. Dudley and some others, to digest into one body, altering, adding and omitting as they saw fit.”<sup>24</sup> Importantly, the “laws so framed were to be sent out ‘to the severall townes that the elders of the churches & freeman may consider of them against the General Court.’”<sup>25</sup> Again the pervasive influence of the entire Puritan community becomes evidenced in this democratic action, which provided the people the:

Opportunity to suggest the inclusion of local customs... and, more importantly, to articulate their opposition to certain features of English law which they regarded as outworn... the *Body of Liberties* reflected in its final form the high importance which they attached to constitutional guarantees and liberties<sup>26</sup>

Ward and Winthrop, as discussed before, were none too pleased with this inclusion of the “inferiour sort,” yet it is important to remember that they took little to no tangible action to prevent it. Haskins’ highlighting of the people’s ability to oppose certain “outworn” English laws is also worth noting, as it reveals the highly progressive and distinct manner with which the document took shape, a document that moved beyond English trappings and included many Puritan ideals that were certainly advanced for the time. The code was finally adopted by the general court in the autumn of 1641, recorded in Winthrop’s journal with a typically unemotional line: “‘established 100 laws, which were called the *Body of Liberties*. They had been composed by Mr. Nathaniel Ward... formerly a student and practiser in the course of common law.’”<sup>27</sup> These laws, of which there were actually 98, a mistake made by Winthrop, were now New England’s first adopted code of laws; a code that would set a precedent all the way to the Bill of Rights while at the same time reflecting and capturing Puritan life and thought in 1641.

Ward’s *Body of Liberties* combined English common law, local Puritan values and concerns, and highly progressive liberties into a document that would massively impact the course of legal and societal history in Puritan New England. As has been said before, the democratic nature in which this code was composed offers a unique analytic opportunity: it is not just the work of a single man, but in fact an amalgam of widespread Puritan legal desires. Thus, this work when deeply examined does not reveal the Puritan character only in the abstract manner that the law in general can, but quite literally exposes it through the aforementioned inclusion of the Puritan populace’s beliefs and apprehensions. As Haskins remarks, “The Code was no mere collection of English laws and customs, but was a fresh and considered effort to order men’s lives and conduct in accordance with the religious and political ideals of Puritanism.”<sup>28</sup> In this way, the code was more than just a reordering of the English legal tradition: it was in fact an entirely new and focused effort to create a legal system specifically for the unique conditions of Puritan society at the time. The creation of a specifically Puritan code was in no way guaranteed: the fear of charter revocation could have easily spurned Ward

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 126

<sup>24</sup> Dean, *A Memoir of the Rev. Nathaniel Ward*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 127.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 2.

and the committee into forming an exceedingly conservative and markedly English code; one that would not endanger the colony of potentially unwanted repercussions. Instead, Ward formed a code that, while still maintaining many features of English common law, such as due process and personal liberty, was specifically Puritan in content.

Ward also moved beyond traditional English common law of the time: “although [the code] retains some strong traces of the times, [it] is in the main in advance of them, and in several respects in advance of the Common Law of England at this day.”<sup>29</sup> Many see the code as a precursor to the more modern American Bill of Rights, as it includes many individual liberties and rights that were undoubtedly ahead of its time and would later be extolled in that 1789 document.<sup>30</sup> <sup>31</sup> On the whole, the *Body of Liberties*’ mainly enumerated “protections against unauthorized and unjust actions of the civil state.”<sup>32</sup> This can be seen markedly in a few particular clauses. The first clause lays out a resounding affirmation of due process, an important cornerstone of English common law. The second clause, often a place of importance within a legal code, is a somewhat surprising assertion of equal justice under the law: “Every person within this jurisdiction, whether inhabitant or foreigner, shall enjoy the same justice and law, that is general for the Plantation, which we constitute and execute one towards another, without partiality or delay.”<sup>33</sup> Though this was a facet of English common law at the time, the hegemonic nature of Puritan society and the relatively intolerant stance they held towards dissidents of any sort makes this inclusion noteworthy.

Throughout the document there are a surprising number of progressive and relatively tolerant laws. As Haskins states, “In several respects the *Body of Liberties* went well beyond protecting the traditional rights of Englishmen, as the colonists knew them.”<sup>34</sup> Of note are clause 12, which outlined freedom of speech and assembly; clause 42, which removed double jeopardy; clause 45, which outlawed torture to force confession; clause 46, which banned inhumane or cruel bodily punishments; clause 47, which required at least three witnesses for a death sentence; clause 48, which required public access to court documents; and clause 77, which allowed a jurist not to vote if they were not positive. Almost all of these quite significant legal rights are easily recognizable, as indeed they almost all have in one form or another found their way into our contemporary legal system. Of particular significance was clause 48, which allowed for public access to court records and this proto-bill of rights as a whole. According to John Witte, “Nothing like that existed in the English common law of the day, with its byzantine complex of courts, writs, and procedures.”<sup>35</sup> Another significant shift in this democratic vein was the final clause, which specified that the code “shall be audibly read and deliberately weighed at every General Court that shall be held, within three years next ensuing.”<sup>36</sup> The communal impulse demonstrated in both of these clauses is something that can easily be connected with the Puritan notion of a covenanted, united society. In many ways these clauses are more democratic than anything seen in most modern constitutions, and though

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<sup>29</sup> Dean, *A Memoir of the Rev. Nathaniel Ward*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> Mass.gov, “Massachusetts Body of Liberties.”

<sup>31</sup> Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 129.

<sup>32</sup> Hall, *A Reforming People*, xii.

<sup>33</sup> Nathaniel Ward, *The Massachusetts Body of Liberties* (Hoboken: Bibliobytes. EBSCO. Public Domain), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 129.

<sup>35</sup> John Witte, *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), *Google Books*, 286.

<sup>36</sup> Ward, *The Massachusetts Body of Liberties*, 13.



this may be a product of the Puritan's relatively small population, it is still quite revealing of their relatively progressive and reformist nature.

It is also worth discussing that along with these more general liberties, there were "special liberties and protections for women, children, and servants, bracketing the traditional common law rules about the right of the paterfamilias to rule the home with little state interference."<sup>37</sup> The liberties of the disenfranchised parts of the population are outlined from clause 79 to 93, specifically the liberties of women, children, servants, foreigners and strangers, and "brute creatures." More than a few of these rights would be sorely missed in the still-to-come Bill of Rights, most notably the explicit ban on slavery except in cases of "lawful captives taken in just wars, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us."<sup>38</sup> The law continues: "these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israel concerning such persons doth morally require."<sup>39</sup> The code also allows for just compensation for any women not left a part of her husband's estate upon his death (clause 79), as well as making wife-beating explicitly illegal except in cases of self-defense (clause 80). These clauses may come as a shock to those who assume a completely misogynist legal system in Puritan society, though they also certainly do not in any way disprove the obvious patriarchal system at work in 17<sup>th</sup> century New England.

Interestingly there is a clause, clause 87, that allows for any servant that is maimed or disfigured by his or her master to be allowed freedom from his or her master's service. This, along with the later Good Samaritan clause which specifies the need to harbor and relieve any shipwrecked peoples, "be it friend or enemy," point to the general tone of anti-violence pervasive throughout most of the *Body of Liberties*. This surely is in line with the Christian sentiment of turning the other cheek, though as the capital laws will later demonstrate, the Puritans in no way shied away from violence in the case of biblical transgressions. In light of the common usage of the term "puritanical" today, the progressive nature of the *Body of Liberties* takes a particularly important role in myth-busting this common stereotype of a morally backwards and anti-reformist people. On the contrary, the *Body of Liberties* is in many ways the ultimate demonstration of just how much of a reforming people the Puritans were in their time. That this document was greatly impacted by the entire population of the colony proves even further that despite perhaps rigid religious beliefs, the Puritans surely possessed a highly progressive civil and legal spirit, one that undoubtedly impacted the revolutionary New England generations to come.

The *Body of Liberties*, while in many ways secular in character, was still undoubtedly "leavened with the ethos of godly rule."<sup>40</sup> The aforementioned capital laws, along with the section dealing with the "Liberties the Lord Jesus has given to the Churches," are perhaps the two most explicit examples of biblically infused law in the *Body of Liberties*. According to Haskins, "Nearly all of these [capital laws] were drawn from, and were annotated to, the Mosaic code of the Old Testament, and many undoubtedly had their origin in John Cotton's proposed draft in 1636."<sup>41</sup> When reading the code, the sudden insertion of the capital laws near the end of the document marks a remarkable change in tone. This is revealing of Haskin's thought that the laws were directly taken from the Bible and Cotton's original 1636 attempt at

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<sup>37</sup> Witte, *The Reformation of Rights*, 283.

<sup>38</sup> Ward, *The Massachusetts Body of Liberties*, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Hall, *A Reforming People*, 111.

<sup>41</sup> Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 130-131.

a code. Certainly these two parts lack much of the graceful style of Ward's earlier provisions, and the odd change in numbering also suggests something along the lines of an old-fashioned copy and paste. The capital laws were comprised of traditional Biblical crimes such as idolatry, witchery, blasphemy, murder, bestiality, sodomy, adultery, kidnapping, and treason. Here, the Puritan's religious commitment is at its most noticeable and fundamental. As Haskins stated, one can easily point to a Biblical verse of every single one of these crimes and find the very same capital punishment applied to it. At first glance, these capital crimes "seem the perfect example of Puritan severity. Yet, with the exception of a man and women executed in Massachusetts for adultery in 1644, and five persons who had died as witches by 1650, these laws were never enforced."<sup>42</sup> These statistics can perhaps be seen as demonstrating that the Puritan lawmakers simply included these capital crimes out of religious tradition, or simply to scare any potential transgressors. Yet it might also be true that the state simply lacked the will to enforce these laws in day to day practice, despite an initial desire to do so. Whatever the reason may be, the inclusion of these twelve capital crimes reveals the powerful influence religion had in the creation of the *Body of Liberties*, and thus within the Puritan community itself, despite the relatively secular character of the rest of the document.

After the *Body of Liberties* was established in 1641, the code went on to have a long history of popular use, slight modification, and eventual revocation by Charles II in 1684. As was discussed earlier, the *Body of Liberties* was never officially ratified by the general court, nor was it the end of a long line of efforts made towards producing a far-reaching and all-encompassing code. While the *Body of Liberties* was the largest step taken, the 1648 official codification *The Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts*, "is one of the crowning achievements of the Bay Colony... it provided the basic statutory law of the colony throughout most of the seventeenth century."<sup>43</sup> *The Laws and Liberties*, for the most part, was simply a restatement of most of the laws outlined in the *Body of Liberties*, with a few necessary inclusions such as more specific laws and a generally refined structure being the largest changes. Indeed, as Dean states: "the people must have been satisfied with the provisions of the *Body of Liberties*; for Mr. Gray states that almost all its articles are contained, in substance, in every subsequent digest."<sup>44</sup> That these codes were widely utilized demonstrates even further the legally-minded, reformist spirit of the Massachusetts Puritan community:

Essexmen still made reference to the Bible in their petitions and depositions, but they made increasingly frequent reference to the colony's code of law and the principles articulated there. The most commonly cited point was the protection against loss of life, property or reputation from 'colour of Law or countenance of Authroitie.'<sup>45</sup>

Apparently, the people were still widely troubled by the excessive power of the magistrates, though the *Body of Liberties* provided a hugely significant legal method to combat their authoritarian leaders. As Konig stated, the Bible was still a frequent point of reference for the community in legal matters, as was the case with the capital crimes. The movement, however,

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<sup>42</sup> Hall, *A Reforming People*, 86.

<sup>43</sup> Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 136.

<sup>44</sup> Dean, *A Memoir of the Rev. Nathaniel Ward*, 66.

<sup>45</sup> Konig, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts*, 108.

towards a more modern system of public civil codes swung into full force in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Though Massachusetts was not the only Puritan colony in the Americas, this legal system was widely adopted throughout the New England colonies, laying the foundational precedent for years to come. Indeed, “by 1650 Massachusetts had become the dominant political and ecclesiastical influence in New England, the center of its trade, and the leader in resistance to the policies of English government.”<sup>46</sup> Surely the calming influence of the *Body of Liberties*, which allowed for peaceful and civil litigation while at the same time guaranteeing the rights necessary for social stability, can be given partial credit for the rise of Massachusetts as the leader of the New England colonies. Massachusetts’s reformatory spirit would continue into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as she became the birthplace of many of the United States’ founding fathers and the epicenter of colonial resistance in the American Revolution. Thus, the *Body of Liberties* does more than reveal the 17<sup>th</sup> century Puritan character; it is in fact an early affirmation of proto-American culture in all of its faulty glory.

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<sup>46</sup> Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 223.

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## IRISH REPUBLICAN MASCULINITY

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LARKIN SNOW COFFEY

Since its inception, the Irish nation's relationship to masculinity and the development of this concept has been a highly complex one, influenced by a wide variety of factors and undergoing numerous permutations throughout history. This paper will examine the development of masculinity in the Irish Republican movement over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the periods of 1916-23 and 1969-98 as its focus. The events of Easter 1916 would both spark a revolution which largely concluded with the Irish Civil War, but their influence would be tremendous on subsequent generations of Republicans, whose ideology would draw heavily from the historical memory of the Rising and the notions of masculine nationalism it propagated. From each of the successive "dead generations from which she [Mother Ireland] receives her tradition of nationhood"<sup>1</sup>, Irish Republicans likewise inherited ideas of masculinity that they adapted to their own needs and circumstances. Through literature, art, and their own interpretations of history, a unique brand of masculinity was passed down through generations, which connected the iconic balaclava-clad car bombers of The Troubles to the smartly uniformed Irish Volunteers who originally proclaimed the Republic in 1916.

Though Ireland's complex relationship with nationalism and colonial domination can be traced into ancient history, the conditions that would determine its development in the modern world were truly set by the arrival of the Ulster Plantation in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Put simply, "land was the basis of wealth and power. To take it from the Catholic Irish...would at once weaken resistance to English rule"<sup>2</sup> and economically subjugate the native population. The implications of this for Irish masculinity were profound and far-reaching, as the loss of control over land would remove the Irish peoples' ability to support themselves economically or exercise political control, thereby degrading them as a nation and removing their claim to masculinity. To their English rulers, the Irish were considered "irrational, emotive, excitable, submissive, able to do tedious tasks, and unable to focus on deep study."<sup>3</sup> Like other subjects of the empire, the Irish people alternately seen as "compliant loyalists, who accept their feminine place under Britain's dominion, and odious, savage nationalists, whose insistence on masculine aggression has made monkeys of them."<sup>4</sup> The loss of land, and thereby masculine pride, provoked numerous waves of unrest throughout Ireland which would form the seeds of the Republican movement. It is crucial to note that while opposition to English rule was widespread among the population, from the very beginning it was an explicitly masculine movement, even going so far as to enthusiastically remove women from any active role<sup>5</sup>. To the male leaders of Irish nationalism, "the spectacle of Ireland being prey to irresponsible nobodies [women]"<sup>6</sup> was unacceptable and incompatible with notions of Irish manhood, despite women's enthusiastic and radical participation in the heated land struggles of the late nineteenth century. Women even assumed control of land agitation when the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Carlton, *Bigotry and Blood: Documents on the Ulster Troubles* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1977), 69.

<sup>2</sup> T.W. Moody, and F.X. Martin, *The Course of Irish History* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2001), 153.

<sup>3</sup> Sikata Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland, 1914-2004* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish Culture, 1880-1922* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Angela Woolacott, *Gender and Empire* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 113.

<sup>6</sup> Moody, 240.

male leadership of the Irish National Land League was imprisoned in 1881, but both the British government and Ireland's male leaders could not stomach the idea and worked jointly to push them aside<sup>7</sup>. As with all other areas of Irish life, the struggle for self-determination was to be a rigidly gendered process.

The roots of Irish Republicanism can be found in the United Irishmen's revolt of 1798. Formed by a Protestant lawyer named Wolfe Tone in 1791, the Society of United Irishmen was inspired by the American and French Revolutions, which it combined with a home-grown nationalism to become the first of many militant Republican groups in Ireland. Though bringing a fresh Republican twist to Irish nationalism, middle class liberals built on a tradition "long accustomed to agrarian conspiracy"<sup>8</sup> which would survive for centuries, bursting forth periodically to lash out at foreign domination. When the United Irishmen rose in 1798, they were quickly suppressed but established a powerful symbol and object of emulation for future rebels. Until the Easter Rising, no single event can compare with the 1798 rebellion in the Republican mind. None other than future leader of the Easter Rising Patrick Pearse declared that "to the memory of '98 we owe it that there is any manhood left in Ireland"<sup>9</sup>. Successive revolts, all doomed to failure, occurred in 1803 and 1848 and kept the flame of Republicanism alive for each generation. In 1858, the Irish Republican Brotherhood was founded to continue the tradition of nationalist conspiracy, believing that, in the words of founder James Stephens, "Ireland's trained and marshalled manhood alone can make Ireland's opportunity [for independence]."<sup>10</sup> While the mainstream nationalist movement of the time took a parliamentary approach and projected an idealized masculinity characterized by self-restraint, spirituality, and moral force<sup>11</sup>, it was the violent, revolutionary masculinity of the Republican minority which would steal the spotlight and become immortalized.

By 1916, Ireland was on track to be granted Home Rule and many in both Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom believed it was largely pacified while Britain devoted its energies to fighting World War I. Against this backdrop, it came as a shock to both Britain and Ireland when on Easter Monday hundreds of men led by a secret conspiracy of the Irish Republican Brotherhood seized the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin and other strategic points throughout the city. The Easter Rising would become the founding myth for both the future Irish State as well as the Irish Republican Army, and its effect on nationalist masculinity would be tremendous. From the steps of the GPO, the Proclamation of The Irish Republic was read by the appointed provisional president, Patrick Pearse. One of the most mythologized and ideologically influential of the Rising's leaders, his speech explicitly connected Irish nationhood and sovereignty with masculine violence. "Having organized and trained her [Mother Ireland] manhood through her secret revolutionary organization"<sup>12</sup>, the Rising's leaders claimed legitimacy through connection with a tradition of violent rebellion:

In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the

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<sup>7</sup> Valente, 47.

<sup>8</sup> Moody, 200.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Pearse, *The Coming Revolution: The Political Writings and Speeches of Patrick Pearse* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2012), 53.

<sup>10</sup> Dennis Dworkin, *Ireland and Britain 1798-1922: An Anthology of Sources* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012), 130.

<sup>11</sup> Valente, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Carlton, 69.

face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State.<sup>13</sup>

This strong link to past generations and their revolts would prove to be a recurring feature of Republican ideology and the Easter Rising itself would pass into Republican memory as the most important of all. Furthermore, the memory of past revolts shamed the historically minded revolutionaries of 1916 into action, as the thought of their generation failing to rise was unbearable to many.<sup>14</sup> Pearse cast the imperative to revolt in explicitly masculine terms, declaring in his 1913 essay *The Coming Revolution* that “bloodshed is a sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood.”<sup>15</sup>

The manner in which his bloodshed was carried out and the intentions of those behind it are hugely important for analyzing its masculine themes. From the moment the Irish Volunteers set out on Easter Sunday, their revolt was almost certainly doomed to failure due to miscommunications, poor armament, and a failure to mobilize units to rise simultaneously in the countryside. Despite almost certain military defeat, the leaders of the Rising believed the act of revolt itself, regardless of immediate success, would facilitate “the reassertion of separatist credibility, the long-term survival of the physical force tradition, [and] the possibility of inspiring popular support.”<sup>16</sup> In keeping with his 1914 statement that “it is the duty of Irishmen to struggle always, never giving in or growing weary, until they have won back their country again”<sup>17</sup>, Pearse and his comrades would, at the very least, set an example of manly resistance to inspire future generations to continue their work, much the same as they had taken inspiration from previous uprisings.

The belief in a masculine duty to keep the flame of resistance alive was not limited to Pearse, but pervaded the Republican movement at all levels, being passed down from the veterans of nineteenth century revolts. In later years, Volunteer John O’Sullivan recounted how “we heard from our parents, grandfathers, friends, and neighbors...if you are an Irishman, just like if you are a native of any country, you...are prepared to make sacrifices for the right to live and govern their own country.”<sup>18</sup> Sullivan’s experiences are typical for rebels of his time, and family ties would be continue to be a crucial means of passing Republican values across generations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Though the Easter Rising was chiefly planned and fought by men, Irish women played a vital part throughout the insurrection. Their involvement, though indispensable, largely followed the strict gender roles of Irish society and has been minimized in Republican memory and ideology. Furthermore, women’s actions during the Easter Rising would set a pattern for future Republican military campaigns, as well as the future Irish state. Approximately two hundred women joined the rising, either as members of the Irish Volunteers’ female auxiliary Cumann na mBan or James Connolly’s socialist Irish Citizen Army.<sup>19</sup> During the 6 days of fighting in Dublin, these women performed all the labor essential to supporting a large fighting force. Along more traditional female duties such as feeding the troops and tending to their wounds, women were used as messengers

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland Easter 1916* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 98.

<sup>15</sup> Pearse, 84.

<sup>16</sup> McGarry, 99.

<sup>17</sup> Pearse, 94.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Griffith, and Timothy O’Grady, *Ireland’s Unfinished Revolution: An Oral History* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1999), 11.

<sup>19</sup> McGarry, 161.

and ammunition carriers due to their ability to slip past British lines safely. Despite the Proclamation's rhetoric of equal opportunity for both men and women, female rebels were consciously kept from combat roles or even exhibiting a soldierly appearance. According to Ann Matthews' research on Republican women, during the Easter Rising there were only two women in military style uniform: Constance Markievicz and Margaret Skinnider.<sup>20</sup> Markievicz, a longtime nationalist and member of the Irish Citizen Army, was also the only woman to occupy any sort of command position throughout the Rising as well as arousing considerable bewilderment at her military jacket, trousers, and prominently displayed pistol. Skinnider would later attempt to claim the pension offered to veterans of the Easter Rising, only to be denied on the grounds that the policy was "only applicable to soldiers as generally understood in the masculine sense".<sup>21</sup> As such, the construction of Irish rebels as explicitly masculine was secured in law as well as public consciousness.

