

Recounting the Past

A Student Journal of Historical Studies

Department of History
At Illinois State University

Number 19 • Spring 2018

Recounting the Past

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Note from the Editor

The History Department is honored to recognize graduate and undergraduate student research through the journal *Recounting the Past*, as well as the faculty who mentored these emerging scholars. Alongside these students and faculty, many thanks also go out to individuals who invested their time and effort at various stages of the production process. These include the editors and mentors who had helped to oversee the papers; the team at University Marketing and Communication that guided the journal through publication; and Sharon Foiles, Administrative Aide in the History Department, who served as the liaison with Marketing and Communication, as well as provided her organizational expertise to keep the project moving forward.

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Carols for Camelot: The Musical Legacy of John F. Kennedy

By Tom Beazley

Directed by Dr. Katrin Paehler

The presidency and assassination of John F. Kennedy are epic chapters within the history of the United States. While many similar political figures have undergone a degree of historic and personal scrutiny, the lingering “Kennedy image” serves as a unique standard for Americanism that continues to be confirmed by the tens of thousands of works dedicated to Kennedy’s memory. Indeed, Kennedy’s legacy as both a Cold War warrior and political advocate of inclusion allowed the “Kennedy image” to become representative of an idealized liberal state.¹ In this manner, the attractive Kennedy “mystique” has proven itself an independent and dynamic force that holds tangible political power, beyond the agency and mortality of Kennedy himself.² Although Kennedy was neither the youngest United States president nor the only one to be assassinated, very few have been so deeply loved or extensively represented.

This paper will demonstrate the extent to which Kennedy’s image has permeated popular memory through music. Music, as a historical source, possesses its own unique set of difficulties and limitations. Many of these arise because music is inherently an unofficial form of expression that is usually regionally specific.³ Furthermore, music presents an unstable and unverifiable reality that is not necessarily representative of a national consciousness. As a result, however, music can reveal how cultural sentiments differ from official

¹ Michael Kazin and Joseph A. McCartin, *Americanism: New Perspectives on The History of an Ideal* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1-22, 128-152.

² Larry Sabato, *Kennedy Half-Century: The Presidency, Assassination, and Lasting Legacy of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

³ Shirli Gilbert, “Music as Historical Source: Social History and Musical Texts / Glazba Kao Povijesni Izvor: Socijalna Povijest I Glazbeni Tekstovi,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 36, no. 1 (2005), 117-134, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30032162>.

accounts.⁴ Indeed, music as a medium of popular memory enabled musicians to appropriate and actualize the significance of the Kennedy legacy. Although the scope of this study will not allow for an in-depth consideration of every song that referenced Kennedy, the abundance of artists who did indicates that music served as a significant tool for the preservation and presentation of the “Kennedy image” to a broader public.

This paper will systematically consider how the Kennedy narrative was preserved and portrayed through popular music in the decades following Kennedy’s assassination. In the first section, this paper will examine the interpretive framework that was constructed in the immediate aftermath of Kennedy’s assassination. The second section will examine how this framework was appropriated by broader regions of the United States through music and allowed individuals to rationalize Kennedy’s death and commemorate him as a pure politician in the decade immediately following the assassination (1963-1973). The remaining three sections will each cover approximately a decade of musical content to reveal how the “Kennedy image” was imbued with new meanings. The youth counterculture of the 1970s, for instance, recast Kennedy as a righteous activist, which they used to promote counterculture ideologies. Meanwhile, an emerging generation in the 1980s—unfamiliar with the historic Kennedy—depicted him as a national epic within a broader historical context. Finally, Kennedy is now nostalgically commemorated because of the radical changes of recent decades. In this manner, although the “Kennedy image” was appropriated in each respective period, popular memory ultimately maintained the same positive portrayal of Kennedy, since each generation relied upon the same established framework of interpretation. Thus, while numerous counter-narratives have emerged in the last half-century, a permanent affirmative narrative persisted in music. In considering how the legacy of Kennedy developed and was expressed through certain vehicles of popular memory, this exploration of the “Kennedy image” serves as a case study for how popular memory inherits and yet utilizes cultural symbols to create a present cultural reality.

The Death of the President

John Fitzgerald Kennedy—the 35th President of the United States—was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald on November 22, 1963, while crossing the Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. In the hour immediately following the shooting,

⁴ Nicholas Tochka, *Audible States: Socialist Politics and Popular Music in Albania* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

incomplete reports by local and national radio bulletins caused the public great confusion. The iconic announcement occurred shortly thereafter when Walter Cronkite—a CBS news anchor of tremendous influence—aired the first televised report.⁵ A flood of numerous radio and TV stations quickly followed suit and interrupted scheduled programming to reverently commemorate the fallen president, provide uninterrupted coverage of the assassination, and hold memorial concerts. The Boston Symphony Orchestra, after announcing the news to their audience, replaced Rimsky-Korsakov's "The Golden Cockerel" with the *Marcia funèbre* from Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*.⁶ Nationwide, people openly wept, schools dismissed students early, many decried the city of Dallas, the stock market reacted drastically, hundreds of businesses closed, and millions gathered to watch the news unfold.

The manner in which Kennedy's death was announced significantly shaped the way in which it was interpreted. The sudden, shocking, and chaotic manner in which the events were presented communicated a state of uncertainty. The initial unavailability of any live broadcasts and the unpreparedness of various media sources caused many reports to be hurried, jumbled, and contain errors.⁷ The precarious political state of the U.S. through its involvement in the Cold War and the relatively high public approval ratings Kennedy held amplified national concern. Furthermore, the media had emerged as the primary interpreter of U.S. reality and the public was sensitive to their reactions.⁸ In expressing a deeply personal and national loss, figures like Walter Cronkite, Edwin Newman, Paul Harvey, Malcolm Kilduff, Frank McGee, and David Brinkley modeled an appropriate approach and interpretation of Kennedy