The contrast between the egalitarian language of the Proclamation and conditions on the ground can be ascribed to the near-universal social conservatism of the Rising's leaders, who shared the Catholic values of most Irish people. Of the signatories to the Proclamation, trade union leader James Connolly alone recognized the need for a more comprehensive politics of women's liberation, famously stating "the worker is the slave of capitalist society, the female worker the slave of that slave."<sup>22</sup> Notably, while the Irish Citizen Army did not fully integrate women into combat duties, female members were trained in the use of firearms and issued revolvers before setting out on Easter Monday<sup>23</sup>, and according to Markievicz, "they sallied forth and held up bread vans" to feed the rebels.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, it was clear that rebellion in service to Ireland was primarily man's work and it is telling that when Pearse ordered a general surrender on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, women were chosen to deliver the message to British soldiers. After 6 days, 450 deaths and the destruction of large parts of Dublin's city center, the Easter Rising came to an end and volunteers either slipped away from their posts or surrendered to the British Army.<sup>25</sup>

Though they had acted on behalf of all Ireland, after their surrender the Easter rebels were widely condemned by the population of Dublin who had been made to endure a week of street fighting, looting, and chaos. As they were marched from their garrisons to British prison, crowds of Dubliners heaped abuse on the defeated rebels. Interestingly, a singular target of this scorn was "the Countess's [Markievicz] breeches and puttees"<sup>26</sup>, which offended the conservative social values of the Irish. This small instance of gender dissension would increase the outrage towards the "criminals, traitors, [and] fanatics"<sup>27</sup> who revolted against the British, but this scorn would soon transform drastically and fulfill Pearse's prophecy of blood sacrifice.

Most historians agree that while the Irish population was initially opposed to the Rising, Britain's harsh suppression of dissidents and subsequent execution of the rebel leadership quickly swayed public opinion in favor of Republicanism.<sup>28</sup> Despite the total failure of all the revolt's military objectives, the rebels' tenacious efforts and upright acceptance of their fate had "succeeded in proving that Irishmen are ready to die endeavoring to win for Ireland their national

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<sup>20</sup> Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women 1900-1922* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2010), 124.

<sup>21</sup> Defense Forces of Ireland, "Military Service Pensions Collection."

<sup>22</sup> James Connolly, *James Connolly: Selected Writings* (London: Pelican Books, 1973), 191.

<sup>23</sup> Matthews, 127.

<sup>24</sup> Dworkin, 212.

<sup>25</sup> McGarry, 180.

<sup>26</sup> Griffith, 78.

<sup>27</sup> McGarry, 278.

<sup>28</sup> Moody, 256.

rights”.<sup>29</sup> Following the Easter Rising, fifteen of its leaders were executed in a period beginning May 3<sup>rd</sup> and ending with the execution of James Connolly on May 12<sup>th</sup>. The spectacle of closed-door trials followed by execution after execution created a sharp contrast for the public between ruthless, cold domination by Britain and “men prepared to sacrifice their lives for an ideal – men of education, ability, and courage who faced their deaths in a noble manner”.<sup>30</sup> Through their public displays of sacrifice, the Rising’s leaders consciously performed a type of patriotic masculinity, “the conventions of which had been defined by a long line of republican martyrs stretching back to Wolfe Tone and were widely understood by Irish nationalists of all shades of opinion”.<sup>31</sup> Witness to the Rising’s aftermath, future IRA commander Ernie O’Malley recalled how crowds in Dublin sang “The Soldier’s Song” with lyrics changed to glorify the Easter Rising rather than that of 1798, demanding “Irish men, remember then, and raise your head with pride/For great men, and straight men, have fought for you and died.”<sup>32</sup> The recent events and resurgent memories of past martyrdoms of Irish men provided a powerful symbol of dignified, brave masculinity in defense of the nation, so much that even Sinn Fein’s president Arthur Griffith, previously an advocate of non-violent nationalism, declared “something of the primitive man awoke in me...I clenched my fists with rage and I longed for vengeance.”<sup>33</sup>

The vengeance sought for would not be long coming, as public opinion continually shifted farther away from Britain and Volunteer companies re-organized for action across the country. O’Malley, whose experiences were typical of many young men of his generation, described how the new imperative to violence was such that by the end of 1916 “the men had little use for anyone who was not of the physical force belief...Gaelic Leaguers and members of Sinn Fein clubs who did not belong to the Volunteers were sneered at.”<sup>34</sup> Scorn was also cast upon the English, whose execution of Irish patriots was enough that the men of O’Malley’s company believed “they were cowardly; their word, as far as Ireland or imperial possessions were concerned, could never be trusted.”<sup>35</sup> Sentiments like these inverted the dominant imperial view of the Irish as either effeminate or savage, instead replacing it with an idealized masculinity based on courage, integrity, and the willingness to face great odds in defense of the nation. In the months immediately following the Rising, this ideal would lead many to continue its work until the 1916 Proclamation could be fulfilled.

In 1918, inspired by the heroic drama which unfolded in the aftermath of the revolt, Irish voters elected a parliament known as the Dáil Éireann that was overwhelmingly opposed to British rule and that considered itself the lawful government of Ireland, with the Irish Volunteers now recast as the Irish Republican Army. When the Irish War of Independence broke out in 1919, Republicans’ conceptions of masculinity began to change with the times and reflected the new circumstances under which they struggled. Rather than a dramatic stand against British soldiers fought more or less in the open, the renewed conflict was largely one of ambushes and raids in the countryside and towns across the island. Faced with an extended guerilla war and brutal repression from British forces, what often counted most for Volunteers was their ability to withstand interrogation. IRA member John O’Sullivan, recounting his time in a British jail during 1921, described the qualities most valued in Republican men: “...here was a group of men you could

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<sup>29</sup> McGarry, 272.

<sup>30</sup> Griffith, 85.

<sup>31</sup> McGarry, 271.

<sup>32</sup> Ernie O’Malley, *On Another Man’s Wound* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2013), 55.

<sup>33</sup> McGarry, 80.

<sup>34</sup> O’Malley, 73.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.



trust. Some were battered before they came in...but everyone was prepared to take what was dished out. One thing I'll say is that the spirit of the...movement at that time could never be approached again – the spirit of self-sacrifice and the courage of these men...with the same spirit imbued in them all.”<sup>36</sup> A direct counter-example to the tough, courageous Irish rebel was the figure of the hated collaborator or informer, described by a volunteer responsible for the execution of one as “a bloody sneaking fellow” who had “pucks of money all his life”<sup>37</sup>.

Another major contrast to dignified Republican manhood was the specter of the Black & Tans, a paramilitary auxiliary force of the British Army which became notorious for committing some of the worst atrocities of the conflict. Tom Barry, a top IRA commander during both the War of Independence and Civil War, described his local Black & Tan commander as a “sadistic scut, a ruthless killer of unarmed men”<sup>38</sup> who lacked the soldier’s honor supposedly held by the Irish. The reign of terror by the Black & Tans also placed the IRA in a familiar position, that of the Catholic defenders protecting the population from a hostile government. This connection with history would not have been lost on the generation of young men who grew up on stories from grandparents and neighbors of past rural conflicts with the forces of law & order.

The role of women throughout this also changed, as they took part in activities previously closed to them. The demands of a rural guerrilla war were much greater than those of a localized revolt, and the duties of women expanded accordingly. No longer confined to the kitchen or field hospital, women were now trained with arms and made responsible for the storing, maintenance, and transportation of weapons<sup>39</sup>. Because they could transport weapons and supplies across the country without much fear of arrest, women such as Mollie Cunningham found that “it was nothing unusual for me to take two or three revolvers at a time from company to company.”<sup>40</sup> Though they were more involved than ever before, direct combat duties were nearly always left to men, and it was men who would make the crucial decisions which ended the war and began another.

When a truce was declared in July 1921 and the treaty with England signed shortly afterwards, the IRA split in two. The treaty, which established southern Ireland as a dominion of the British Empire and maintained Northern Ireland as an integral part of Britain, clearly “wasn’t the Republic we’d fought so hard for.”<sup>41</sup> The idea of swearing allegiance to the British Crown and partitioning the country was deeply humiliating to many Republicans, and the IRA split between those who favored a continued war for absolute independence, and those who opted to join the newly declared Irish Free State. There was no simple formula for determining which side IRA units picked, but anti-treaty fighter Tom O’Connor believed “The active men of the Tan War remained staunch,”<sup>42</sup> while those who had not proved themselves in combat were more inclined to accept the agreement. While many of the war’s bravest and most committed combatants sided with the Free State, O’Connor’s comments display a belief among many Republicans that those who supported the treaty had failed to uphold and honor the ideals and sacrifice of 1916. Despite their commitment to honor the full text of the 1916 Proclamation, the anti-treaty elements of the Republican movement were defeated after a bloody civil war between former comrades that ended with the IRA dumping arms in 1923 and largely becoming dormant for another generation.

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<sup>36</sup> Griffith, 207.

<sup>37</sup> Ernie O’Malley, *The Men Will Talk To Me: Kerry Interviews* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2013), 120.

<sup>38</sup> Griffith, 219.

<sup>39</sup> Matthews, 249.

<sup>40</sup> Ann Ryan, *Comrades: Inside the War of Independence* (Dublin: Liberties Press, 2007), 233.

<sup>41</sup> Griffith, 263.

<sup>42</sup> O’Malley, 138.

Following the cessation of hostilities and solidification of partition in 1923, the IRA repeatedly attempted to reassert itself and renew its war to expel the British, with dismal results. Successive campaigns throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s failed to gain momentum or popular support and by 1969 the IRA was “almost unarmed and certainly very largely discredited.”<sup>43</sup> When widespread rioting broke out in 1969 and Catholic areas across Northern Ireland were attacked, the IRA was incapable of providing adequate defense due to a lack of arms, personnel, and will to engage in armed conflict. Though the IRA had not been a major force for decades, a generation of young men grew up hearing “stories of the B Specials [a notoriously reviled Protestant police force], of the shootings and the oppression...all that was consciously engrained.”<sup>44</sup> Young men who grew up in Republican households therefore had vivid male role models from previous generations to look up to who passed down an ideology of masculine violence to the generation of 1969. Brendan Hughes, who became one of the most influential figures within the Provisional IRA during The Troubles, reflected after the conflict was over that the male role models he grew up with “unconsciously directed me towards the movement”<sup>45</sup> by instilling the masculine values of sacrifice and violent patriotism from an early age.

In response to the IRA old guard’s inability or unwillingness to effectively defend northern Catholics, a coalition of hard line Republicans and younger men like Brendan Hughes split and formed the Provisional IRA in December 1969, which was determined to not just defend Catholics, but to take the war to the British until they surrendered Northern Ireland. The “Provos,” as they became known, quickly claimed the traditional mantle of protectors of the downtrodden Catholics. The role of protector was also explicitly gendered as masculine, with Sinn Fein Councilor Francie McNally declaring that “the IRA are defenders and any man who says he is a Republican would not say anything else”<sup>46</sup>. For at least a short period at the beginning of the conflict Catholics widely felt that “the IRA were our defenders, looking after our interests, fighting for our rights”<sup>47</sup> and young men “looked up to the IRA because they had fired at the soldiers.”<sup>48</sup> Beyond the immediate task of defending Catholics from sectarian attack, the IRA sought to connect the circumstances of 1969 with Republican history and mythology. To maintain this continuity with the past militants “turned to the ‘Old Republicans’, those who had not been turned from the straight and narrow path of tradition”<sup>49</sup> and held true to the values and promises of the 1916 Proclamation. The connection with past glory and honor was readily accepted by many unemployed, disenfranchised young men in Northern Ireland who felt impotent and unable to either support their families or control their environment. For a young nationalist man, IRA membership conferred status and “gave meaning to his life and it made him different from all the other defeated, unemployed and powerless”<sup>50</sup> men who populated Northern Ireland’s Catholic ghettos. As observer Eamonn McCann stated, “when a man lives in a world of bookies’ slips, varnished counters and Guinness spits he will readily accept an account of the past which tends to invest his living with dignity”<sup>51</sup>. The importance of historical continuity for the IRA cannot be understated, as technically they viewed themselves as

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<sup>43</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA: A History* (New York: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994), 259.

<sup>44</sup> Ed Moloney, *Voices From The Grave: Two Men's War in Northern Ireland* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2010), 36.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>46</sup> Kevin Toolis, *Rebel Hearts: Journeys Within the IRA's Soul* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 64.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>49</sup> Eamonn McCann, *War and an Irish Town* (London: Pluto Press, 1981), 135.

<sup>50</sup> Toolis, 207.

<sup>51</sup> McCann, 119.

the sole legitimate government of Ireland, descended from the original 1918 Dáil Éireann<sup>52</sup>. Through this obsession with history, the Republican movement reconstructed an idea of Irish masculinity based not just on the contemporary needs of defense, but also on the historical imperative to revolt against the English.

A great deal of insight into the specifics of this masculinity can be gained from official IRA documents. The “Green Book” of the IRA was the organization’s introductory primer for new members and details the required qualities of an IRA volunteer. Originally published in 1956, an updated version was put into use in 1977 to address the new challenges and tasks faced by the IRA. Crucially, the entire text uses only male pronouns when referring to volunteers, assuming that they are by default men (despite the lack of official discrimination in membership policy). According to the Green Book, the most necessary qualities for a recruit are the ability to follow orders and face likely arrest, imprisonment, or death<sup>53</sup>. The Green Book also includes an overview of Republican history, highlighting “The milestones, the battle honours won, the bloodstained trail of sacrifice, imprisonment, hunger strikes [and] executions” as well as “telling blows delivered to the enemy, often in the heart of British imperialism itself, commanding the open admiration of freedom-loving peoples around the world”<sup>54</sup>.

Reflecting the changing circumstances of the IRA’s war in the 1970s and 80s, one of the most detailed and vital sections of the Green Book deals with arrest and interrogation of volunteers. In a war that increasingly hinged on intelligence gathering and evasion of surveillance, preventing leaks of information was vitally important. Apart from emphasizing the importance of mental and physical fortitude in resisting interrogation, it gives rare insight into the IRA’s attitudes towards sexuality. In describing how interrogators may try to sexually humiliate captives, the Green Book declares that this “is inherent in the homosexual and though the interrogators themselves may be married men with a family it indicates suppressed homosexual tendencies”.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, it states that “when the volunteer realizes and understands this proven fact he should not have great difficulty in triumphing over his interrogators”<sup>56</sup>, as if they can achieve moral victory by virtue of their captors’ supposed homosexuality. In this section, it is made clear that not only is the IRA volunteer assumed to be male, but also heterosexual, granting them some degree of superiority over their enemies who are presumably inferior by contrast.

Additional insight into the IRA’s version of masculinity can be gained from the musical and visual culture produced by the Republican movement. Republicans in Northern Ireland have a strong tradition of folk music celebrating past and present conflicts, which provide an important means of transmitting values and historical memory between generations. These rebel songs generally exalt the IRA and are steeped in gendered rhetoric which define an idealized, masculine version of Republican history. In his well-known 1969 rebel song “The Boys of The Old Brigade,” Paddy McGuigan describes a father reminiscing to his son about the War of Independence. When “from hills and farms a call to arms/was heard by one and all, and from the glen cam brave young men to answer Ireland’s call” the narrator’s father wonders “where are the lads who stood with me when history was made/A Ghra Mo Chroi [love of my heart], I long to see the boys of the old

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<sup>52</sup> Coogan, 420.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

brigade.”<sup>57</sup> Similarly, “The Rifles of the IRA ” by The Wolfe Tones (named for the founder of Irish Republicanism) describes the War of Independence as such:

Cork City`s flames lit up the sky/But our brave boys new no fear/The Cork Brigade  
with hand grenade / In ambush waiting lay/And the black and tans, like lightning  
ran/From the rifles of the IRA. The tans were caught, taken out and shot/By a brave  
and fearless few, Sean Treacy, Denny Lacey, And Tom Barry`s famous  
crew/Though we`re not free yet but we won`t forget/Until our dying day/When the  
black and tans like lightning ran/From the rifles of the IRA.<sup>58</sup>

Songs such as this portray the War of Independence as a triumph of Irish masculinity, in which the bravery of the IRA easily overcomes the cowardice of English authority. The comparison between Irish and British masculinity is often clearly made, such as when “in twenty-one, Britannia’s sons were forced to earn their pay”<sup>59</sup> before fleeing from the heroic IRA.

These songs also establish a strong continuity between the masculine heroes of the past and current generations of Republicans. In “The Broad Black Brimmer”, Art McMillen describes the symbolism of his father’s old IRA uniform from the 1920s:

It was the uniform been worn by my father years ago/When he reached me mother's  
homestead on the run/It was the uniform me father wore/in that little church  
below/When oul' Father Mac he blessed the pair as one/And after Truce and Treaty  
and the parting of the ways/He wore it when he marched out with the rest (and the  
best!)”

McMillen goes on to declare that “when men claim Ireland's freedom, the ones they'll choose to lead 'em will wear the broad black brimmer of the IRA.”<sup>60</sup> This song perfectly captures the association between Republican purist integrity and masculine duty to liberate Ireland, which was necessary as long as the 1916 Proclamation remained unfulfilled. More immediately, at the time of the song’s writing in 1974, many Republicans did feel that men would be claiming Ireland’s freedom quite imminently. Another layer of symbolism can be found in the figure of the narrator’s mother, who has preserved the old IRA uniform in anticipation of her son’s arrival to manhood and the IRA. In this reading, Mother Ireland has patiently preserved the legacy of manly, violent Republicanism embodied by the tattered old uniform until her sons are ready to take it up once more. Both “The Boys of The Old Brigade” and “The Broad Black Brimmer”, through their narrative style, evoke the family traditions of Republicanism as something passed down from fathers to sons, each generation picking up where the last left off. Though historical themes are common in Irish rebel songs, Republicans during The Troubles also produced music dealing directly with their immediate concerns, many of which highlight the brand of masculinity found in the IRA from 1969 onward.

A notable example of this is “My Little Armalite”, an ode to the iconic Armalite rifle favored by IRA gunmen. In this song, the narrator is subjected to a common and humiliating experience for young men when he is accosted by a soldier who “hit me with his rifle and he kicked

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<sup>57</sup> McGuigan, Paddy, "The Boys of The Old Brigade".

<sup>58</sup> The Wolfe Tones., "The Rifles of The IRA," *The Rifles of The IRA*, Performed by The Wolfe Tones, compact disc.

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

<sup>60</sup> McMillen, Art, "The Broad Black Brimmer," Performed by The Wolfe Tones, compact disc.

me in the groin/I bowed and I scraped, sure my manners were polite Ah, but all the time I was thinking of me little Armalite!”<sup>61</sup> Thus, the rifle is a way to avenge the humiliation and powerlessness felt by young nationalist men. Once again, the figure of an armed Irishman is used to denigrate the masculinity of British forces, who are quickly dispatched when confronted by the Armalite:

A brave RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] man came walking up our street/With  
600 British soldiers gathered round his feet/Come out ya cowardly Fenians, come  
on out and fight/But he cried I'm only joking when he heard my Armalite!<sup>62</sup>

To a generation of young men accustomed to regular harassment and beatings at the hands of Crown forces, songs such as this provided a clear solution to their woes. The glorification of weapons can also be viewed as a response to the events of 1969, in which the IRA was woefully under armed and unable to defend Catholic neighborhoods from sectarian violence. The subsequent re-arming which took place in the 1970s was thus a re-masculinization of the Republican community to remove the vulnerability it had experienced without weapons.

The connection between arms, freedom, and masculinity extended into other areas of popular culture, becoming a major theme of the Republican movement with far-reaching implications. In the sharply divided jigsaw puzzle of Catholic and Protestant districts in towns like Belfast and Derry, large murals famously glorify whichever side holds sway over a particular neighborhood. In Catholic districts, many of these murals espouse familiar Republican themes such as sacrifice, historical continuity, and resistance to English rule. Though there is a great diversity in the imagery found in such murals, it is common for them to portray IRA volunteers wielding guns (frequently Armalites) and assuming traditionally masculine postures. Representative of this style is the mural at the juncture of Divismore Way and Springfield Road in West Belfast, dedicated to Bobby McRudden, Mundo O’Rawe, and Pearse Jordan, all of whom were killed during IRA activities (see figure 1). The three appear armed and triumphant before a celebrating crowd, having become heroes to their community through their sacrifice. Interestingly, the volunteer in the center is dressed and armed in a manner more in line with the 1920s, establishing a link between IRA men of the past and present. The motif of dead IRA volunteers appearing armed and victorious served as a constant reminder throughout the conflict of the sacrifices and dedication expected of Republicans, particularly young men.

Other Republican murals commemorate past struggles, as seen in a mural from Beechmount Avenue, Belfast portraying the Easter Rising (see figure 2). This mural depicts a young man with a rifle standing larger than life in front of the Dublin General Post Office, reminding the whole neighborhood of the Irish manhood which was sacrificed in 1916. Like the dead volunteers of their own generation, the masculine symbolism of this figure would not have been lost on young men in war-torn Belfast. Reaching even further into the past, another Belfast mural places a list of IRA dead in the same company as mythic Irish hero Cuchulainn, declaring both to be “Unbowed and Unbroken” (see figure 3). This provides a powerful link with Irish masculinity predating the Republican movement and confers an equally legendary or mythic status

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<sup>61</sup> The Irish Brigade., "My Little Armalite," Roll of Honour, Compact disc.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



Figure 1



Figure 2

to the latter-day warriors of Ireland it was created by and aimed at. As with other Republican media, these murals serve to both provide role models of masculine prowess as well as invest the movement's current struggles with historical legitimacy.

Though men with guns are ubiquitous among Northern Ireland's murals, there are also numerous depictions of women bearing arms and sharing equal standing with their male counterparts. Reflecting the emergence of feminism in the 1970s, as well as the IRA's internal restructuring, the Republican leadership acknowledged that "women and girls have greater roles to play as military activists and as leaders in sections of civil administration in propaganda and publicity."<sup>63</sup> While the overwhelming majority of active IRA combat forces were still male, women increasingly took part in military duties and numerous female volunteers were killed over the course of The Troubles. In keeping with their tradition of commemorating dead volunteers through community murals, many buildings throughout Northern Ireland feature portraits of armed female volunteers. One such mural in Belfast depicts a woman holding an Armalite rifle surrounded by the portraits of dead female volunteers and civilian women killed by security forces (see figure 4). Behind her marches a color guard of female volunteers, reflecting the ceremonial and support role of most female IRA personnel. Tellingly, in murals depicting armed female members, they are nearly always dressed in the same military trousers and jackets of their male comrades. Their adoption of masculine dress and the symbol of Irish patriotic manhood, the Armalite rifle, place them on equal footing with male volunteers. The artistic depiction of female volunteers does not necessarily match reality, as many photos exist of female volunteers fighting in the streets dressed in normal feminine attire (see figure 5), but it allows women to be integrated into the Republican masculine ideal.

Another mural in Belfast titled "Women in Struggle" (see figure 6) depicts the history of women in Republican politics and perhaps unintentionally illustrates their marginalization. Only two of the women in the mural, Constance Markievicz and Mairead Farrell<sup>64</sup> have any involvement

<sup>63</sup> Coogan, 357.

<sup>64</sup> An IRA volunteer famously shot in the back by British troops during an attempted attack on Gibraltar in 1988.

with the IRA's military activities, while the others are a young girl and women engaged in passive protest or electioneering. In the context of Republican ideology, there is an analogue for this in the "ballot box and Armalite" strategy adopted during the 1980s, by which the Republican movement planned to win power through an electoral as well as military strategy. In their murals, it is clear which sex was intended to wield the Armalites and which was directed towards the ballot box. While all-male murals nearly always depict men in active, usually military contexts, this one reinforces the idea that women's role within the Republican movement is largely one of support, while direct military action remains the province of men.



Figure 3



Figure 4

While Republicans continually look to their past to legitimize political strategies, values, and in the case of this study, concepts of masculinity, their future is far from certain. With the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, the IRA's decades-long war came to a formal end and in 2005 all known stockpiles of IRA weapons were decommissioned. In the absence of a military conflict, the militarized masculinity of Irish Republicanism was suddenly expected to disappear and be replaced with a civic-minded, peaceful attitude. Though violence is drastically reduced in Northern Ireland, nearly thirty years of vicious conflict could not be wished away so easily and the blood sacrifice of earlier generations continues to command obedience for some. Various splinter groups, notably the Continuity IRA and Real IRA, reject any peace agreement without total British withdrawal and continue military activity, albeit at a much reduced level. These dissident Republicans insist that they "remain steadfast in our allegiance to the principles and ideology for which our comrades and predecessors sacrificed so much"<sup>65</sup>, much as the Provisional IRA claimed in 1969.

<sup>65</sup> Real IRA Army Council, "Conflict Archive on the Internet." Last modified January 28, 2003. Accessed December 12, 2013. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/organ/ira/rira280103.htm>.

Along with continued violence against security forces, Republicans attempt to hold on to the mantle of community defenders through “punishment beatings” of suspected anti-social individuals in Catholic areas. Newer groups such as Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD) as well as the Provisional IRA have been implicated in these attacks<sup>66</sup>, which can be seen as an attempt to maintain legitimacy on the streets through the time-honored tradition of masculine violence. Though there is no realistic chance of a return to the levels of violence experiences during The Troubles, the legacy of Republican masculinity stubbornly refuses to disappear entirely and the dead generations invoked by Patrick Pearse in 1916 continue to hold sway over Ireland.



*Figure 5*



*Figure 6*

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<sup>66</sup> Kennedy, Liam. Conflict Archive on the Internet, "They Shoot Children Don't They?." Last modified 2001. Accessed December 12, 2013. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/violence/docs/kennedy01.htm>.



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COSMOPOLITAN MODERNISM AND PEASANT RELIGIOUS TRADITION:  
COMPETING CONSTRUCTS OF HOMOSEXUAL IDENTITY IN THE  
LITERARY WORLD OF LATE IMPERIAL RUSSIA

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MARK ALEXANDER

Although the attempted Russian Revolution of 1905 failed either to unseat Tsar Nicholas II or to establish a new system of government for the peoples of the Russian Empire, the subsequent repeal of censorship laws revolutionized popular Russian literature and poetry. The sudden appearance of positive and introspective depictions of same-sex love in the literature and public personas of several avant-garde Russian authors after 1905 stands in stark contrast to the few negative portrayals of homosexuality which appeared in Russian literature in the preceding decades. The most influential of these new positive depictions followed two very different constructions of homosexual identity in fin-de-siecle Russia: the diametrically opposed paradigms of the highly cultured cosmopolitan and that of the sexually ambiguous, devoutly religious peasant. While the former figure established the modern and worldly homosexual character as an identity intrinsically foreign to Russian culture, the latter's roots are firmly planted within the quintessentially Russian Old Believer *Khlysty* and *Skoptsy* schismatic peasant religious sects. Although both of these constructions of homosexual identity and the success of their authors greatly informed the popular perception of same-sex love through the final years of Tsarist Russia, the cosmopolitan construction appeared on the literary scene first and quickly became the dominant archetype. After the prolonged absence of positive depictions of same-sex love which Russian society experienced under Romanov censorship, it seems natural that a construction of homosexual identity which implied that the phenomenon of same-sex love in Russia was imported from modern Europe would enjoy an easier reception than one which was firmly rooted in an archetypal facet of Russian peasant culture. However, the widespread toleration of homosexuality which existed in medieval Russia and the continuation of this legacy of toleration through peasant religious traditions belies the notion that homosexuality is alien to and irreconcilable with Russian culture and society.

An exploration of several of the most important and influential avant-garde pieces of literature and poetry of the period is necessary in order to understand how and why these paradigms of homosexual identity emerged in the years after the 1905 Revolution. The first Russian novel to explore homosexuality in an affirmative light, Mikhail Kuzmin's *Wings*, will be given particular attention. Also necessary is an examination of such texts' authors, whose lives, personalities and successes helped to shape the emerging archetypes of modern Russian homosexual identity at this time. Biographical works on Mikhail Kuzmin, Nikolai Klyuev, and Sergei Esenin will further our understanding of these authors' works and the archetypes which they helped to build. Although the English-language scholarship on these subjects is scant, the work of several academics is both insightful and indispensable to their exploration. The utilization of this small but important historiography of modern Russian sexuality is necessary for the chronological and thematic contextualization of this brief resurgence of homosexual literature and poetry after 1905 between the repressive eras of Tsarist and Soviet censorship.

Although virulent instances of homophobia have continued through the Tsarist and Soviet Eras of Russian history until the present day, there is also an ancient tradition of toleration of homosexuality nearly as old as Russia itself. Vaunted examples of same-sex love appeared in accounts of the lives of saints as early as the turn of the eleventh century, when an anonymous monk penned the romantic story of the deaths of two Kievan princes named Boris and George the Hungarian.<sup>1</sup> Simon Karlinsky, eminent historian of homosexual themes in Russian literature, has claimed that “the Muscovite period may have been the era of the greatest visibility and tolerance for male homosexuality that the world had seen since the days of ancient Greece and Rome.”<sup>2</sup> Not only was homosexuality tolerated, but it was practiced openly among every strata of Russian society and could be found everywhere from “lowly Moscow taverns that were apparently gay hangouts” to the palaces of Russian royalty.<sup>3</sup> Although Grand Prince Vasily III (r. 1505-1533) married twice, Karlinsky has noted that “he was able to perform his conjugal duties only when an officer of his guard joined him and his wife in bed in the nude.”<sup>4</sup> Vasily’s heir, Ivan IV, known as Ivan the Terrible (r. 1547-1584), was attracted both to women and to attractive young men who dressed in women’s clothing.<sup>5</sup>

Visitors from Europe were especially amazed at the disparity between Russian attitudes and the harsh moral and legal codes of their own nations. In fact, it appears that the end of this celebrated period of toleration resulted primarily from the influence of European mores. The first state restrictions upon homosexual behavior did not appear in Russia until the reign of Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725), when he initiated a campaign to westernize Russian society and more Russians began to travel abroad. Appropriately, the authors of his 1716 military legal code were themselves hired German advisors, and fashioned their legislation after the current military code of Sweden.<sup>6</sup> This 1716 code pertained only to the military, and criminalized only the act of sodomy. It was not until the 1832 legal code of Nicholas I (r. 1825-1855) that the proscription of sodomy was extended to include the entire Russian population.<sup>7</sup> Historian Daniel Healey has observed that since only the physical act of sodomy was within the purview of these laws, same-sex love between women was nearly completely ignored by authorities in Russia, as it was in contemporary European societies.<sup>8</sup>

As Russian attitudes and strictures concerning homosexuality became increasingly synchronized with those of the Empire’s less tolerant European neighbors, the formerly open tolerance exercised within Russian society for centuries nearly vanished. One area of society in which open toleration of sexual difference survived was religion. Although Russian Orthodox priests had always “denounced the practice,” even refusing to “hear confession of any man who shaved off his beard [a key Muscovite Era proclamation of homosexual identification],” two important schismatic sects of the Old Believer peasant tradition carried the uniquely Russian attitude of toleration of homosexuality through the eighteenth, nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Karlinsky, “Introduction,” in *Out of the Blue: Russia’s Hidden Gay Literature: An Anthology* (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Karlinsky, “Introduction,” 16.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature and Culture: the Impact of the October Revolution,” in *History of Homosexuality in Europe*, (1992), 170.

<sup>4</sup> Karlinsky, “Introduction,” 16.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Healey, “The Russian Revolution and the Decriminalization of Homosexuality,” in *Revolutionary Russia* 6, no. 1 (1993), 28.; Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature,” 166-67.

<sup>7</sup> Healey, “The Russian Revolution,” 28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 28.

and twentieth centuries.<sup>9</sup> Karlinsky has observed that the mystical Christian *Khlysty* and *Skoptsy* sects, which split from the Old Believers as the open homosexuality of the Muscovite period ended, both displayed “recognizable homosexual and bisexual strains in their culture, folklore, and religious rituals.”<sup>10</sup>

Outside of these religious sects, homophobia’s ascendance in mainstream Russian society produced an environment in which individuals denied their sexuality both to themselves and others. Several of the most important nineteenth century Russian authors struggled with this theme in their writings and their private lives. The works of Leo Tolstoy and Vasilii Rozanov are replete with references to the struggle over the morality of their own homosexual inclinations. The story of Nikolai Gogol is a tragic example of a lifelong struggle to deny one’s own sexuality. Karlinsky describes the author’s death:

This brilliant writer committed suicide at the age of forty-three, after confessing his true sexuality to a bigoted priest who ordered him to fast and pray day and night if he wanted to escape hellfire and brimstone.<sup>11</sup>

Although censure of same-sex love and homosexual acts was commonplace in Russia during the nineteenth century, by the 1890s the emergence of several prominent gay and lesbian Russian artists, authors, and musicians began to evoke Russia’s historic legacy of toleration.<sup>12</sup> Once again openly gay grand dukes moved about high society.<sup>13</sup> The sexual orientations of such luminaries as poets Alexei Apukhtin, Sergei Esenin and Nikolai Klyuev, publisher Anna Yevreinova, composer Peter Tchaikovsky and the avant-garde ‘World of Art’ leader Sergei Diaghilev were open secrets, and once again.<sup>14</sup> Karlinsky has asserted:

Such figures as Diaghilev, Kliuev, and Kuzmin were national celebrities, much written about in the press. Their homosexuality was known to everyone and caused no problems in their social or professional lives.<sup>15</sup>

This resurgence of openness suggests that homophobia, imported from Europe, never became as virulent in the Russian Empire as it was in the countries of its origin. Historian Laura Engelstein describes the resistance of Russian professionals and politicians to European-style opprobrium of homosexuality:

Until the end of the nineteenth century, liberals in the legal community [in Russia] argued for the insignificance of homosexual behavior as a marker of social deviance. The medical interpretations of homosexuality...had little effect on Russian legal thinking....On the public stage, homosexuality never

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<sup>9</sup> Karlinsky, “Introduction,” 17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

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

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

<sup>15</sup> Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature,” 174.

served as a vehicle for symbolic politics, as it did in England and Germany during the same period.<sup>16</sup>

The public trial of Irish poet Oscar Wilde is perhaps the best illustration of Engelstein's observation of the relative intolerance of western Europe. At the same time that Russian society began to thaw its formerly frigid reception of openly gay public figures, the pages of its newspapers were filled with sensational accounts of Wilde's trial for sodomy. Kuzmin's biographers, John E. Malmstad and Nikolay Bogomolov, assert that the Russian press generally "pilloried English society and the English system of justice, not Wilde, and on occasion went so far as to call for the formation of defense committees."<sup>17</sup> During the trial, Wilde lauded "the Love that dare not speak its name" as a "deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect."<sup>18</sup> This sensational public veneration of same-sex love (as well as Wilde's own fashionable, dandyish self-image) had an immeasurable impact upon the developing cosmopolitan archetype of Russian homosexuality at the turn of the twentieth century.

The influence of Wilde's cosmopolitan persona, fashionable dress and personal pride in his sexuality are especially evident in the life and writings of Mikhail Kuzmin, "the most outspoken, prolific and well-known of Russia's gay writers."<sup>19</sup> Born in the city of Yaroslavl in 1872, Kuzmin was the son of a naval officer whose cosmopolitan, cultured family were members of the provincial nobility.<sup>20</sup> Kuzmin's biographers observed his early cosmopolitanism; as a young man, Kuzmin excelled in French, loved theater and opera, and developed into "a competent composer and a resourceful performer of his own songs at the piano."<sup>21</sup> At the age of twelve his family moved to St. Petersburg, where Kuzmin also began to study Italian and German.<sup>22</sup> As a young man, he struggled with bouts of depression and even attempted suicide. Kuzmin flirted with both religion and atheism before devoting himself to music and writing in his early thirties. He first became a success through his music, and began to move among the fashionable artistic circles of St. Petersburg society by 1904.

In the prerevolutionary days of late August 1905, Kuzmin first began reading selections from the manuscript of his recently completed novel, *Wings*, to private gatherings of friends and fellow artists.<sup>23</sup> This seminal work "brought Kuzmin instant notoriety" and quickly "became the catechism of Russian gay men."<sup>24</sup> The novel relates the story of Vanya Smurov, a Russian youth who becomes enamored of Larion Dmitriyevich Stroop, a sophisticated older gentleman. As the enigmatic Stroop becomes closer with Vanya, he is drawn into the midst of a scandalous suicide of a young lady grown distraught at the realization of his true sexuality. Throughout the novel, Vanya struggles with the morality of same-sex love as his awareness of the nature of Stroop's relationships and his own affection for the older man grow. Replete with classical as well as contemporary cultural references, *Wings* evokes a lofty exploration of

<sup>16</sup> Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-siècle Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 57-58.

<sup>17</sup> John E. Malmstad and Nikolay Bogomolov, *Mikhail Kuzmin: a Life in Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 28.

<sup>18</sup> <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/wilde/Crimwilde.html>

<sup>19</sup> Karlinsky, "Introduction," 22.

<sup>20</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 7-9.

<sup>21</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 10.; Michael Green, "Mikhail Kuzmin: Past and Present," in *Out of the Blue*, 117.

<sup>22</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature," 172.

“the cultural and spiritual rationales that justify the practice of same-sex love,” even suggesting its “superiority to other forms of love.”<sup>25</sup>

Although Kuzmin enjoyed broad acclaim from within the “intertwined society of poets and philosophers who perpetrated the revolt against the dominant canons of socially conscious realism,” the novel received a more controversial reception from Russian society at large.<sup>26</sup> *Wings* first appeared in print in the November 1906 issue of the literary magazine, *Libra*; a book form quickly followed and instantly sold out.<sup>27</sup> To some, *Wings* was merely “pornographic,” using the sensationalism of a “hitherto taboo topic” to garner attention.<sup>28</sup> However, Kuzmin’s work “carefully avoided any depiction of sex, gay or otherwise.”<sup>29</sup> By combining an abundance of fashionable classical and cultural references in *Wings* with an absence of overt erotic language, Kuzmin succeeded in creating a uniquely acceptable platform for the exploration of such a controversial subject. However, it was the theme itself which the novel’s detractors still found objectionable. Conservative critics found themselves either “outraged or disgusted,” while political radicals decried Kuzmin’s work as a betrayal of the revolutionary spirit by “petty-bourgeois individualism.”<sup>30</sup> Maxim Gorky, popular Bolshevik Party writer and personal friend of Lenin, wrote scathingly that Kuzmin and his ilk:

...are old-fashioned slaves, people who *can't help* confusing freedom with homosexuality. For them, for example, ‘personal liberation’ is in some peculiar way confused with crawling from one cesspool into another and is at times reduced to freedom for the penis and nothing more.<sup>31</sup>

Persistent negative reactions such as these culminated in 1909 in an unsuccessful attempt to organize a literary boycott of Kuzmin’s body of work.<sup>32</sup> By this time, however, popular acclaim and the accumulated accolades of several of Russia’s most respected poets and critics had already placed Kuzmin “beyond the reach of journalistic sniping.”<sup>33</sup>

The enduring strength of the cosmopolitan archetype of the “genuine new man” evinced by the composite of Kuzmin’s main characters also contributed to the novel’s success. Kuzmin’s ability to construct characters that resonated with his Russian readers lies partially in his positive utilization of preexisting negative stereotypes. Although *Wings* presented homosexual inclinations and same-sex love in a radically affirmative light, Kuzmin’s main characters harmonized well with prevailing Russian prejudices and preconceptions. Engelstein has correctly observed:

For all its aesthetic radicalism and provocative stance, *Wings* follows the line of the reigning clichés, evoking the sexual sophistication (usually branded

<sup>25</sup> Lindsay F. Watton, “Constructs of Sin and Sodom in Russian Modernism, 1906-1909,” in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 3 (1994), 372.

<sup>26</sup> Engelstein, 388.

<sup>27</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 93.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature,” 173; Engelstein, 391.

<sup>31</sup> Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature,” 173.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Green, “Mikhail Kuzmin,” 116.

<sup>33</sup> Karlinsky, “Introduction,” 23.

degeneracy) of the wealthy upper classes and the willingness of popular riffraff to service their needs.<sup>34</sup>

At one point, Vanya overhears a conversation between a young man who turns out to be Stroop's valet, Fyodor, and his uncle Yermolai. Fyodor is describing the first time he agreed to "play around" with a gentleman at a bathhouse in exchange for beer and ten roubles.<sup>35</sup> The most suggestive moment of the novel occurs when Vanya is refused an audience with Stroop by the half-dressed Fyodor:

Fyodor's face was red with excitement, like that of someone who has been drinking or using rouge, his shirt was unbelted, his hair carefully combed and seemingly slightly curled, and he gave off a strong smell of Stroop's scent.<sup>36</sup>

The implication of this passage, of course, is inescapably clear. However, Stroop's actions in this scene (firmly arguing with a lady in an adjacent room before striding quickly by) do not compromise the masculine prerogatives of his character in the least. Fyodor is half-dressed and out of sorts, but Stroop argues boldly and orders his servant about as he rushes past. The class and power disparity evident in the master/servant relationship demonstrated here manages to conform to contemporary Russian stereotypes of homosexuality as a symptom of the decadence of high society while preserving the integrity of Stroop's character. This is illustrative of the way that Kuzmin cloaks familiar depictions of homosexuality in a positive light.

Although Engelstein characterizes *Wings* as "a homosexual companion piece" to Mikhail Artsybashev's seminal work, *Sanin*, *Wings* displays far fewer characteristics of boulevard literature.<sup>37</sup> Kuzmin's work is strewn with classical and literary references and the novel itself is constructed in a daring and innovative disjointed style. Although melodramatic topics such as suicide, typical of boulevard literature, also appear in *Wings*, death and defilement are not at the center of Kuzmin's novel. Additionally, *Wings* is a piece of autobiographical fiction with many parallels to Kuzmin's own life story. In 1893, Kuzmin fell in love with a cavalry officer a few years older than himself, subsequently traveling with this man in the spring of 1895 to Asia Minor, Egypt and Greece.<sup>38</sup> Torment over this forbidden relationship had driven Kuzmin to attempt suicide, but his confession of his love to his mother and his months abroad with 'Prince Georges' became the most influential and affirmative experiences of his life. Just like Vanya at the conclusion of *Wings*, Kuzmin found joy and self-realization through his decision to travel abroad with his male lover.

The main characters in *Wings* all evince a connection to the modern world of European high society and a fascination with the classical world: Vanya Smurov, the slender youth with long curls struggling to make sense of his place in the world; Larion Stroop, "the *erastes* to ...Smurov's *eromenos*"; and to a lesser extent Daniil Ivanovich, Vanya's diminutive, well-educated Greek instructor.<sup>39</sup> The common characteristics of these men, particularly their

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<sup>34</sup> Engelstein, 390.

<sup>35</sup> Mikhail Kuzmin, *Wings*. Translated by Hugh Aplin (London: Hesperus Press Limited, 2007), 34.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>37</sup> Engelstein, 388.

<sup>38</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 29-30.

<sup>39</sup> Kuzmin, 14; Watton, "Sin and Sodom," 372.

shared fascination with foreign languages, classical literature, high art and the world outside of the Russian Empire, lead them to identify strongly with one another as fashionable, modern men intent on the development and improvement of the individual self. In this context, same-sex love is venerated as the “way towards the beauty of life.”<sup>40</sup>

Vanya, the novel’s protagonist, is based upon Kuzmin himself and his experiences as a young man. Described as physically handsome and slender, Vanya is nevertheless extremely self-conscious. An intelligent and sensitive young man with a discontented angst, he is eager to learn new languages, collect new experiences and travel. Wearing his everyday clothes, Vanya “for some reason seemed dandified, despite [their] utter ordinariness.”<sup>41</sup> At the time *Wings* appeared, Kuzmin had himself “just entered the ‘dandy phase’ that so many memoirs describe.”<sup>42</sup> He understood “dandyism” to be “the rebellion of individual taste against the leveling and tyranny of fashion.”<sup>43</sup> Although Kuzmin’s surrogate, Vanya, could evoke this look simply with his long hair and ordinary clothes, Kuzmin himself “pushed his protest against ugliness to the limits with his colorful vests, makeup, and even special beauty marks.”<sup>44</sup>

Stroop, whom Vanya’s uncle informs him is “half-English, a rich man...a highly educated and well-read man,” represents for Vanya all that is cultured and refined in the world.<sup>45</sup> He is a mature, respected success who refuses to allow his sexual difference to marginalize him. His foreign pedigree practically embodies the idea that homosexuality was a phenomenon imported from modern Europe, yet in *Wings* this phenomenon is depicted innocuously as another facet of a modern and sophisticated culture. The character himself makes mysterious trips abroad, frequently attends operas, and extols the virtues of studying foreign and ancient languages.

Vanya’s Greek teacher, Daniil Ivanovich, is similarly worldly and well educated. His gentle encouragement throughout the novel enables Vanya to take his first steps into the larger world of cultural attainments he seeks. While Stroop’s ancestry imbues his character with an alien quality, Daniil Ivanovich’s profession introduces foreign culture to Russia’s youth. He invites Vanya abroad, where the young man is reintroduced to Stroop after a period of acculturation and maturation in Italy. Engelstein has recognized the significance of the fact that “...it is in Italy—land of antique glory and real sunshine—rather than in philistine Russia that the boy finds his way.”<sup>46</sup> As Vanya confides to his teacher, “there’s no one simply able to understand and share the least movement of my soul...not here, nor perhaps, in St Petersburg.”<sup>47</sup>

Although Vanya’s journey of self-discovery (drawn from the artist’s own life) strongly suggests that solace and self-realization could only be attained outside of Russia, *Wings* also contains brief references to the toleration which sprang from the schismatics of the Old Believer peasant religious tradition. On the heels of the bathhouse conversation, Fyodor’s uncle learns that he has recently taken a permanent position with Stroop: “An Old Believer, is he?” Uncle Yermolai assumes.<sup>48</sup> Later Vanya visits with some Old Believers, and they discuss

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<sup>40</sup> Kuzmin, 97.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>42</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 120.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 122.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>45</sup> Kuzmin, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Engelstein, 388.

<sup>47</sup> Kuzmin, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 35.

sex, sin and Stroop's relationship with Fyodor.<sup>49</sup> A young man Vanya's age appears to be more thoughtful and tolerant than Vanya himself, asserting that Stroop's business is his own. This young man, "an authentic schismatic of the old school from the Volga...goes around in a *poddyovka*," a light Russian peasant coat. Kuzmin himself had worn a *poddyovka* when he had flirted with assuming the fashions of the Old Believer schismatics in early 1906. Aleksey Remizov vividly described Kuzmin during this phase:

At that time Kuzmin had a beard—black as black can be!—and went about in a maroon velvet *podevka*....there was a touch of eye makeup, so that he looked either like the Pharaoh Tutankhamen himself or like someone who has escaped from a bonfire in the hermitages beyond the Volga, and he used a lot of rose-smelling scent—so he reeked like a [scented] icon on a holiday.

Despite Kuzmin's own passing adoption of these overt schismatic affectations, he summarily dismissed the most influential Russian peasant poet of the post-1905 cultural scene, Nikolai Klyuev, as a "charlatan" and an "unsuccessful Rasputin."<sup>50</sup> The two met in 1915, and Kuzmin maintained a poor opinion of Klyuev until the late 1920s.<sup>51</sup> Quite possibly, this was due to the fact that although Klyuev may have "played up his peasant image to attract attention,"<sup>52</sup> his persona was an authentic expression of his upbringing: the genuine, mystical Russian peasant past of which the cultured Kuzmin, with his foppishly affected Old Believer look, could only jealously imitate. Although the fascination with Old Believer traditions would last for many years, Kuzmin's affected Russian peasant dress was merely a fleeting phase. Malmstad and Bogomolov describe Kuzmin's revelation that he truly belonged "in the milieu in which he had been born and raised."<sup>53</sup>

Kuzmin's opinion notwithstanding, Klyuev's roots belie the notion that his peasant image was a mere affectation. Born in 1887 near Lake Onega in northern Russia, Klyuev lived "in a tiny village of eight huts near the provincial town of Vytegra."<sup>54</sup> Klyuev and his family were actively involved in the *Khlysty* sect, a schismatic sect of the Old Believer faith which believed that "Christ's spirit did not leave the earth when he died; instead he was reincarnated in various individuals."<sup>55</sup> Although the *Khlysty* held mostly puritanical attitudes regarding sex, drinking and gambling, nevertheless "ecstatic prayer meetings frequently culminated in orgies."<sup>56</sup> Although Klyuev embraced his heritage and savored his persona's impact, his image was still an authentic "reflection of his background and interests."<sup>57</sup>

Klyuev became a "semi-official composer of religious songs" for the local *Khlysty* at age fifteen, and his first poems appeared in print two years later in 1904.<sup>58</sup> He was still a teenager, and still learning his craft. It was not until 1910 that Klyuev and other poets interested in the preservation and transmission of Russian peasant traditions made their impact

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 46-51.

<sup>50</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 330.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 330.

<sup>52</sup> John Glad, "Preface," in *Poems*, Translated by John Glad (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis Publishers, 1977), xiii.

<sup>53</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 65.

<sup>54</sup> John Glad, x.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, xiii.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, xi.



on the national scene.<sup>59</sup> In the years 1911-1913 Klyuev published three books of verse which brought him instant celebrity despite his “unconcealed homosexuality.”<sup>60</sup> He had public affairs, many of which were with other “peasant intellectuals.”<sup>61</sup> Significantly, Klyuev’s open attraction to men did nothing to prevent “most poets and critics as well as many literate peasants from seeing him as the foremost literary spokesman for the whole of Russian peasantry.”<sup>62</sup> This speaks not only to the liberal tolerance increasingly practiced by Russia’s cultural elite, but also to the toleration of Russian peasant culture, where sexual difference had long been accepted as an integral component of schismatic tradition. Klyuev’s open homosexuality did not delegitimize him as an authentic representative of devout peasant culture, but rather reinforced his reputation as a genuine peasant mystic.

His poems celebrated and romanticized the world of the Russian peasant, eschewing the modern industrial metropolises in favor of the quiet magic of village life. Utilizing images of nature, haystacks, threshing barns and huts to provide the context for his poetry, Klyuev frequently integrated religious and sexual imagery. Many of his sexually suggestive poems remain deliberately ambiguous about the object of desire involved, deftly mixing references to both male and female figures in his verses. Some of his homoerotic lyrics are focused upon rather lofty sentiments. For example, in “Two Youths Came to Me,” the first stanza opens romantically:

Two youths came to me  
 In a September evening of falling leaves;  
 They came to their beloved,  
 Drawn by the beat of his heart, the joy of his calm.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to such romantic sentiments, Klyuev was more than capable of expressing his own attraction to men in explicitly sexual language as well. In “Today, Brothers,” Klyuev merges blatantly homoerotic sexuality together with references to Christ:

For this embryo of the world do not spare your sperm,  
 Caress your testicles and couple as whales;  
 Gladden the old fisherman, God,  
 That he might toss a line into our boiling blood!

Sweet it is to feel the bait of God in the body’s backwaters,  
 In the small of the back, under the nipples, in the flaming scrotum.<sup>64</sup>

At the time Klyuev met Kuzmin in 1915, he had already become involved with the greatest love of his young life, the handsome, youthful peasant poet Sergei Esenin. Esenin lived at times with both men and women, including a “brief marriage” to fashionable American

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<sup>59</sup> Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature,” 172.

<sup>60</sup> Gordon McVay, *Esenin: a Life* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis Publishers, 1976), 59. Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature,” 172-73.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

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

<sup>63</sup> Nikolai Klyuev, *Poems.*, Translated by John Glad (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis Publishers, 1977), 14.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

dancer Isadora Duncan.<sup>65</sup> Like Klyuev, Esenin wrote poetry heavily influenced by his peasant upbringing, although Esenin appears to have exaggerated his humble beginnings more than Klyuev had. Whereas Klyuev had been born into a remote village of only eight families, Esenin's isolation was less severe. His village had "six or seven hundred huts...and the village stretched on and on."<sup>66</sup> In addition, although Klyuev was an autodidact, Esenin had spent his youth in a literate family, studying at an Orthodox Christian boarding school which taught religion, Church Slavonic and Russian literature.<sup>67</sup> Moving to Moscow at the conclusion of his studies, Esenin worked for a time in a butcher's shop and a bookstore before finding employment at the thriving printing factory of I.D. Sytin.<sup>68</sup>

In 1915 Esenin moved St. Petersburg, taking pains to exaggerate his peasant appearance upon his arrival. He wore boots and a blue *pyoddovka* to his first meetings with the capital's literary avant-garde.<sup>69</sup> The poet Sergei Gorodetsky enthusiastically welcomed the arrival of the handsome young Esenin, who "brought his verse wrapped in a rustic kerchief."<sup>70</sup> However, Esenin's peasant accessories conformed more to "a Petersburg aesthete's conception of a peasant" rather than the genuine article, and he seems to have adopted them only upon his arrival in Petersburg.<sup>71</sup> He was an unprecedented instant success, arriving upon a well-established avant-garde cultural scene which had recently been introduced to homosexual and peasant themes in the works of Kuzmin and Klyuev.

Recognizing the debt which his style and success owed to the well-established Klyuev, the younger Esenin "took the initiative" of writing him a flattering letter. For his part, Klyuev was "eager to establish a special literary bond" with this young peasant poet who had made such an immediate impression upon St. Petersburg's artistic circles.<sup>72</sup> Within months the two were exchanging affectionate letters, and a romance soon blossomed. To some of Esenin's friends, it appeared that Klyuev had possessively "dug his claws into him."<sup>73</sup> The future actor Vladimir Chernyavsky wrote that by the end of the year Klyuev had "taken complete command of our Sergunka: he fastens his little belt for him, strokes his hair and follows him with his eyes."<sup>74</sup> The two lived together from late 1915 until 1917, writing much of their most brilliant poetry during this inspired time. Although married to three different women throughout his life, Esenin seemed capable of writing moving romantic poetry "only when it was addressed to other men."<sup>75</sup>

Although Esenin's early work evoked a deep longing for the peasant countryside from which he came, after the revolutionary year of 1917 he began to divorce himself more and more from his humble beginnings. Esenin's biographer, Gordon McVay, explains that while an established poet of Klyuev's stature could resist the pressures of a radically altered literary scene:

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<sup>65</sup> Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature," 173.

<sup>66</sup> McVay, 17.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 27-28.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>70</sup> Sergei Gorodetsky, in McVay, 54.

<sup>71</sup> McVay, 54.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>73</sup> Vladimir Chernyavsky in McVay, 61.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature," 173.

Esenin lacked Klyuev's deep-rooted adherence to the Old Believer faith and culture; he was several years younger than Klyuev, and much more adaptable in his aspiration to poetic fame.<sup>76</sup>

Subsequently, Esenin shed his peasant persona once it had outworn its usefulness to him. He and Klyuev's relationship ended in 1917, and he soon adopted the dandified style of the modern Imaginist poets. Esenin, rapidly developing a new appreciation for metropolitan life, "plunged into the whirlpool of urban bohemia."<sup>77</sup> Although Esenin did not even drink tea living with Klyuev at the height of his peasant phase, he rapidly developed a taste for alcohol and appeared as the very picture of cosmopolitan dandyism.<sup>78</sup> The poet's new "elegant city dress" stood in especially strong contrast to the surroundings of impoverished Moscow during the years of the Russian Civil War.<sup>79</sup> Frequently appearing in "top hat, gloves, and patent leather shoes," Esenin abandoned his religious convictions as well as his earlier fashion sense, allegedly going so far as to smear obscene poetry on the wall of a convent and chop up religious icons for firewood.<sup>80</sup>

As might be expected, Klyuev reacted jealously and indignantly to what he regarded as Esenin's betrayal and corruption. In "the Fourth Rome," Klyuev excoriated Esenin's newly-discovered fashion and morality in barely-veiled verse:

I don't want to be a famous poet  
In a top hat and patent leather shoes....

I don't want to hide the horns of a forest devil  
With a top hat!

...I don't want to plug a hole in the cargo-boat of the soul  
With a top hat and city shoes!

...Anathema, Anathema to you,  
City shoes and eyeless top hat!<sup>81</sup>

Naturally, the October Revolution exercised an influence upon Russian literature and poetry far greater than Esenin's own fashion sense. The Bolshevik coup had a long-reaching, repressive effect upon Russia's nascent but flourishing gay cultural scene. However, Simon Karlinsky observes that "with remarkable unanimity, all male gay and bisexual writers welcomed the October takeover."<sup>82</sup> Mikhail Kuzmin called the Bolshevik coup "a long-awaited miracle," even referring to its opponents as "animals and scum."<sup>83</sup> Nikolai Klyuev imagined that Lenin would "protect village life from modernization" while supporting "the

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<sup>76</sup> McVay, 170.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>80</sup> Glad, xv.

<sup>81</sup> Klyuev, "The Fourth Rome," in Glad, 34-38.

<sup>82</sup> Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature," 175.

<sup>83</sup> Kuzmin, in Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature," 175.

traditional ways of the peasantry.”<sup>84</sup> However, the Bolsheviks would ultimately betray these famous authors’ initial hopes for the October Revolution. The dominant and simplistic historical narrative constructed in Soviet-era historiography is that “Lenin and Trotsky overthrew the tsar, freed the serfs, and liberated women and gays.”<sup>85</sup> However, Leninist-Marxists personally “subscribed to a Victorian, puritanical and patriarchal ethic devised in the 1860s,” and so the abrogation of the proscriptions against homosexuality was merely “a benign oversight, the result of having dispensed with all law during the Civil War.”<sup>86</sup> Karlinsky explains that the strong association of homosexuality with the decadence of the upper classes created intolerance for openly homosexual authors who concerned themselves with sexual difference in their literature:

Because the most visible homosexuals of the prerevolutionary decades belonged to royalty or aristocracy (the grand dukes, Meshchersky) or were politically ultraconservative (Leontiev, Przhevalsky, Tchaikovsky), the Bolshevik government assumed from the start that homosexuality was the vice of upper-class exploiters.<sup>87</sup>

Despite Kuzmin’s initial support, the most famous and respected of Russia’s openly homosexual writers could not publish his most seminal work a mere six years into the Soviet regime. Karlinsky describes how, despite the enormous success of *Wings* and the many reissues of the novel throughout the late Imperial period, “its last publication in Kuzmin’s lifetime occurred in 1923.”<sup>88</sup> Healey asserts that the modification of proscriptions against homosexual acts exemplifies not puritanical intolerance, but the “revolutionary élan of the era, a desire to modernise backward Russia.”<sup>89</sup> Whatever the motivating factors, Kuzmin and other openly gay writers and artists began experiencing difficulties pursuing their professions in the 1920s.

Although the 1922 Criminal Code retained statutes which criminalized homosexual coercion, “the jurists went to the bother of eliminating consensual sodomy from the Code.”<sup>90</sup> Despite this legal delineation, homosexuality of any kind quickly became taboo in the Soviet Union. The most important piece of late Imperial Russian homosexual literature, *Wings* was lost to the world for approximately fifty years, until it found eager new audiences after being translated into several western languages in the 1970s.<sup>91</sup> Despite his posthumous fame, in the years after the Revolution Kuzmin was quickly reduced to dire financial straits.<sup>92</sup> Supposedly contracting pneumonia from a drafty hospital hallway, Kuzmin died in 1936, escaping the arrest and execution which many of his intimate circle met in 1938.<sup>93</sup>

The censure and censorship of homosexual themes in literature under the Soviet regime greatly affected Klyuev as well. Historian Michael Makin explains that “the combination of

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<sup>84</sup> Karlinsky, 175.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 170; Healey, “The Russian Revolution,” 32.

<sup>87</sup> Karlinsky, “Introduction,” 24.

<sup>88</sup> Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature,” 172.

<sup>89</sup> Healey, “The Russian Revolution,” 33-34.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>91</sup> Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature,” 172.

<sup>92</sup> Malmstad and Bogomolov, 360.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 357; 362-63.

evident talent, established reputation...and ‘mystical’ attachment to ‘patriarchal’ Russian culture rendered him especially vulnerable” to persecution, making him the “major target” of Soviet stricture.<sup>94</sup> He was arrested in 1933 and exiled to Siberia. Although the details surrounding his death are obscure, he died while returning from exile with “a suitcase full of manuscripts.”<sup>95</sup> Whether he died of a heart attack in his weakened condition or was secretly executed by the state police, Klyuev’s death resulted directly from his persecution at the hands of the Soviet authorities.

However, despite Klyuev’s poverty and persecution, he outlived his former lover, Esenin, by many years. During his dandified Imaginist phase, Esenin’s taste for alcohol became a full-blown addiction and he began using cocaine and smoking opium.<sup>96</sup> He became paranoid and frequently violent, finally committing suicide in late 1925.<sup>97</sup> In true melodramatic Russian fashion, Esenin penned his suicide note, addressed to “a young Jewish poet who had spent the night with him a few days earlier,” in his own blood.<sup>98</sup>

Although Klyuev’s stubborn refusal to change his poetry kept his works from publication for Soviet readers, Esenin had completely abandoned his veneration of the antiquarian traditions of the peasant countryside in favor of all that was modern and urban before his death. Thus, Esenin’s later works became the “object of a veritable cult in the last decades of the Soviet system.”<sup>99</sup> Despite the popular acceptance of Esenin’s post-revolutionary works, Karlinsky explains:

All references to his homosexuality, in his poetry and in memoirs about him, were banned. Most Russians today respond with stupefaction or rage when this aspect of his life and writings is mentioned.”<sup>100</sup>

Although the open and affirmative exploration of homosexuality in the years after the Revolution of 1905 greatly contributed to the evolution of Russia’s artistic and cultural values in the last years of tsarist rule, by the early 1920s the most influential of these artists’ works could not be found on the shelves. The architects (and embodiments) of the two competing constructions of homosexual identity in these years, Kuzmin and Klyuev, became impoverished when the Soviet regime refused to allow them to publish their writings. Kuzmin died of pneumonia contracted in the drafty hallway of an overwhelmed hospital: the picture of a poet abandoned by a world grown cold around him. Klyuev’s mysterious death “somewhere along the Transiberian railroad,” likewise places his death well within the bounds of Russian melodramatic tradition, while the histrionics of Esenin’s poetic suicide hardly require elaboration. Their dramatic lives, not to mention their theatrical deaths, indelibly mark them as archetypal Russian literary figures. Although the resurgence of positive portrayals of homosexuality in the years between the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 may have been fleeting, the constructions of Russian homosexual identity which the writings and personas of these authors helped to create endure in their literature. The cosmopolitan modernism of Kuzmin’s

<sup>94</sup> Michael Makin, *Nikolai Klyuev: Time and Text, Place and Poet* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 54.

<sup>95</sup> Glad, xix; Kuzmin, in Glad, xix.

<sup>96</sup> Rurik Ivnev, in Davies, 161-62; Lev Fainshtein, in Davies, 177.

<sup>97</sup> Davies, 199.

<sup>98</sup> Karlinsky, “Introduction,” 24.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

milieu may seem at odds with the traditional peasant tradition of Klyuev's poems, but the ease with which Kuzmin and Esenin adopted the affectations of these archetypes suggest that at least some contemporaries did not consider the two incompatible.

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*ISOLATIONISTS IN THE "GREAT DEBATE": THE FOUNDATIONS OF THEIR  
MOVEMENT AND THE FAILURE OF THEIR CAUSE*

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G. SCOTT WATERMAN

**Dedication**

This essay is dedicated to the memory of my father, whose palpable reverence and affection for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt pervaded and enriched my upbringing but complicated my efforts to bring objectivity to the present project. The reader will judge the extent to which I have succeeded at achieving that elusive – and perhaps illusory – goal.

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On Monday, December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appeared before the Congress of the United States to ask for a declaration of war. The iconic CBS News reporter Edward R. Murrow described that unfolding scene of shared purpose and resolve, noting that “a joint session of senators and representatives, many of them bitter foes of the man on the rostrum, cheer him madly because, like most Americans, they are angry, frightened, and confused, and he is the President of the United States.”<sup>1</sup> With only one dissenting vote, Congress declared war on the Japanese Empire that day, and three days later, following the German and Italian declarations of war against the United States, Congress voted unanimously to reciprocate against those European Axis nations. Not only was official Washington united in recognition of the necessity of fighting powerful foreign enemies; at that point the American people appeared to be as well. In Gallup Polls conducted between December 12 and December 17, 1941, 97% of respondents approved of the declaration of war against Japan and 91% favored Congress’ declaration of war on Germany.<sup>2</sup> Such near-unanimity of opinion on those matters, however, belied what had been, up to the moment of the Japanese attack on U.S. territory, a highly contentious and sometimes-rancorous public conversation about the question of American involvement in the tensions and, ultimately, violence that had been developing around the world.

As evidenced by Washington’s famous Farewell Address, Jefferson’s warning against foreign entanglements, and the Monroe Doctrine, defining America’s role in the world has, at least periodically, been a major topic of political discourse. Such discussions have focused on expansion within the North American continent, particularly at the expense of Mexico, and later on U.S. involvement in conquering, pacifying, and governing an overseas empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite progressive expansion of the American role in the international arena, more than 140 years passed between the Declaration of Independence and the arrival of the first U.S. military forces to fight in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, although American involvement in the First World War did not proceed without opposition,

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<sup>1</sup> Edward R. Murrow and Fred W. Friendly, *I Can Hear It Now*, vol. 1, band 7, Columbia Records, 33 rpm, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), December, 1941. Retrieved March 5, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.  
[http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data\\_access/ipoll/ipoll.html](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html).

<sup>3</sup> Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt & the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), ix.

the national debate preceding U.S. entry into World War II was remarkable in its scope, reflecting what Americans and their leaders perceived to be the extraordinary stakes involved.

In reviewing the events, opinions, policies, and pronouncements during the lead-up to the U.S. declarations of war in 1941, this essay will focus on those individuals and groups that argued against American involvement in the developing conflict in Europe. It will briefly review the cultural heritage of the isolationist position (whose adherents after September 1939 preferred the label “noninterventionist”), particularly the development of its 1930s incarnation and both its mainstream and extremist exemplars. The stage will then be set, both with respect to events in Europe as well as public opinion at home, for the twenty-seven months of the “Great Debate.”<sup>4</sup> The course of that exchange will be described, eventually focusing on the most organized and visible exponents of the isolationist stance, the America First Committee (AFC) and its leading spokesmen. The unfolding of that very public clash of ideas will be outlined by events in Europe, the decisions and policies of the Roosevelt administration, and FDR’s direct appeals to the people. This analytic framework is justified by the reactive nature of the isolationist camp, particularly the AFC.<sup>5</sup> This essay will then briefly examine the ways by which cultural products, especially radio and motion pictures, along with overseas developments, ultimately overwhelmed the efforts of the AFC and others opposed to intervention. It will conclude with an examination of the duties of citizens and their leaders, the nature of dissent in an open society, and the prospects of American international interventionism.

Historian Steven Casey identified the 1930s as “the high-water mark of American isolationism.”<sup>6</sup> This “isolationist renaissance” had antecedents that Geoffrey Smith, among other scholars, locates in the experiences of the First World War and the Great Depression. American isolationists saw in World War I and its aftermath of nationalism and revolutionary upheaval a lesson that involvement in European affairs is fruitless and counterproductive, as democracy and peace had been rendered *less* secure, contrary to Wilson’s stated goals. Moreover, the violations of civil liberties at home that occurred in the context of U.S. involvement in the war added credence and gravity to that lesson. Isolationists tended to emphasize the differences between American and European political cultures and motivations, arguing that avoiding the contagion of European power politics would allow American democratic institutions to retain their purity and survive as examples to the rest of the world. In many isolationists’ views, Wilson’s policies had been at best naively emotional and unjustifiably Anglophilic. More than just errors in judgment, however, lay behind the “devil theory of war,” an expression coined by historian Charles Beard which, according to Smith, “became by 1939 accepted conventional wisdom in college and high school textbooks, dominating the nation’s foreign policy stance during mid-decade, and – in the two years before Pearl Harbor – affecting relations between noninterventionists and their opponents.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Although some authors limit the period referred to as the “Great Debate” to the 18 months between the fall of France and U.S. entry into the war, I am adopting the broader definition used by other historians by which it began with the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939.

<sup>5</sup> Justus D. Doenecke, ed., *In Danger Undaunted: The Anti-interventionist Movement of 1940-1941 as Revealed in the Papers of the America First Committee*, Hoover Archival Documentaries 384 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 49.

<sup>6</sup> Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey S. Smith, “Isolationism, the Devil, and the Advent of the Second World War: Variations on a Theme,” *The International History Review* 4, no. 1 (February 1, 1982): 55–60.



The many proponents of the “devil theory of war” saw in munitions makers, financiers, and their government allies a malevolent mix, motivated by war profits, which posed an institutionalized impediment to peace. The Senate hearings during the mid-1930s on this subject, chaired by Gerald Nye of North Dakota, were highly influential in promulgating the view that an isolationist policy between 1914 and 1917 would have both served the nation better and averted the Great Depression. The consequent mistrust of industrial, financial, and governing elites, combined with the ongoing domestic priority of economic recovery (as opposed to international affairs), convinced many progressive as well as conservative politicians who would become important figures in the coming Great Debate that Congress must be proactive in preventing U.S. involvement in future foreign wars. The 1930s thus saw enactment of several Neutrality Acts that limited by law the extent to which the U.S. could become involved in overseas conflicts, and even an attempt at a constitutional amendment that would have required national referenda on declarations of war.<sup>8</sup> The grave threats to peace that were developing rapidly in both Europe and Asia coincided with a profoundly, if understandably, insular set of attitudes among a large segment of Americans.

Not only was isolationist sentiment during the 1930s in the U.S. widespread, it was also held by a heterogeneous group of people. Historian Manfred Jonas summarized its fundamental tenets as having “consisted of belief in the amorality of international affairs and the impregnability of the Western Hemisphere which, taken together, made American intervention in a foreign war both unavailing and unnecessary.” War results “largely through the machinations of selfish, greedy minorities” and other “amoral, warlike, or vulnerable countries,” making it essential that the U.S. pursue a foreign policy of unilateralism. Given that this constellation of views was espoused by Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, capitalists and socialists, and for a time even Fascists and Communists, Jonas finds isolationism to be “devoid of political, economic, or social content.”<sup>9</sup> He insists that it not “be dismissed as simple obstructionism based on ignorance and folly,” though, as “[i]solationism was the considered response to foreign and domestic developments of a large, responsible, and respectable segment of the American people.”<sup>10</sup> Jonas’s taxonomy of 1930s isolationists entails five categories: foreign-oriented isolationists, belligerent isolationists, timid isolationists, radical isolationists, and conservative isolationists.<sup>11</sup> Foreign-oriented isolationists, while exerting little direct influence by the time of the Great Debate, were nevertheless of indirect significance, and will therefore be introduced briefly below. The other contributors to the isolationist argument, some of whose voices will be heard in this essay, occupied the other four categories.

The distinction between “belligerent” and “timid” isolationism referred to the question of U.S. willingness to sacrifice its freedom to trade with belligerent nations – a traditional right of neutrality under earlier conceptions of international law and freedom of the seas – in order to ensure non-involvement in future wars. The most active advocates of the “belligerent” position argued that trade is in the national interest and should continue under policies of strict neutrality. They included the older, progressive Republican Senators Hiram Johnson of California and William Borah of Idaho, as well as the younger, conservative, generally anti-

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 55-64.

<sup>9</sup> Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 273-74.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

New Deal Representative Hamilton Fish of New York. The most visible exponents of the “timid” view that avoidance of involvement in foreign conflict and maintenance of unilateral freedom of action necessitated a retreat from international trade were the progressive Republican North Dakota Senator Gerald Nye, whose committee had investigated the munitions industry, and conservative Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan.<sup>12</sup>

An even more fundamental political cleavage point that was bridged by the isolationist movement of the 1930s was that between left and right. Liberals and radicals feared that involvement in war would derail the social and economic programs of the New Deal and feed unrestricted capitalism. Norman Thomas of the Socialist Party espoused such views, and a number of progressive academicians, most notably Charles Beard, as well as left-wing journalists such as Oswald Villard, voiced grave concerns about the consequences of U.S. involvement in another European war. Progressive Senators Robert La Follette of Wisconsin and Burton Wheeler of Montana, the latter a labor-oriented Democrat, were also prominent isolationists. On the other side of the political spectrum, trepidation over the prospect that involvement in war would endanger the American free-market system and lead to socialism animated the isolationism of such conservative stalwarts as former President Herbert Hoover and Ohio Senator Robert Taft.<sup>13</sup> Eventually, though, the public face and voice of isolationism became those of aviator Charles Lindbergh. His 1927 flight from New York to Paris in the *Spirit of St. Louis* had made him one of the most celebrated figures of the era. His conservatism – conflated, as shown below, with more extreme right-wing forms of opposition to U.S. intervention – became the most recognizable instantiation of isolationism during the Great Debate.

Clearly outside the mainstream of American political ideology were three individuals and their followers, characterized by Jonas as “foreign-oriented isolationists” and, more evocatively, by Geoffrey Smith as “waste products of the Great Depression.”<sup>14</sup> The German-American Bund, under *Bundesleiter* Fritz Kuhn after 1935, was likely the best-known right-wing organization in the U.S. during the 1930s.<sup>15</sup> Its allegiances were explicitly foreign and the motivation behind its opposition to U.S. aid to the Allies unambiguous. Nevertheless, attempts were made to reconcile the nationalities of its hyphenated name, such as occurred at a rally in New Jersey to honor George Washington on his birthday in 1938. According to the local bund president, “Hitler has done as much for the new Germany as Washington did for the United States...the character and achievements of both men are something to be admired.”<sup>16</sup> The home-grown version of European-style fascist organizations was William Dudley Pelley’s American Silver Shirts. A fanatical anti-Semite and nativist, Pelley “considered his organization to parallel the Nazi SS.” Its peak membership of approximately 15,000 was reached in 1934.<sup>17</sup> Of greatest cultural significance among the three extremists was Father Charles Coughlin. The radio priest – who had earlier been a supporter of the New Deal and was at various times considered a populist, a democrat, a radical, a conservative, a

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 32-69

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 70-99.

<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey S. Smith, *To Save a Nation: American Countersubversives, the New Deal, and the Coming of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Leo Ribuffo, “Fascists, Nazis and American Minds: Perceptions and Preconceptions,” *American Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (October 1, 1974): 423.

<sup>16</sup> “Bund Plans 2 Rallies,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1938.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *To Save a Nation*, 53-65.

Nazi, and a Communist – had become vociferously anti-Semitic by 1938.<sup>18</sup> Following the outbreak of war in Europe, Coughlin’s Anglophobia and admiration for the German and Italian governments were reflected in his advocacy of American neutrality, though his time as a serious cultural force had by then passed.<sup>19</sup> While neither the Bundists nor the Silver Shirts nor Father Coughlin exerted significant direct influence in the Great Debate, they would nevertheless acquire or maintain relevance through association of mainstream noninterventionists with their extremism.

The inclinations of most Americans to consider the economic crisis of the 1930s as taking precedence over foreign events was not at odds with those of FDR or his administration until late in the decade. Hitler and Roosevelt both came to power in 1933 and although FDR found the anti-democratic nature of the Nazi regime disquieting, he only gradually became concerned that it posed a threat to its neighbors and, potentially, the rest of the world. Military conscription was enacted in Germany in 1935; the following year Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland and, in 1936 and 1937, concluded alliances with Japan and Italy. FDR nevertheless maintained some doubts about the commitment of the German people to the Nazi program and the ability of the German economy to sustain its accelerating rearmament. He was also mindful of public opinion. Among the earliest opinion polls was a 1936 survey in which 95% of respondents indicated opposition to U.S. involvement in foreign conflict. However, by 1937 FDR was clearly troubled by the prospect of “bandit nations” conspiring to carve up the globe, and any illusions he held regarding the potential of appeasing Germany’s aggressive aims were dispelled in the aftermath of the Munich crisis of 1938.<sup>20</sup>

Roosevelt took the occasion in October 1937 of a bridge dedication in Chicago, the city that would become the hub of the noninterventionist movement, to begin his efforts at convincing the American public of the need for attention to the dangers building outside its borders. Without naming any specific country, region, event, or leader, he announced that “[t]he political situation in the world...is such to cause grave concern and anxiety to all the peoples and nations who wish to live in peace and amity with their neighbors.” He warned that “[t]he present reign of terror and international lawlessness” may come to endanger the Western Hemisphere. FDR proclaimed “the sanctity of international treaties and the maintenance of international morality” to be “a matter of vital interest and concern to the people of the United States.” He assured listeners of his “determination to pursue a policy of peace” and “to adopt every practicable measure to avoid involvement in war.” Famously analogizing “the epidemic of world lawlessness” to disease outbreaks that necessitate quarantine of patients for the welfare of the community, he cautioned that “we cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder in which confidence and security have broken down.”<sup>21</sup> In one of the opening salvos of what would become the Great Debate, the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, led by isolationist editor and publisher Colonel Robert McCormick, responded the following day to what it deemed FDR’s “new foreign policy for the United States.” Under the headline, “He, too, would keep us out of war,” the paper tied Roosevelt’s international concerns, presumably at that point regarding Japanese aggression in China and German and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1982), 265-67.

<sup>20</sup> Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 3-23.

<sup>21</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address at Chicago, October 5, 1937, in *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, vol. 6, 1937 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 406-11.

Italian participation in the Spanish Civil War, to those of Woodrow Wilson two decades previously. Noting the anti-interventionist mood of the nation and Congress, the editorial grimly predicted that “after months of propaganda the task [of declaring war] may be simplified. It was so in 1917; it may be so again in 1938.”<sup>22</sup>

Following the *Anschluss* with Austria in March and the Munich crisis over Czechoslovakia in September 1938, FDR recognized not only the nature and strength of Nazi Germany, but also the potential future importance of mitigating public opinion regarding American stakes in European affairs. The Neutrality Acts reflected such public and Congressional opinion, and well before the war in Europe began many of the prominent isolationists introduced above had begun warning the American people of the dangers of engagement in the developing conflicts overseas. Senator Robert Taft appeared on “The American Forum of the Air” panel discussion radio program in January 1939, responding to FDR’s request earlier that month for an increase in defense appropriations. Although he did not quarrel with the need for spending on armaments, he objected to what he saw as the president “favor[ing] a foreign policy very different from mere defense of the United States.” He referred to FDR’s Quarantine Speech of 1937 and subsequent indications of concern about “international lawlessness” as indicative of the president’s desire for the power to “favor one nation or another” in Europe and Asia. He invoked “traditional policy...from the days of George Washington” and American rejection of participation in the League of Nations in opposing policies that “almost inevitably lead to war.” The conservative senator from Ohio expressed consternation about “lin[ing] up with England and France, and probably Communist Russia,” and suggested that the “lesson” of 1917 be heeded and that the U.S. not fight “[a] war to preserve democracy.” Warning that such a war “would almost certainly destroy democracy in the United States” and “create a socialist dictatorship,” he also asserted that American impregnability rendered overseas involvement unnecessary, therefore counseling maintenance of strict neutrality.<sup>23</sup>

Over the subsequent seven months, several of the other senators strongly identified with the isolationist position outlined their arguments and fears before American radio audiences. William Borah asked listeners to imagine “[w]hat would happen in this country if we should permit ourselves to be drawn into a European war?” He proceeded to answer his rhetorical question in ways that were already becoming familiar, pointing to the dangers of a still-ailing economy and society going to war and the losses of liberty that would accompany it. Referring to the previous war, Borah asked if that experience “has...no lesson to teach,” revealing his conviction of the incurability of Europe as “the breeding ground of many wars.” Asserting that the tensions in Europe reflected a clash of empires rather than ideologies in which Americans might have a moral stake, he concluded that he “would send no money to European war chests, no munitions to any nation engaged in war, and, above all, no American boy to be sacrificed to the machinations of European imperialism.”<sup>24</sup> After labeling Axis governments “barbaric, indecent, cruel and even inhuman,” Burton Wheeler reminded his “American Forum of the Air” audience of British behavior in India and “our own treatment of the American Indians.” He reviewed the failures of the First World War, decried the

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<sup>22</sup> “He, Too, Would Keep Us Out of War,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 6, 1937.

<sup>23</sup> Robert A. Taft, “Let Us Stay Out of War,” January 22, 1939, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* V (1938-39): 254-56.

<sup>24</sup> William E. Borah, “What Our Position Should Be,” March 25, 1939, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* V (1938-39): 397-99.

“tremendous propaganda campaign in behalf of the so-called democracies,” located economic interests as the source of current European volatility, and reiterated the devil theory of war by recommending “taking the profit out of war,” all before predicting the destruction of democracy if American entry into another war were not prevented.<sup>25</sup> Just eight days before the German invasion of Poland, in the context of unfulfilled administration desires to amend the Neutrality Act of 1937, Gerald Nye accused FDR of pursuing a reckless and inept foreign policy, suggesting its role as a diversion from domestic woes. He exhorted his audience not to forget the “lessons of 1914, 1915, and 1916,” when British leaders and American bankers conspired to undermine U.S. neutrality. In support of his unambiguous isolationism, Nye drew a bright line between European and U.S. interests, denying any relevance for ideological or moral distinctions among political systems on a continent “where hates of thousands of years look down and rejoice at the re-enacting of a carnage which has been going on without determination for generations beyond count.”<sup>26</sup> Along with Wheeler and others, he would become a staple of AFC rallies.

The re-enactment of carnage represented by the Nazi *blitzkrieg* of Poland became formalized as a European war when, two days after the September 1 invasion, Great Britain and France honored their commitments and went to war with Germany. That same evening President Roosevelt addressed a national radio audience in his first Fireside Chat devoted to foreign policy. Continuing his efforts at eroding isolationist sentiment which began with his Quarantine Speech but were only intermittently reiterated in the interim, FDR sought to dispel the notion that “all the United States has to do is to ignore [the conflict] and go about its own business.” Acknowledging that “we may desire detachment,” he asserted that “we are forced to realize that [the war] does affect the American future.” He then immediately endeavored to reassure his audience that “every effort of [their] government” would be directed toward staying out of the war and that American neutrality would be maintained, but added that he “cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought.”<sup>27</sup> Americans surveyed that month on the question “Which side do you think will win the war?” expressed overwhelming confidence (82%) in Allied victory, for which a similar proportion (83%) in a different poll expressed preference. On the other hand, during the following month 71% of respondents indicated opposition to a declaration of war on Germany, even if Allied defeat appeared to be in the offing.<sup>28</sup> Such public opinion appeared consistent with FDR’s policy of all aid to the Allies short of war, and by early November he had succeeded in having the arms embargo lifted, thus allowing “cash-and-carry” munitions exports, to the benefit of the Allied side.

Responses from the isolationists included Borah’s radio address on September 14 in which he described such aid to Britain and France as “unquestionably constitut[ing] intervention,” claiming that “these wars are not our wars.”<sup>29</sup> That month Lindbergh also appealed via radio on behalf of “those people in the United States of America who feel that the destiny of this country does not call for our involvement in European wars.” Revealing his

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<sup>25</sup> Burton K. Wheeler, “The Futility of War,” April 9, 1939, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* V (1938-39): 406-7.

<sup>26</sup> Gerald P. Nye, “Save American Neutrality,” August 24, 1939, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* V (1938-39): 723-26.

<sup>27</sup> Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy, eds., *FDR’s Fireside Chats*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 139-51.

<sup>28</sup> Gallup Poll, September, 1939; Roper/Fortune Survey, September, 1939; Gallup Poll, October, 1939. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>29</sup> William E. Borah, “Retain the Arms Embargo,” September 14, 1939, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* V (1938-39): 751-52.

own racially tinged assumptions and anxieties, he asserted, “These wars in Europe are not wars in which our civilization is defending itself against some Asiatic intruder. There is no Genghis Khan or Xerxes marching against our Western nations. This is not a question of banding together to defend the white race against foreign invasion.” Nazi Germany’s membership in “our own family of nations,” Lindbergh implied, rendered its aggression less worrisome. He foresaw the likelihood of losing “a million [American] men” and a grim future for the U.S. and Western civilization itself in the event of involvement in the war. And in warning of a coming deluge of propaganda he urged listeners to “ask who owns and who influences the newspaper, the news picture and the radio station.”<sup>30</sup> His innuendo would eventually be made more explicit. In a Gallup survey that month, respondents were roughly evenly divided between Lindbergh’s view that the war was “just another struggle between European nations” and the notion that it represented “a struggle of democracy against the spread of dictatorship.”<sup>31</sup>

That September also saw Colonel McCormick’s *Tribune* decry the U.S. “throwing its weight on the side it... recognizes as the just and moral side, chang[ing] its laws with a war in progress to discriminate against one belligerent or possible set of belligerents in favor of others.” Labeling the European war an “imperial competition,” the editorial advised readers to “adhere to the truth that this is not our war” so as to maintain neutrality and, ultimately, “the civilization of free government and free people.” During the following month the *Tribune* chided FDR’s “peculiar ideas of neutrality,” averring that “[t]he vast majority of our citizens want to remain neutral” but that “the various classes of war conspirators are determined and resourceful,” concluding, “We are not safe.”<sup>32</sup>

Although the European powers were formally at war, the early months of 1940 saw a relative lull in the Great Debate, reflecting the “phony war” in Europe. The successful German offensive that spring in Scandinavia and subsequently the Low Countries, however, soon revived and energized the national conversation. In this context, American public opinion was growing significantly more pessimistic about the prospects of Allied victory. Moreover, 59% of respondents in May 1940 answered affirmatively the question “Do you think the United States will be in any danger from Germany if Germany wins,” but nevertheless endorsed in even greater proportion the proposition that the U.S. should “stay out” of the war.<sup>33</sup> Lindbergh cautioned a radio audience that month, shortly before the evacuation of Allied forces at Dunkirk, of the dangers of American interference “with the internal affairs of Europe,” particularly regarding the “powerful elements in America who desire us to take part.” With French resistance nearing collapse, FDR delivered his second foreign policy Fireside Chat on the crisis and American military readiness. He took direct aim at isolationists, suggesting that those “who in the past closed their eyes to events abroad” had as a result of the preceding few weeks lost their “illusions” of security. He then sought to reassure Americans that the nation was stronger militarily and better prepared for defense than was being portrayed in some quarters and that their government was committed to continuing the build-up, which would not jeopardize the administration’s domestic agenda. The president alluded to “the fifth column that betrays a nation,” and while he did specify “foreign agents” as the targets of his warning,

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<sup>30</sup> Charles A. Lindbergh, “Appeal for Isolation,” September 15, 1939, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* V (1938-39): 751-52.

<sup>31</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), September, 1939. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>32</sup> “American Peace and Neutrality,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 13, 1939; “The Struggle to be Neutral,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 20, 1939.

<sup>33</sup> People's Research Survey, May, 1940. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

he later seemed to conflate them with opponents of his developing policies as “dividing forces” whom he characterized as “undiluted poison” to the nation.<sup>34</sup>

In mid-June, on the day after German troops marched down the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Lindbergh responded to FDR in a radio address. Affirming his support of military preparedness, he asked listeners not to “confuse the question of national defense with the question of entering a European war.” He decried the recklessness of “stepping closer and closer to war,” which he saw as pitting “one half of the white race against the other half.” Characterizing Germany as “the strongest military nation the world has ever known,” he predicted that U.S. involvement in the war would not only necessitate “a dictatorial [American] government”; it would also result in a multi-generational apocalyptic struggle that U.S. geographic impregnability made entirely unnecessary. Reiterating his view that race rather than ideology supplied the foundation on which civilizations rest, Lindbergh asked, “Shall we continue this suicidal conflict between Western nations and white races, or shall we learn from history... that a civilization cannot be preserved by conflict among its own peoples, regardless of how different their ideologies may be?”<sup>35</sup> French capitulation resulted in a nadir of Americans’ confidence that the Allies (now Britain alone) would prevail, with nearly three-quarters supporting doing “everything possible to help England except go to war.”<sup>36</sup> Preparations for that still-unpopular latter possibility led Congress that summer to consider enacting the first peacetime military conscription in history. Its passage would, according to Wheeler, “slit the throat of the last Democracy still living,” whose epitaph would be, “Here lies the foremost victim of the war of nerves.”<sup>37</sup>

The possibility or even likelihood of Axis victory in the European war, while not desired by the mainstream of the isolationist movement, was also not viewed by them with great alarm. A Gallup Poll in August 1940 found that American opinion was near-evenly divided regarding Lindbergh’s advice that the U.S. should pursue “friendly and diplomatic relations” with a victorious Germany.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the administration, with the support of public opinion, was committed to aiding Britain in staving off that outcome, and in September concluded a deal whereby the Royal Navy received 50 aging destroyers in exchange for U.S. rights to British bases in the Western Hemisphere. During that same month, “the most powerful mass pressure group engaged in the struggle against the foreign policy of the Roosevelt administration,” as its foremost historian characterized it, was organized.<sup>39</sup> The America First Committee was conceived by a group at Yale and led by law student R. Douglas Stuart Jr. General Robert E. Wood, then chairman of the board of Sears, Roebuck and Company, agreed to serve as its national chairman. Headquartered in Chicago, the AFC attracted a number of prominent official and unofficial policy advisors, many of whose isolationist views have been introduced above. The organization’s first statement of principles

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<sup>34</sup> Buhite and Levy, *FDR’s Fireside Chats*, 152-62.

<sup>35</sup> Charles A. Lindbergh, “Our Drift Toward War,” June 15, 1940, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* VI (1939-40): 549-51.

<sup>36</sup> Gallup Poll, June, 1940; Office of Public Opinion Research War Survey, July, 1940. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>37</sup> Burton K. Wheeler, “Marching Down the Road to War,” August 15, 1940, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* VI (1939-40): 689-92.

<sup>38</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), August, 1940. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>39</sup> Wayne S. Cole, *America First* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), vii.

targeted administration policy, declaring, “‘Aid short of war’ weakens national defense at home and threatens to involve America in war abroad.”<sup>40</sup>

The day after its formation was publically announced, General Hugh Johnson, former New Dealer and now ardent noninterventionist, delivered the AFC’s inaugural address on the radio. Conceding that “our sympathies are all with England,” he attempted to dispel the idea that Americans had a “compelling cause” to risk war in her defense. Countering concerns that the Western Hemisphere would be imperiled were Britain to fall, he charged that the only serious threats to the Monroe Doctrine had originated in the United Kingdom. Johnson saw the need for national self-reliance as the lesson of the chaos and unfulfilled international promises in Europe, warning that Americans risked both their defensive capabilities and their democracy by aiding Britain. Counseling against “frittering our military and naval strength away all over the globe,” he instead advised “concentrating it for the defense of this continent” and pleaded to “defend us not by first defending the British Empire upon which the sun never sets, defend America by defending America first, last and all the time.”<sup>41</sup> Consistent with his prominence in the isolationist movement and in the wider culture, it was Lindbergh who became the leading spokesman for the AFC. In his October radio address he chided interventionists for contriving fear “that we may be invaded from the ice-bound mountains of Greenland; and by fleets of non-existent transatlantic bombers” and for harangues on democracy while endangering it in America. Expressing doubt about the American-ness of U.S. leadership, Lindbergh closed by reprising Johnson and other isolationists of the day: “The doctrine that we must enter the wars of Europe, in order to defend America, will be fatal to our nation if we follow it.”<sup>42</sup>

With Britain surviving the *Luftwaffe* onslaught and the likelihood of German invasion declining, American public opinion by later in the fall was once again optimistic about British prospects of victory.<sup>43</sup> In their attempts to persuade Americans that sympathy with – and now renewed optimism about – the British cause should not lead the U.S. into participation in the war, the AFC began running full-page advertisements in major newspapers. Under the words, printed in large, bold font, “Peace or War? Which Will You Choose...,” readers were admonished against “foolish panic or hysterical sentimentalism.” The considerable text sought to “stop the rush toward war” and counteract the interventionist “flood of propaganda” with “the facts” that “[d]read of invasion is ridiculous,” “we cannot destroy them [Fascism, Nazism, Communism] simply by making war on them,” “[w]ar instantly imposes its own dictatorship,” and “our clear duty [is] to defend these United States” by making America impregnable. In an apparent attempt to counter its opponents’ characterizations, the AFC described itself in the advertisement as “a non-partisan organization of *loyal and patriotic citizens*.”<sup>44</sup> In November, three weeks after the ad’s appearance, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, one of the administration’s most interventionist members, included Lindbergh with Father Coughlin and others among those he identified as leaders of “native Fascist groups,” suggesting that “most,

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<sup>40</sup> Wayne S. Cole, “The America First Committee,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 44, no. 4 (December 1, 1951): 305–22.

<sup>41</sup> Hugh Johnson, “We Must Rely on our Own Strength,” September 5, 1940, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* VI (1939-40): 763-65.

<sup>42</sup> Charles A. Lindbergh, “Our Frontiers Do Not Lie in Europe,” October 13, 1940, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* VII (1940-41): 42-43.

<sup>43</sup> Roper/Fortune Survey, October, 1940. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>44</sup> Display Ad 11, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 31, 1940; Display Ad 74, *New York Times*, November 1, 1940 (emphasis added).



perhaps even all, are financed...from abroad” and are “enemies of America and believers in totalitarianism.”<sup>45</sup> Suspicion, innuendo, and acrimony between the sides of the Great Debate would only grow in the year to come.

The AFC’s first campaign as an organization was directed against the Lend-Lease program. In a December press conference Roosevelt had introduced the proposition that he be granted the power to supply war materiel to those belligerent countries whose efforts he deemed essential to the security of the U.S. without expectation of immediate payment. He analogized such a policy with the simultaneously generous and self-interested act of loaning a garden hose to a neighbor whose house had caught fire.<sup>46</sup> Later that month he delivered his first Fireside Chat since reelection to an unprecedented third term as president. Reminding the American people that they had faced the Great Depression “with courage and realism,” FDR encouraged them to confront the ongoing European and Asian crises, and what he saw and described as the threats to the Americas that they posed, with those same attitudes. Challenging one of the isolationists’ primary tenets, he tied the safety of the Western Hemisphere to British survival, dismissing the notion that the expanses of the oceans provided sufficient protection from an Axis side whose victory would, in his view, result in Americans “living at the point of a gun.” Continuing his efforts to balance reassurance that “[t]here is no intention by any member of your government to send...armies to Europe” with his call for continued escalation of armaments production for British and American defense (which he saw as very closely correlated), FDR concluded, “We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself.”<sup>47</sup> By February 1941 the Lend-Lease bill, described in an AFC newspaper advertisement the previous month as the “War Dictatorship Bill,”<sup>48</sup> was viewed with approval by just over half of Americans surveyed on the topic.<sup>49</sup> The following month it became law, having been introduced in the House of Representatives symbolically numbered as H.R. 1776.

The first half of 1941 saw the administration move further in the direction of preparation for possible intervention in Europe, including establishment of a military presence in Greenland and Iceland. A clear majority of the American public continued to endorse the policy of doing “everything possible to help England except go to war,”<sup>50</sup> while the AFC argued that such a policy was leading the U.S. into inevitable involvement in the war and weakening its own defensive capabilities. The all-aid-short-of-war position drew support from, among other quarters, the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies (CDAAA), led by Kansas Republican newspaper editor William Allen White. By late 1940 that organization was countering the efforts of the AFC, running full-page newspaper pleas to “Speed up, America” in its aid to the Allies in the form of “morale,” industrial production, and “sacrifice,” each of which must be “the all-absorbing concern of the American people” on “a twenty-four hour basis.”<sup>51</sup> Magazine publisher Henry Luce, in a February 17 editorial in *Life*, argued for internationalism from a more grandiose perspective. Labeling “[a]id to Britain short

<sup>45</sup> “Ickes Brands Col. Lindbergh a 'Fascist',” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1940.

<sup>46</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Presidential Press Conference Number 702 (December 17, 1940), in *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, vol. 15–16, 1940 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972).

<sup>47</sup> Buhite and Levy, *FDR’s Fireside Chats*, 163-73.

<sup>48</sup> Display Ad 12, *New York Times*, January 28, 1941

<sup>49</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), February, 1941. Retrieved March 22, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>50</sup> Office of Public Opinion Research War Survey, March, 1941; Gallup Poll (AIPO), April, 1941. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>51</sup> Display Ad 96, *New York Times*, December 18, 1940.

of war” as “typical of [America’s] halfway hopes and halfway measures,” Luce asked readers not only to reconcile themselves to what he saw as the fact that “America is in the war” to “defend democratic principles throughout the world,” but to embrace internationalism as an opportunity – indeed, a duty – to assume global leadership and create “the first great American Century,” to the benefit of the U.S. and the rest of the world.<sup>52</sup>

For its part, the AFC released a statement of principles in March 1941. Reflecting the views that isolationists, several of whom were now speaking and broadcasting under AFC auspices, had been espousing during the previous months or even years, they included the claims that:

1. Our first duty is to keep America out of foreign wars. Our entry would only destroy democracy, not save it.
2. Not by acts of war abroad but by preserving and extending democracy at home can we aid democracy and freedom in other lands.
3. In 1917 we sent our American ships into the war zone and this led us to war. In 1941 we must keep our naval convoys and merchant vessels on this side of the Atlantic.
4. We must build a defense, for our own shores, so strong that no foreign power or combination of powers can invade our country, by sea, air or land.

The AFC message was delivered via radio addresses and newspaper advertisements. In addition, the organization held thousands of meetings, ranging from small, informal ones in members’ homes to enormous rallies such as the one at Madison Square Garden in May at which Lindbergh and Wheeler spoke.<sup>53</sup> Lindbergh’s points had already become familiar to a majority of Americans: “the future of America” should not “be tied to these eternal wars in Europe”; “Americans should have no reason to fear” Axis power or success on other continents; “if we go to war to preserve democracy abroad, we are likely to end by losing it at home”; and war would necessitate fighting “the strongest military powers in the world.”<sup>54</sup>

That familiarity derived in part from the efforts of the AFC speakers’ bureau, which arranged 126 public addresses across thirty-two states. The speakers’ bureau supplied the AFC point of view in succinct written answers to questions such as “For what aims is the war being fought?,” “If our national interest doesn’t require us to go to war, shouldn’t we go anyway to keep democracy alive in the world?,” “Suppose we don’t help England and Germany beats her?,” and “Is it true the British fleet is America’s first line of defense, the one force that separates us from totalitarianism?” The key themes were all packaged in readily usable form. According to the AFC, the war in Europe was a struggle among empires rather than a battle between good and evil political systems; the best way to maintain American freedoms was to stay out, as war would neither eradicate other ideologies nor protect democracy; support of Britain was jeopardizing national defense that could ensure the impregnability of the Americas; and, moreover, an Axis victory need not be considered a military, political, or economic disaster for the U.S.<sup>55</sup>

Still, the challenges faced by the isolationist position continued to mount. They originated from FDR and his administration, from other interventionist forces including those

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<sup>52</sup> Henry R. Luce, “The American Century,” *Life*, February 17, 1941, reprinted in *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 159-71.

<sup>53</sup> Cole, “The America First Committee,” 308-13.

<sup>54</sup> Gallup Poll, April, 1941. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank; Charles A. Lindbergh, “Election Promises Should Be Kept,” May 23, 1941, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* VII (1940-41): 482-83.

<sup>55</sup> Doenecke, *In Danger Undaunted*, 16-158.

in the wider culture, and from within the isolationist movement itself. On the heels of German military successes in the Balkans and North Africa in the spring of 1941, the president delivered a Fireside Chat in May, proclaiming an unlimited national emergency in the presence of representatives of the other countries of the Americas. He was explicit in his conviction that “unless the advance of Hitlerism is forcibly checked now, the Western Hemisphere will be within range of the Nazi weapons of destruction.” He credited the “epic resistance of Britain” with thwarting “Hitler’s plan of world domination” to that point, and asserted the necessity of maintaining freedom of the seas, foreshadowing his subsequent decision that the Navy would provide escort protection to Lend-Lease merchant convoys in the Atlantic. In an extended swipe at isolationists, the president described “a small group of sincere, patriotic men and women whose real passion for peace has shut their eyes to the ugly realities of international banditry and the need to resist it at all costs.” Giving them the benefit of the doubt, he mused that they must be “embarrassed by the sinister support they are receiving from the enemies of democracy in our midst.” Shifting from patronization to demonization, FDR characterized as “no mere coincidence” that isolationists’ arguments aligned with those emanating “from the Axis bureaus of propaganda.”<sup>56</sup> The anti-totalitarian organization Friends of Democracy was even more explicit in its pamphlet describing the AFC as “a transmission belt by means of which the apostles of Nazism are spreading their antidemocratic ideas into millions of American homes.”<sup>57</sup>

The AFC nevertheless remained highly active in its attempts to turn public opinion against administration policies. When on June 22, 1941 Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, thereby breaking the pact that had resulted in the 1939 division of Poland between its two neighbors, the AFC ran an extensive newspaper advertisement headlined, “No Red Allies for the U.S.” It framed the European conflict now as “a war between Fascism and Communism,” asking readers, “Which do we choose?” and explaining, “If Hitler wins, Russia will go Fascist. If Russia wins, Germany will go Communist. Triumphant Communism will dominate Europe. We are asked to supply the weapons, the planes, the men to accomplish that.” The ad closed with an appeal “to Americans to halt this madness.”<sup>58</sup> Legislation to extend Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union won passage, though entry of the USSR into the war may have augmented AFC strength during the summer of 1941. The U.S. preemptive occupation of Iceland, the Atlantic Charter formulated in a secret August meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill on goals for the post-war world, and renewal and extension of the Selective Service Act that same month were all defeats for the AFC and for the isolationist cause more generally.<sup>59</sup>

Although this essay has focused on explicit statements made and arguments advanced by the principals, particularly the isolationist ones, in the Great Debate, it is likely that the mass media were at least as influential in shaping public opinion. And with respect to motion pictures and radio, that influence was not favorable to the isolationist cause. Historian Richard Steele argues that, in seeking support for aid to the Allies while preparing Americans for direct involvement in war if necessary, FDR’s goals included generating awareness of international (especially Nazi) threats, thus discrediting isolationism, and instilling confidence in the government’s ability to respond effectively to those perils. Movie producers were obliging of the administration’s desires, a fact that has been attributed, at least in part, to their motivation

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<sup>56</sup> Buhite and Levy, *FDR’s Fireside Chats*, 174-87.

<sup>57</sup> Cole, *America First*, 109-10.

<sup>58</sup> Display Ad 9, *New York Times*, June 26, 1941

<sup>59</sup> Doenecke, *In Danger Undaunted*, 30-35.

for settlement of the recent Justice Department antitrust action against the major studios, and the interventionist sentiments (and Jewish heritage) of studio executives. Not only were feature films such as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), *The Great Dictator* (1940), and *A Yank in the R.A.F.* (1941) helpful in generating anti-German and pro-British feeling; nearly all movies during 1940-41 were accompanied by ten-minute newsreels. Their focus on international crises tended to undercut some of the isolationists' premises and their producers consistently included administration messages such as FDR's Fireside Chats, while rejecting Senator Wheeler's request for equal time. Isolationists in the Senate initiated an investigation of the interventionist slant of Hollywood productions but after Lindbergh's contention of bias on the part of Jewish and British members of the industry, the matter was dropped.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to its role in broadcasting the addresses described above (among many others), radio's news, public service, and entertainment programs were of tremendous importance at a time when 90% of Americans could be reached in their homes via that medium.<sup>61</sup> According to Steele, radio dramas were similar to motion pictures in the preponderance of their interventionist messages. Public service programs clearly promoted the administration's agenda, and the Council for Democracy's "Speaking of Liberty" series came, according to its producers, "just short of 'warmongering.'" Moreover, the most popular news commentators on radio – H.V. Kaltenborn, Elmer Davis, Raymond Gram Swing, and Edward R. Murrow – are all characterized by Steele as having been "outspoken and persistent advocates of some form of American intervention."<sup>62</sup> A survey conducted by the AFC in December 1940 of radio broadcasts in the New York area demonstrated the predominance of interventionist-leaning programs. The author of the AFC memorandum on the topic of radio programming strongly urged "that non-interventionist groups take the offensive in attempting to secure [equal] time."<sup>63</sup> By the following fall the *Tribune* labeled as "justified" continuing AFC charges of an interventionist "radio monopoly."<sup>64</sup>

Another of the AFC's handicaps in its efforts to convince the public of the validity of noninterventionist arguments was the association, both actual and contrived by opponents, of its positions with those of extremists. Other than the Communists, who opposed intervention until the German attack on the Soviet Union, those extremist individuals and groups occupied the far right wing and have been discussed. Their shared opposition to U.S. intervention embarrassed the AFC, which declared Communists, Nazis, and fascists ineligible for membership. Nevertheless, the German-American Bund and other such organizations recommended support of the AFC, at least two of whose speakers were later convicted of failure to register as German agents. Charges of anti-Semitism leveled against the AFC had an even stronger basis, as Henry Ford had been a national committee member, many of Father Coughlin's supporters were active in the AFC, and some of its chapters were led by anti-Semites.<sup>65</sup> None of those facts, however, may have been as important to public opinion as Lindbergh's refusal to return the medal presented to him by Goring on behalf of Hitler in 1938, the evident awe in which he held Goring's *Luftwaffe*, and his own words – whether or not they reflected personal anti-Semitism.

<sup>60</sup> Richard W. Steele, "The Great Debate: Roosevelt, the Media, and the Coming of the War, 1940-1941," *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 1 (June 1, 1984): 69-92.

<sup>61</sup> Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 34.

<sup>62</sup> Steele, "The Great Debate," 84-85.

<sup>63</sup> Doenecke, *In Danger Undaunted*, 35, 385-88.

<sup>64</sup> "Radio Monopoly and the War Debate," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 4, 1941.

<sup>65</sup> Cole, "The America First Committee," 318-20.

Although AFC leaders were likely sincere in their stated patriotic motives, FDR and members of his administration portrayed the organization as seditious, conspiratorial “fifth-columnists” of the Bund, Silver Shirt, and Coughlinites variety. Interior Secretary Ickes accused them of equanimity in the face of possible Nazi victory “at the expense of this country’s welfare,” and FDR speech-writer Robert Sherwood decried their apparent willingness to see “America become Hitler’s next victim.”<sup>66</sup> As the Great Debate grew ever more rancorous, the administration sought to sully Lindbergh’s personal reputation by questioning his loyalty. When he labeled Roosevelt’s policies as warmongering, the president replied that “it could not have been better put if it had been written by Goebbels himself,” adding that it was “a pity that this youngster has completely abandoned his belief in our form of government and has accepted Nazi methods because apparently they are efficient.”<sup>67</sup> In May 1941, a couple weeks after the president compared Lindbergh to the “Copperheads” (northern Democrats who harbored sympathies for the Confederate cause and opposed the Civil War),<sup>68</sup> the AFC asked, referring to a poll that month on Lindbergh’s views, in a full-page newspaper advertisement, “Mr. President – Are 24% of the People ‘Copperheads’?” In an effort to cast FDR, rather than Lindbergh, as divisive, the ad concluded, “If what you want is national unity, Mr. President, you will come closer to achieving it if you recognize that the overwhelming majority of your fellow citizens want to stay out of war.”<sup>69</sup>

The AFC’s characterization of American public opinion remained accurate in September, when 87% of those surveyed opposed sending “an army to Europe to fight,” while at the same time a majority (56%) agreed that the U.S. was “already in the war.”<sup>70</sup> Earlier that month, after a German submarine fired on the American destroyer *Greer* off the Icelandic coast, FDR ordered U.S. warships to shoot German and Italian ones on sight. On September 11 he addressed the American people in a Fireside Chat about the incident and its implications. Without indicating that the *Greer* had initiated action against the German submarine by identifying its location to a British warplane, which then unsuccessfully dropped depth charges, the president reported “the blunt fact that the German submarine fired first upon this American destroyer without warning, and with deliberate design to sink her.” He tied this instance of “international lawlessness” to a “Nazi design...to acquire absolute control and domination of these seas for themselves,” thereby posing a grave and growing danger to the Western Hemisphere. Dubbing German subs “the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic,” FDR suggested that “when you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him.” He again warned against internal enemies as well, “not only [Hitler’s] avowed agents but also, also his dupes among us,” who would “be used as soon as he has gained control of the oceans.”<sup>71</sup> The Navy began escorting British convoys and after the destroyer *Kearney* was torpedoed, resulting in the first American casualties of the war, and the *Reuben James* was sunk, Congress repealed crucial elements of the Neutrality Act in November and U.S. merchant ships, now permitted to carry goods directly to the war zone, were armed.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Smith, *To Save a Nation*, 172.

<sup>67</sup> Smith, “Isolationism, the Devil, and the Advent of the Second World War,” 81.

<sup>68</sup> Wayne S. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 130-31.

<sup>69</sup> Display Ad 24, *New York Times*, May 12, 1941.

<sup>70</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), September, 1941. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>71</sup> Buhite and Levy, *FDR’s Fireside Chats*, 188-96.

<sup>72</sup> Doenecke, *In Danger Undaunted*, 41-44.

The AFC mounted vigorous opposition, entailing distribution of thousands of pamphlets and numerous letters and telegrams to members of Congress, to the prosecution of undeclared war in the Atlantic. Its national chairman, General Wood, charged FDR with “asking Congress to issue an engraved drowning license to American seamen.” Recognizing that a majority of Americans continued to oppose direct participation in the war, in October the AFC released an open letter to the president, asking that he request from Congress a declaration of war with Germany.<sup>73</sup> Labeling FDR’s Fireside Chat of September 11 on the Greer incident “violent” and “inflammatory,” the *Tribune* proclaimed that “[t]here was scarcely a point made by Mr. Roosevelt which will stand calm examination.” After accusing the president of seeking to “confuse and frighten the American people into the belief that they are confronted by stupendous dangers,” the editorial concluded, “We believe the American people will see thru [*sic*<sup>74</sup>] the scheme and thwart it.”<sup>75</sup> But it was Lindbergh’s speech that fall that proved momentous for the noninterventionist movement. On the same day FDR addressed the nation, the famous aviator declared in his nationally broadcast address to an AFC rally in Des Moines, Iowa that the U.S. was being pressured into war by three groups: “the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt administration.” Several members of the national committee resigned following the address, and socialist Norman Thomas stopped speaking under AFC auspices. For the most part, however, the organization supported Lindbergh and his statement, which distinguished “their [Jewish] interests” from “ours [American].”<sup>76</sup> A Gallup Poll conducted shortly thereafter found just 15% of respondents agreeing “with Lindbergh’s viewpoint on aid to Britain and foreign policy.”<sup>77</sup>

Although he had not sought it, Lindbergh had also not repudiated the support he received from the extreme right, including overt anti-Semites. In that context, his remarks in Des Moines drew outraged responses from numerous quarters, seriously weakening his standing and that of the movement he represented.<sup>78</sup> The AFC, as noted above, continued its active opposition to the administration’s policies in the Atlantic, now turning some of its attention to U.S. tensions with Japan. Having passed a resolution opposing war with Japan, it was from that side of the globe that the fatal blow to the AFC and the noninterventionist cause came. Four days following the attack on Pearl Harbor, and on the same day Germany and Italy declared war on the U.S., the AFC national committee voted to dissolve the organization, issuing a statement that urged its followers “to give their full support to the war effort of the nation,” while asserting, “Our principles were right. Had they been followed, war could have been avoided.”<sup>79</sup>

War, of course, had by then been raging for well over two years in Europe (and longer in Asia), and in human, material, and political terms, its consequences were gruesome; surpassed, perhaps, only by those that would have issued from the global Axis hegemony that was averted. By the beginning of the period that constitutes the focus of this essay, attractive options may simply have no longer existed. But even if the validity of either side’s argument in the Great Debate can never be concluded with certainty, lessons may nevertheless be drawn

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>74</sup> Such spellings were a *Tribune* trademark under McCormick.

<sup>75</sup> “The Hidden Purpose,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 13, 1941.

<sup>76</sup> Cole, “The America First Committee,” 320; Doenecke, *In Danger Undaunted*, 37-40; Smith, *To Save a Nation*, 179.

<sup>77</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), September, 1941. Retrieved March 5, 2013 from the iPOLL Databank.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, *To Save a Nation*, 178-81.

<sup>79</sup> Doenecke, *In Danger Undaunted*, 46-48, 469.

from the manner in which that national discourse was conducted. War is the most momentous and consequential undertaking in which a nation-state may engage. In a democratic society it is vital that the citizenry in whose name destruction and death are pursued as a collective endeavor grasp as fully as possible the causes and implications of, as well as potential alternatives to, such action. It was, therefore, entirely proper and laudable that a wide swath of the American people – elected officials, prominent and ordinary private citizens – engaged in efforts to educate and persuade one another in order to shape public opinion and policy. That discussion, however, was inherently asymmetric. And although the world on which isolationist premises were founded may have ceased to exist by the late 1930s, it was what Geoffrey Smith labeled FDR’s “conspiracy theory of dissent” whose legacy has likely been more pernicious.<sup>80</sup>

The Roosevelt administration and its supporters correctly (albeit belatedly) identified the conflicts in Europe and Asia as relevant to American interests and policies. Their conviction of the need to employ all means available to gain the latitude they believed necessary to address the ever-widening crisis is understandable, even in retrospect. But the impulse to equate dissent with subversion – certainly by no means original to the Roosevelt administration – is particularly worrisome, and increasingly so as American power, and thus the consequences of American policies, has only expanded. If the advisability of earlier U.S. involvement in World War II remains debatable, judgments about its interventions in Vietnam and, more recently, Iraq do not. If Luce’s “great American Century” arguably applies to the twentieth, its prospects for the twenty-first appear decidedly less robust. The vitality of dissenting movements is crucial to ensuring that collective action reflects collective will and that collective will reflects collective deliberation. The isolationist movement, and the America First Committee and its leading spokesman in particular, were deeply flawed in many critical respects. But the enduring lesson of the Great Debate to which they contributed must be that debate itself reflects the health of an open society and enhances the likelihood that its actions will merit the support of its members.

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<sup>80</sup> Smith, “Isolationism, the Devil, and the Advent of the Second World War.”

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## JEBEDIAH BURCHARD AND THE AMBIGUITY OF THE 1830S

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ROBERT BENNER

In the midst of the Second Great Awakening in 1835, a fiery preacher named Jedediah Burchard took a tour of Vermont and parts of western New Hampshire to reignite Northern New England evangelicalism.<sup>1</sup> According to most accounts of his trip, Burchard came as a hero and left as a crook, deemed a heretic by most anyone who had the misfortune of making his acquaintance. These accounts labeled him a liar and a thief, and contended that as soon as he left, all the men and women he had claimed to convert immediately returned to their former churches, and his efforts ultimately ended in failure.<sup>2</sup>

However, Burchard's efforts were much more successfully than these accounts give him credit for – both at the religious and political levels. Whether they were for or against his revivalist principles, Burchard's time in Vermont led to an increase in total church participation throughout the state. For those he did convert, although many did return to their former churches after his departure, enough of them held on to their revivalist principles to take part in the rebuilding of new evangelist congregations and churches, while non-evangelical denominations for the most part did not see this level of growth. In addition, by couching his sermons in language calling for limited political power and increased equality among men, Burchard proposes a new type of evangelical religion masked as a debate over many social and political issues in Jacksonian America.

Not much is known about Burchard's early life.<sup>3</sup> He was born in Connecticut in sometime before 1792, most likely to a family of modest means. Early in his childhood he and his family moved to central New York State, a region booming with religious fervor. Little is known about his family's religious orientation, but young Burchard identified as an "abominable a rebel against the law of God...as ever trod the earth, rushing headlong into perdition" while growing up.<sup>4</sup> Reports differ on what type of education he had, or what he aspired to do in adulthood, but almost every secondary source on him notes that after a failed business venture in Albany, Burchard began studying religion under George W. Gale.<sup>5</sup> By 1824, was ordained as an evangelical and started his preaching career..

Evangelicalism's popularity was rapidly expanding as Burchard got his start, and was the religious movement behind the Second Great Awakening. The Second Great Awakening was a movement that lasted roughly from 1790 to 1840 throughout the United States, and

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<sup>1</sup> Though he went to both states, this paper will focus solely on his time in Vermont.

<sup>2</sup> The two extant accounts of Burchard's trip I could find are, Russell Streeter's, *Mirror of Calvinistic Fanatical Revivals: or Jedediah Burchard During a Protracted Meeting of Twenty-Six Days in Woodstock, Vermont* (Woodstock, VT: Nahum Haskell, 1835), and C.G. Eastman, *Sermons, Addresses, & Exhortations by Rev. Jedediah Burchard* (Burlington: Chauncey Goodrich, 1836). Secondary sources that describe his trip as a failure include Jeffrey Potash, *Vermont's Burned-Over District: Patterns of Community Development and Religious Activity*, (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Pub., 1991), and Randolph A. Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Secondary material on Burchard is scarce – I couldn't even find any sort of biography of him, or even the year of his birth.

<sup>4</sup> Streeter, 77.

<sup>5</sup> Gale would later go on to mentor Charles Finney, arguably the most famous revivalist preacher in Burchard's time.



aimed to remedy the evils of society before the Second Coming of Christ. As such, followers of the movement took up a belief in immediatism, a doctrine that proclaimed the necessity for each individual to embrace God immediately, before it was too late. Individuals, they claimed must repent for their sins as soon as possible, before the Holy Spirit left their soul and would forever be impure.<sup>6</sup> Consisting primarily of Baptists, Methodists, or Presbyterians, Evangelicalism was considered a “heart religion,” which strived to establish a relationship with God in every person they got the chance to talk to.<sup>7</sup> Evangelicals reminded their audiences that Jesus was a poor, uneducated man from the country, and used this as proof that anyone should be able to identify with him and understand the Bible. Like many evangelical preachers of the Second Great Awakening, Burchard began his career touring through upstate New York, moving from congregation to congregation preaching with fiery enthusiasm about the danger individuals face if they did not change their lifestyles immediately.

Historians have identified demographic groups as the most active during the Awakening: the “entrepreneur” class, consisting of craftsmen and industrial leaders, unmarried women, and men under the age of 21.<sup>8</sup> However, there is no consensus on which group was the most active. Further, scholars of social and religious history have debated at length as to what specifically brought about the embrace of revivalism. Some argue that the Awakening was a movement by genuinely religious individuals to re-envision the United States through a religious framework, while others contend the Awakening was attractive because of its ability to reshape rapidly changing social orders. For some, religion is a means, and for others an end.<sup>9</sup> Regardless of debate, the movement grew primarily out of the middle class, and individuals who did convert did so for a multitude of reasons, most likely falling somewhere in between these two arguments. What *should* be emphasized is the fact that the Second Great Awakening took place during an era of dramatic changes in American life, and that each group that did convert had some type of stake in its success.

Specifically in Vermont, these changes were profound. Before 1830, the state had experienced a number of natural disasters and environmental changes that damaged the crop yield through abnormally high water levels and regular floods. Traditional farm life was declining as well, and notices of cholera outbreaks could be heard throughout the state.<sup>10</sup> Vermonters were intensely anti-Masonic, believing the principles of Freemasonry were corrupt and undemocratic. In fact, the state gave candidate William Wirt his only seven electoral votes in the presidential election of 1832. The Baptists were the most anti-Masonic, believing that

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Morton, *A Narrative of a Revival of Religion in Springfield, Vermont* (1834), 9. Though this piece deals directly with a revival in Vermont in the 1830s, the event took place before Burchard’s tour of Vermont and New Hampshire and did not take place under his supervision.

<sup>7</sup> When I use the word “revivalist” (or any of its various forms) I mean exactly this.

<sup>8</sup> Potash, 124.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of economic changes and motives for industrial laborers, see Paul Johnson’s *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium*; for a discussion of economic changes and motives for women, see Nancy Cott’s “Young Women in the Second Great Awakening in New England,” *Feminist Studies* 3 (1975): 15-29; for a discussion of economic changes and motives for young men, see Joseph F. Kett, “Adolescence and Youth in the Nineteenth Century,” in Theodore Rabb and Robert Rotberg, eds., *The Family in History* (New York, 1975); for an argument focusing on the movement as one driven primarily by new ideas for American through the lens of religious discourse and a disdain for secularism, see Perry Miller’s, *The Life of the Mind in America* (New York, 1965) or William G. McLoughlin’s *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, 1978). For a proper survey weighing many potential causes of the revivals, see Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma*, 188-207.

<sup>10</sup> H. N. Muller and John J. Duffy, “Jedediah Burchard and Vermont’s ‘New Measure’ Revivals: Social Adjustment and the Quest for Unity,” *Vermont History* 46, no. 1 (January 1978): 6-7.

Freemasons were scheming to control the government, and that they were closer to their fellow Masons than towards their Christian brothers. In fact, nine Baptist churches in Addison County withdrew from the Vermont Association because the association would not agree to deny all Masons membership. These churches organized the Addison County Baptist Association in 1833 in an attempt to keep all Masons out of the Baptist tradition and to establish a united front against Freemasonry.<sup>11</sup> Later this association joined in with the growing temperance movement, refusing to give membership to anyone who did not promise to cut off all alcohol intake. A few years after, the association turned towards the abolitionist cause under the guidance of the highly radical Orson Murray.<sup>12</sup>

Not all religious organizations were this extreme, but the example of the Addison County Baptist Association serves to show some of the most pertinent social issues churches were facing: temperance, Masons, and abolitionism. Most importantly though, it shows the extent to which these congregations were ready to enact policies that would implement new social as well as religious ideas. This devotion to a certain method or practice of Christianity and an intolerance for others was characteristic of Vermont at the time, and was the primary atmosphere Burchard dealt with when he arrived there.

Burchard had been invited to Vermont by Reverend Joshua Bates, President of Middlebury College, Thomas Merrill, a Middlebury Congregational minister, and a number of other clerics in the state. Bates had overseen religious revivals and spikes in enrollment in the early and mid-1820s, pitting an education based on “reason and revelation” against the University of Vermont’s much more secular model.<sup>13</sup> Revivalist fever started to die around 1831-1832, when over half of Vermont’s orthodox Congregational and Baptist churches reported a total of 7,500 converts combined.<sup>14</sup> Bates and Merrill wanted to reignite this fever, and, having heard of Burchard’s triumphs in Rochester, invited him to come to Vermont to repeat his efforts up there.<sup>15</sup>

Vermont revivals of 1831-32 had the traditional protracted meetings with “anxious seats” and an incredible amount of theatrics and emotion, staples of Charles Finney’s “New Measure” revivals.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the protracted meetings of the earlier revivals, Burchard’s meetings lasted not three or four days but between 15 and 30. Also while the revivals of 1831-2 saw life continue as normal and limited their presence to just the church, Burchard boasted of shutting down all of the businesses in town. In Woodstock, for example, Burchard and his fellow revivalists, “ransacked the village, the town, and other places, and almost dragged people, especially the young and the diffident, from their homes and their business, to the scene

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<sup>11</sup> Potash, 161-4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Daniels, ed. *The University of Vermont: The First Two Hundred Years* (Burlington: University of Vermont, 1991), 42-3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>15</sup> For more on Burchard in Rochester, see Johnson 116-123, or Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), 178-92.

<sup>16</sup> Cross theorizes that Burchard may have had a significant amount of influence over Finney’s creation of these “New Measures.” Both studied with George Gale, and Cross argues that Burchard may have provided Finney with a model for revivalism. Cross also sites a feud between the two: they only crossed paths once during their years, and it was an accident. Finney never published any criticisms of Burchard, but was known to dislike him, which Cross argues resulted from the guilt he felt for the debt he owed Burchard. Cross, 187-9.

of mental slaughter.”<sup>17</sup> Burchard needed to be the entire focus of the town; he needed to make his presence known for the sake of conversion.

Burchard’s meetings were incredibly busy. Most of the towns’ businesses shut down, the meetinghouses and churches overflowed with people, and many local clergy and their followers ran around town assisting him. In the morning, Burchard held meetings of inquiry, which even the most devout evangelical had to attend.<sup>18</sup> During these meetings Burchard would try further to gain converts, testing the individuals through evaluations of their morality and demanding they confess their love for God.<sup>19</sup> He would then preach in the afternoon or evening, where he introduced his “anxious seats,” which were pews in the front of the church closest to him. The anxious seats were well known to many individuals who understandably avoided them. Burchard trapped newcomers in the anxious seats by calling upon “every man, woman, and child who is willing, or has no objections, to be prayed for, to rise.”<sup>20</sup> He would go on to survey the audience for those standing members who had yet to profess their love for God and commit to practicing evangelicalism. He would call any who had not up to the anxious seats for conversion.<sup>21</sup> While on the anxious seats individuals would confess to any sins and wrongdoings as Burchard convinced them to proclaim they would devote their lives to Christ. During his sermons, he would ask the individuals on the anxious seats over and over again:

‘will you not say that you love God? Only say that you love or wish to love God.’ Those who did say they loved God had their names collected and were reported as converts. He would continue – ‘Do you not love God? Will you not say you love God?’ Then taking out his watch, - ‘There now, I give you a quarter of an hour. If not brought in fifteen minutes to love God, there will be no hope for you – you will be lost – you will be damned’<sup>22</sup>

Although this process may seem cruel and unfair by today’s standards, some contemporaries praised it for preaching the gospel through personal conversation and public example.<sup>23</sup> Burchard also attempted to set up systems in order to maintain committed conversion. For example, if he was converting an individual with an alcohol problem, he would make sure someone in the audience would keep an eye out for them and make sure they never entered the tavern in town. Putting everyone’s sins out in the public, and especially in this fashion, raised awareness for those who truly needed help.

Burchard was also known for his theatrics during his sermons. Listed by one source as a former actor, circus performer, and gymnast, Burchard would “leap from the pulpit and do acrobatic stunts and walk among the people along the tops of the backs of the square pews” in order to convince them they were observing a godly presence.<sup>24</sup> His main aim was to instill fear in his audience, exposing the comfort and confidence they lacked without God’s guidance.

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<sup>17</sup> Streeter, 64.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 122-3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 123-6.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 115

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>22</sup> David Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791–1850* (Columbia University Press, New York 1939), 57.

<sup>23</sup> Morton, 13; also discussed in Johnson, 6.

<sup>24</sup> “The Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of the First Church, Burlington, VT,” published by the church, October 1905; Potash, 173.

Women also played an intricate role in the evangelizing process, both in Burchard's revivals and in the Second Great Awakening as a whole. Burchard's wife, an Episcopalian, helped convince many non-evangelicals that revivals were for anyone with an interest in connecting with God.<sup>25</sup> When any parents wanted to go pray together, she held daily meetings for their children, where she would teach them all about evangelical values.<sup>26</sup> She was to said to have been inspired by the death of her only child.<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Burchard worked with many of the mothers as well, praying and continuing Burchard's efforts. One author said in describing her, "I know of no female in the department of Christian effort to be compared with Mrs. Burchard... Her name among us is still 'as ointment poured forth.'"<sup>28</sup> As mentioned earlier, one of the largest groups Burchard was able to convert were individuals under the age of 21, a portion of which should be absolutely attributed to Mrs. Burchard's efforts.

In terms of public opinion though, Burchard did not fare as well as his wife. Even before his sojourn, Vermonters against the evangelical movement raised concern as to the efficacy of his revivals, with one pointing out that of 700 converts he reportedly made, only 30 of them kept "anywhere within the bounds of decency."<sup>29</sup> Other citizens brought up the moral concerns of evangelism. For instance, the Episcopalian John Henry Hopkins in his 1835 work *The Primitive Church*, attacked the strong link between temperance and evangelicalism, arguing that the association created a false bond between Christians and non-Christians, in which non-Christians were getting the idea that they could rid themselves of sin without proper Christian morality and discipline. This was in direct conflict with Bates and other evangelicals arguing that the link between temperance and evangelicalism was inextricable and was a powerful selling point of the revivals. Daniel Morton, an evangelical and Springfield native, wrote that the furthering of the temperance movement has "diminished immensely the danger of spurious convention."<sup>30</sup> Morton believed that those who able to convert permanently to evangelicalism would be far less likely to pick up alcohol and leave the church.

Division only increased during the duration of Burchard's stay. Most of his meetings went without issue, but he was the subject of two major controversies: one in Woodstock and one in Burlington. Burchard's Woodstock meeting in early 1835 lasted 26 days, and saw the huge crowds and closed businesses and intense histrionics that characterized all of his revivals. A young reporter named Russell Streeter took down and commented on many of his sermons. He argued that Burchard was only preaching for the money, that Burchard only won people over with exhaustive meetings late into the night, and that people only converted out of fear, not out of conviction. Streeter was not alone in his convictions, as Woodstock town selectmen passed a resolution during Burchard's stay to remove him town, citing excessive disruption of all public affairs.<sup>31</sup>

Characteristic of the Jacksonian era's fear of corruption and power, Streeter classified Burchard as a type of tyrant. He remarked that "the exhibition of pontifical authority. They

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<sup>25</sup> Roth, 193.

<sup>26</sup> Morton, 12.

<sup>27</sup> William Francis Pringle Noble, *1776-1876, a Century of Gospel-work: A History of the Growth of Evangelical Religion in the United States, Containing Full Descriptions of the Great Revivals of the Century, Personal Sketches of Eminent Clergymen, Narratives and Incidents of Christian Work, Accounts of the Rise of the Union Organizations, Statistics of Religious Denominations, Etc* (H. C. Watts & Company, 1876), 405.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 406.

<sup>29</sup> Roth, 216

<sup>30</sup> Morton, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Potash, 173.

were satisfied, by this time that the battle was fought, the victory won, and all the people in the hand, and subject to the control, of the conqueror.”<sup>32</sup> He makes Burchard seem greedy and rich with power, painting an image of him as a power-hungry, ruthless politician. The reference to the Pope implies that he is not even a Protestant, instead, a believer in European models of hierarchy. At the same time, Streeter’s account has a strongly anti-democratic tone to it. He describes the excitement in the streets when it is announced Burchard is coming, where children were taught to yell “hurrah for Burchard,” without having any idea why they were doing it. He describes a mobbed public in “wild commotion,” writing that after hearing Burchard would be arriving, the excited feelings of the multitude” exploded. “Every nerve was put upon the stretch – every eye wide open, and the populace on tiptoe, - ‘some for fear, some for fun, and some they knew not why.’”<sup>33</sup> Later he claims that Burchard produced such an influence over the populace they he could make them think a crow right in front of them was white.<sup>34</sup> Streeter, of course, “read him through in a moment,” and was unafraid of the potential risk.<sup>35</sup>

Streeter’s elitism was another very traditional stance during the Jacksonian era, where fear of mob rule – as well as fear of tyranny – abounded. Vermonter Leonard Withington sums up this sentiment very well in his review of Burchard’s sermons:

It has been generally remarked, that this is an age of great insubordination; that the organ of reverence in the human scull [sic] is daily diminishing; and that even the laws themselves, before whose invincible majesty, vice once trembled, and virtue bowed, are in danger of being overthrown, or committed, for their execution, to the multitude...The political demagogue is to blame, who is ready to shake the pillars of the state that his party may reign over its ruins; adopting the infernal maxim: ‘better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven’<sup>36</sup>

The swift societal changes occurring were threatening to break down the laws, increasing greed and selfishness, and threatening to bring down American liberty. The independence of mind is being thrown away for fanaticism and excessive emotion. Anti-Burchardians would probably not protest to switching “political demagogue” with “revivalist preacher.”<sup>37</sup> They saw Burchard’s goals as threatening to the entire church order and the society it built itself around, and did not want to see a dramatic power shift organized by the masses of middle class individuals. Anti-Burchardian positions did not necessarily come as a reaction to his religious principles, but to the change structural change he proposed in church order..<sup>38</sup> Granted, this is only one factor in why many Vermonters were anti-evangelical, but it is important to understand the ways in which the political fears and political rhetoric of the age transcended the political into the religious.

Burchard’s strong anti-aristocratic rhetoric helped make this transcendence clear. He frequently criticized the wealthy during his trips, forcing them to perform menial tasks and

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<sup>32</sup> Streeter, 71.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 24-7.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard Withington, “Review of Burchard’s Sermons,” in Leonard Woods and Charles D. Pigeon, eds., *The Literary and Theological Review* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1836), 236.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>38</sup> Muller and Duffy, 12-3.

exercising a heightened intensity and sense of urgency whenever he met with them. This attitude toward the upper class gave wealthy churchgoers an additional incentive to fight against his evangelical preachings, as Burchardism proposed a threat to their financial, religious, and social standing.<sup>39</sup> Using his revivalist rhetoric to pit the poor against the rich, Burchard's revivalism becomes a source of empowerment for the middle and lower classes, anchored by the strong democratic conviction that any member of the community can join.

Burchard's pro-democratic message of equal opportunity for all citizens in God's eyes is evident in his Calvinism. Burchard was an orthodox Calvinist, which meant he believed God had already chosen which individuals would enter heaven. However, Burchard's Calvinism was much softer than previous incarnations throughout history. Most likely based on his own experience with Christianity, as he converted at age 24, Burchard had a strict concept of who could be part of the elect and who would be part of the eternally damned. However, he did not classify these as entirely predestined categories. Burchard believed that it was his God given duty to preach to sinners and try to convert them, in turn, washing away old religious traditions and replacing them with his revivalism. He believed that his preaching was the only way he could get to heaven, and through a conversion by him, was the only person through whom an audience member could reach heaven. But, because of the immediatist belief that individuals needed to change now in order to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ, an audience member only had a limited amount of time before they could convert.

I am going to backtrack slightly in order to be clearer. Calvinists believed that the Holy Spirit was in an individual's soul at birth, but eventually, and with too much sin, the Holy Spirit would exit the person's soul and they could never be purified and reach heaven. In order for an individual to keep the Holy Spirit inside of him then, he needed to accept Burchard's sermons, convert through him, and maintain his newfound spirituality.<sup>40</sup> In other words, membership in the elect is not predestined, it is contingent upon one's actions, but by a certain point these actions will have no effect. Burchard's fiery attitude, his desperate yelling and kicking and screaming, were all in an effort to convert as many individuals as possible before it was too late.

These ideas though, that anyone can properly become a member of the elect, resonate strongly with notions of Jacksonian Democracy. Burchard's Calvinism contends that any individual, regardless of their social standing, vocation, place of birth, or any other demographic or sociological factor, can eventually become one of the elect and reach heaven. Further, he has modified the idea of the elect from something individuals are born into, into something individuals earn their way into through commitment, hard work, and determination. Purity of the soul and eternal life is something an individual earns for themselves – without help from anyone around them and without a natural advantage or head start. These are all important tenets of a more equal, more meritocratic, and more just society.

Burchard lost all hope for being remembered for these strongly democratic ideals during his trip to Burlington. Over the course of the decade or so before his arrival, the University of Vermont had become increasingly secular under the presidency of James Marsh,

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<sup>39</sup> Roth, 193-4.

<sup>40</sup> Eastman, 8-20; Streeter, 78-84; Roth, 191-2. I should say that what I say here is primarily speculation. Burchard is very unclear on how he reconciles a Calvinist method with immediatism, and there is little secondary material that addresses this, but this is what makes most sense to me.

and had pushed Burlington towards a very anti-evangelical stance.<sup>41</sup> By the time he arrived in Burlington in late 1835, Streeter's book had already been published and widely read all around the state. In an attempt to gather second picture of what Burchard was like during protracted meetings, Chauncey Goodrich, James Marsh's brother in law, commissioned two UVM students to report on what they saw during the Burlington meetings.<sup>42</sup> Burchard, incensed by the possibility of any report as vicious as Streeter's refused to let either man take notes during his sessions. The two argued their free speech entitled them to take notes and publish his meetings, as they were public, but Burchard still did not accept this. He then tried to convert the students through his traditional "But don't you love God?" rhetoric but they failed to budge.<sup>43</sup> Eventually Burchard tried to bribe Eastman with \$150. Eastman took the money but did not hand over the notes. A storm of bad publicity then ensued when Burchard and other evangelicals tried to bar Eastman and Tenney from entering the church.<sup>44</sup> A few nights later a mob broke out in Burlington to protest the apparent arrest of the two students.<sup>45</sup> The two were not arrested, but the events sparked enough controversy that this fact became irrelevant in the public eye.

This episode, combined with the fact that he only converted four UVM students, caused public opinion of him and his revivalism to drop significantly. He did record around 200 cases of "professed submission to Christ" in Burlington as a whole, but this effort remained overshadowed by his righteous fury toward the two students.<sup>46</sup> This drop in popularity took place mostly among those who were unsure of evangelicalism – those who supported Burchard remained partial to his methods. But these angry anti-Burchard voices drowned out his loyal followers, leaving historians with an only understanding of the "harsh and unchristian language" Burchard used at times. This has caused these historians to either forget or neglect, for example, the beloved preacher in Montpelier Burchard replaced in 40 days after the man's untimely death, or the minister who was fired for his opposition for him or the reputation Burchard had as a man who "preached the truth with great plainness and boldness, [although] his manner was conciliatory."<sup>47</sup> Accounts ignore this material and instead continue to portray Burchard in an undeservingly poor light.

We do, however, have a great deal on what happened in Vermont after his ignominious exit. Intended as an interdenominational trip, Burchard's journey to Vermont hardened the lines between evangelicals and non-evangelicals. By the time of his departure, ministerial bodies in Rutland, Pawlet, and Windsor all published notices urging citizens to avoid him at all costs.<sup>48</sup> The Rutland Association of all Congregationalist ministers referred to revivalists as

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<sup>41</sup> Daniels, 41-5; for more information on Marsh's transformation of UVM, see James Marsh, *The Remains of the Rev. James Marsh, D. D., Late President and Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy in the University of Vermont: With a Memoir of His Life* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1843).

<sup>42</sup> It is unclear whether Marsh requested Goodrich to commission the two students, but Eastman vehemently denied it when pressured by Burchard to give him more information. Eastman, 114.

<sup>43</sup> Text of this conversation can be found in Eastman, 79-90.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-7.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>46</sup> *Records of the First Congregational Church in Burlington*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Abby Maria Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer: A Magazine, Embracing a History of Each Town, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Biographical and Military: Volume IV* (Claremont, NH: The Claremont Manufacturing Company, 1882), 390; *The Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of Bethany Congregational Church*, (Montpelier: Published by the Church, 1908); Morton, 16.

<sup>48</sup> *Hundredth Anniversary of First Church, Burlington*, 24.

“low + personal + harsh + use[rs] [sic] of unchristian language.”<sup>49</sup> One preacher defended Burchard in a farewell sermon, warning his congregation to “be careful of your minister’s character. Do not slander him; never magnify his faults. Do not give circulation to flying reports concerning him. Be in the habit of rebuking slanders and insinuations against him, whenever you meet them.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, the stark divide between evangelicals and non-evangelicals only grew once he left. Many evangelicals shifted away from identifying with Burchard and his ideas and more towards the conceptions of revivalism on its own. In Brandon, for example, ministers from multiple churches waited until Burchard had been gone for at least two weeks before examining his converts to see if their convictions had remained sound.<sup>51</sup>

The ministers in Brandon did not act without reason, as many converts did in fact fade away from the church after Burchard’s visit, either to return to their former congregation or to eliminate Christianity from their life altogether. Immediately after he left, many churches were overflowing with members who expected Burchardian raucousness every Sunday. Because so many of them were unfamiliar with regular church life, they often expected every sermon to have the same fire and energy and intensity that Burchard converted them with. Non-evangelicals noted that these churches were “blessed to death,” because despite incredible gains in the congregation, they had to crack down on significantly more disruptive behavior during and after services.<sup>52</sup> Burchard had brought the democratic mob into the chapel, with such a passionate fervor that not even evangelist democrats could manage them. There is very little data on whether these more exuberant converts were more or less likely to leave the church, but the fact that churches both evangelist and non-evangelist were unwilling to adapt to their ideal religious experience shows the limits of how far mainstream Christianity was willing to bend to Burchardism.

However far it was or was not willing to bend, Burchard’s presence in Vermont provoked a surge in evangelical church membership, even with a drop off of around half of their initial conversions in some cases.<sup>53</sup> The Baptists reported over 2,700 converts during the early to mid-1830s, mostly during Burchard’s visit, while Congregationalists amassed over 5,000 during this same time period.<sup>54</sup> Even the Episcopalians grew during this time, despite their animosity toward revivalism, with five new churches in the state between 1832 and 1835. Middlebury’s Episcopalian church had doubled in size between the early 1830s and 1835.<sup>55</sup> While anti-evangelicals may have been correct in labeling Burchard’s evangelism as insincere or superficial for many, this was not the case across the board, as Burchard managed to amass enough genuine converts to fundamentally reshape Vermont’s religious landscape.

Burchard’s tour through Vermont was by no means a complete success, but it would be a hasty conclusion to say it was a complete failure either. Or maybe that while Burchard the man failed, his ideas succeeded. He came to Vermont in order to convert its citizens to evangelicalism and revive religious fervor throughout the state. Without a doubt he succeed at

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<sup>49</sup> Muller and Duffy, 9.

<sup>50</sup> “Farewell Sermon Preached to the Church and Society in Cornwall,” by Reverend Jedidiah Bushnell, (Middlebury: Knapp and Jewett, 1836): 15.

<sup>51</sup> *Hemenway, Historical Gazetteer: Vol. III*, 465.

<sup>52</sup> *Hundredth Anniversary of First Church, Burlington*, 25.

<sup>53</sup> Morton, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Ludlum, 57. The number of Congregationalists strikes me as potentially a little high, but I haven’t seen such specific figures anywhere else, so I will keep the number as, at the least, another way of saying “a lot.”

<sup>55</sup> Potash, 169.



least partially here, but the majority of his contribution came in the social and political realms, as his evangelicalism had vast implication beyond the scope of the church.

To convert to Burchard's immediatism was to change more than one's religious faith, it was to change one's actions and the way one looked and identified himself in the world. In responding to these actions a debate between evangelicals and non-evangelicals ensued: between religious fanatics and the James Marshes on the UVM hill, between an old and a new social order, between liberty and power, and between democracy and aristocracy – where an individual stood on the religious question dictated where they stood on these social or political questions. What Burchard did was offer people a choice, making the church into a centralized space in which Vermonters could deal with and respond to the many contemporary issues at hand: a rapidly democratizing influence, huge social and technological change, temperance, elitism, power, corruption. He was not successful in converting all of these individuals, but he was successful in providing them with the knowledge that they could shape Jacksonian America however they wanted to, and provided them with one starting tool for doing so.

## DEPARTMENT NEWS

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THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT TWO PROMOTIONS IN 2013-2014:

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**Andy Buchanan** was promoted to Senior Lecturer.

**Sean Field** was promoted to Full Professor.

THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT HISTORY DEPARTMENT FACULTY MAINTAINED ITS ACCUSTOMED LEVEL OF PUBLICATION AND RESEARCH ACTIVITY. HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2012-2013 INCLUDE:

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**Andy Buchanan's** book *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II* was published by Cambridge University Press and released in 2014. He also presented conference and seminar papers on aspects of the book in Oxford and at King's College, London, in early March.

**Paul Deslandes** is currently finishing the writing of his new book *The Culture of Male Beauty in Britain: From the First Photographs to David Beckham*. Since the appearance of the last review, he has published several book reviews and a substantial book chapter titled "The Cultural Politics of Gay Pornography in 1970s Britain," in Brian Lewis, ed., *British Queer History: New Approaches and Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). He has also presented papers at both the Northeast Conference on British Studies and the North American Conference on British Studies. In addition to his role as chair of the history department, he also serves as Executive Secretary for the North American Conference on British Studies, Vice President and Program Chair for the Northeast Conference on British Studies, and Chief Reader for the College Board's AP European history program.

**Sean Field**, In late 2013 and early 2014 Associate Professor Sean L. Field published *The Rules of Isabelle of France: An English Translation with Introductory Study* (Franciscan Institute Publications); *The Sanctity of Louis IX: Early Lives of Saint Louis by Geoffrey of Beaulieu and William of Chartres* (Cornell University Press, with Larry F. Field and M. Cecilia Gaposchkin); and *Marguerite Porete et le Miroir des simples âmes: Perspectives historiques, philosophiques et littéraires* (Vrin, 2013, edited with Sylvain Piron and Robert E. Lerner). He is currently completing a collaborative project with Jacques Dalarun and Anne-Françoise Leurquin-Labie, entitled *Isabelle de France, soeur de Saint Louis: Une princesse mineure, for Les Éditions franciscaines in Paris*. He is looking forward to spending this June in France, working on some newly discovered early-modern manuscripts of Agnes of Harcourt's Vie d'Isabelle de France.

**Melanie S. Gustafson's** recent publications include an online publication: "Maud Wood Park: The Power of Organization. Part One: Maud Wood Park and the Woman Suffrage Movement," *Women and Social Movements in the United States*, 17:2 (September 2013). This first half of a two-part document archive is on the life and work of Maud Wood Park from her college years at Radcliffe in the late 1890s until the passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1920. Part Two will appear in the spring of 2014. The publication can be accessed through the UVM Library website.

Professor Gustafson's recent conference papers include: "The Freedoms of Europe: Blanche Willis Howard's Writing Career," at the Transatlantic Women II Conference in Florence, Italy, June 2013.

**Felicia Kornbluh** has an interview with a museum curator forthcoming in the catalog of the Queens Museum of Art's landmark show, "13 Most Wanted Men: Andy Warhol and the 1964 World's Fair." She was an informal historical advisor in the history of civil rights for the show. Kornbluh has also had an abstract accepted for a special issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Labor: Working Class History of the Americas*, on the subject of food and work. She will write on "The Civil Rights of Food." The piece will appear in 2015.

**Frank Nicosia** finished the final editing for his new book, *Nazi Germany and the Arab World*, which will be published by Cambridge University Press this fall, 2014. He also served this academic year as the Interim Director of the Carolyn and Leonard Miller Center for Holocaust Studies at UVM.

**Nicole Phelps** published her book *U.S.-Habsburg Relations from 1815 to the Paris Peace Conference: Sovereignty Transformed*, which came out from Cambridge UP. This year she also presented a paper on her next project, which deals with the US Consular Service from 1789 to 1924, at the Organization of American Historians (OAH) annual conference. In addition, she also served as a commentator for a panel at the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) conference, and participated in a conference on "Legacies of World War I" at Williams College.

**Alan E. Steinweis** has been on leave from UVM while he holds the chair for Jewish History and Culture at the University of Munich, where he will remain through December 2014. He published "Antisemitismus und NS-Kulturpolitik bis 1938," in *1938: Kunst, Künstler, Politik*, edited by Eva Atlan, Raphael Gross, and Julia Voss (Wallstein-Verlag, 2013), and made progress on three edited volumes: *The German People and the Holocaust*, co-edited with UVM's Susanna B. Schrafstetter, which is based on the 2012 Miller Symposium; *Ethnic Minorities and Holocaust Memory: A Global Perspective*, co-edited with Jacob Eder, Norbert Frei, and Philipp Gassert, which is based on the conference of the same title co-sponsored by the Miller Center at the University of Jena in 2013; and a special issue of *Münchener Beiträge zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* devoted to the Holocaust in and around Munich. He served on the faculty of the doctoral workshop of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure in Munich and Paris. He delivered the following papers and comments: Comment on a panel about Western Europe at the conference on "Ethnic Minorities and Holocaust Memory: A Global Perspective," University of Jena, July 2013; "Rassismus als soziales Paradigma," presentation at the conference "Die deutsche Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus. Forschungspositionen und -perspektiven," Zentrum für zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam, September 2013; "Der Novemberpogrom 1938 im transatlantischen Vergleich: Antijüdische Ausschreitungen in Deutschland und die Rassenunruhen in den USA während der 1920er und 1930er Jahre," University of Vienna, November 2013; "Bemerkungen zur Geschichte des Münchner Katholizismus und Protestantismus im 20. Jahrhundert," lecture delivered under the auspices of the Catholic and Protestant chaplains of the Dachau concentration camp memorial site, Munich, November 2013; "Kristallnacht 1938: History and Memory," conference on "Kristallnacht: History, Memorialization, Lessons," Kaliningrad, Russia, November 14-17, 2013; "Der Novemberpogrom als zentrales Ereignis der Holocaust-Ära,"

Frankfurt Jewish Museum, December 2013; “Antisemitism and Nazi Cultural Policy,” Neue Galerie, New York, March 2014; comment on Jürgen Matthäus’ paper “Antisemitismus und Holocaust“ at the inaugural workshop of the Center for Holocaust Studies of the Institute for Contemporary History, Munich, April 2014.

**H. Amani Whitfield** published his book, *The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont, 1777-1810*, in February 2014 through the Vermont Historical Society. In the past year, he has traveled around the state giving public lectures on this research at various venues, including the Vermont Historical Society, Rokeby Museum, Castleton State, and the University of Vermont.

**Denise J. Youngblood** published, in 2013, two articles in Rimgaila Salys, ed., *Russian Cinema Reader*: "Early Russian Cinema, 1908-1918" and "Soviet Silent Cinema, 1918-1930." She also published "Mark Donskoy's 'Gorky Trilogy' and the Stalinist Biopic," in Robert A. Rosenstone and Constantin Parvelescu, eds., *A Companion to the Historical Film*. She won the Robert V. Daniels Award for Outstanding Contributions to International Education, sponsored by UVM's Global and Regional Studies Program

**Steven Zdatny** won a Fulbright Award for 2014-2015 that will allow him to take a post as Visiting Scholar at the Centre de Recherche Historique, in Paris.

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

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**Ruby Ray Daily** is a second year history graduate student, specializing in nineteenth-century Britain with an emphasis on gender and sexuality. Her master's thesis explores the glut of saccharine governess woe in Victorian, British popular media and erotica. Following graduation, she will be entering the history doctoral program at Northwestern University in the fall.

**Daniel Davis** is a UVM senior studying History and Philosophy. He is currently writing his honors thesis about the French Royal Academy of Sciences' response to Newtonian physics as a rupture in contemporary elite gender norms. He is also a founding member of One in Four at UVM, a men's outreach program committed to ending the culture of sexual violence on campus through education and empathy.

**Michael Edmondson** is currently an undergraduate senior studying classics and history. His honors thesis is entitled "The Will of a Man: Innocent III and the Failure of the Fourth Crusade."

**Jessica Fuller** is a Pennsylvania native and a junior undergrad student in History with an unhealthy fascination with Soviet Russia and Women's History. In her spare time she's the president of *Vox: Voices for Planned Parenthood at UVM*, the feminist group on campus concerned with Reproductive Rights and Sexual Health.

**Meagan Ingalls** is a second year history graduate student currently focusing on the Holocaust in Western Ukraine. This summer, she received a David Scrase Grant to study at Ukrainian Catholic University in L'viv, Ukraine. After completing the graduate program, Meag hopes to travel around the world before pursuing a career teaching at the college level.

**Kassandra LePrade Seuthe**, a first year history graduate student, is focused on the complicity of ordinary Germans in the exploitation of Nazi forced labor. Her areas of academic interest include gender and sexuality under National Socialism, and the Holocaust in contested Polish-German borderlands. She looks forward to future world travel not only for further research, but also for relaxation.

**David Solomon** is a first year graduate student from Tallahassee, Florida. He is currently studying sensationalist urban journalism in Jacksonian America. Because of irregularities with the Post Office, David and his fiancé live in both Essex Junction and Colchester, Vermont, where they can be found doting far too much on their cat.

**Emily Stoneking** is a senior studying history and German. She intends to pursue a graduate degree in medieval history. She loves medieval craft work and her knitting and stained glass work both keep her sane and fund her education.

**Elizabeth Van Horn** is a Detroit native and a first year graduate student. Her research interests focus on the social and cultural history of World War I, particularly interactions between civilians and soldiers on the Western Front. In her free time she enjoys watching terrible movies with her boyfriend, Max, and their cat, Mona.

**Rebecca White** is a UVM Junior and History Major with a Speech Minor. She is actively involved in the Lawrence Debate Union on campus and is passionate about Vermont history.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Mark Alexander** is a graduate student from the Burlington area pursuing his MA in History and Holocaust studies. His current research explores Nazi collaborators in Eastern Europe and their escape from justice through the auspices of American Intelligence in the early Cold War. After completion of his MA degree, Mark hopes to enter a PhD program.

**Skyler Baldwin Bailey** is an undergraduate senior and history major. His primary ambition is to become an author of books of early Vermont history, though he is currently working on a book about the Tenth Mountain Division in World War Two. He is a living historian of the American Revolution, in Seth Warner's Extra-Continental Regiment of Foot.

**Dillon Baker** is graduating this spring from the University of Vermont with a double major in History and English. He is spending the summer seeing America on a cross-country road trip, and then hopes to attend either law school or graduate school in the near future.

**Robert Benner** is a senior history major with minors in English and political science. He enjoys reading, biking, and Ken Burns documentaries. He plans to teach English abroad next year, provided he goes undrafted yet again in 2014.

**Larkin Snow Coffey** is graduating from UVM with a degree in history and plans to study library science at Miskatonic University. His academic interests include gender history, witchcraft, and revolutionary movements. His independent studies focus on music, science fiction, and arcane pursuits.

**Meagan Ingalls** is a second year history graduate student currently focusing on the Holocaust in Western Ukraine. This summer, she received a David Scrase Grant to study at Ukrainian Catholic University in L'viv, Ukraine. After completing the graduate program, Meag hopes to travel around the world before pursuing a career teaching at the college level.

**G. Scott Waterman** graduated from Harvard University and the University of Michigan Medical School. He is currently a Graduate Student in History and Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus at the University of Vermont. His historical interests include modern European and American extremist political ideologies and movements, the Holocaust, and the Cold War.

**2014 INDUCTEES TO THE UVM CHAPTER OF PHI ALPHA THETA**

Andrew Michael Bowen  
Cole Remington Burton  
Carolyn Ruth Connor  
Andria G. Cubero  
Alexandria Christine Feeley Dolph  
Grace Isobel Gilmour  
Emily Ann Howe  
Molly Elizabeth Jacques  
Clara Catherine Kelly

Alana Michele Luttinger  
Kathryn Helga Meader  
Julia Elizabeth Morrow  
Corina Melissa Pinto  
Philip Anthony Prah  
Tyler David Purinton  
Timothy Grady Robustelli  
Jonathan Stephen Tsoris  
Sarah Virginia Wilds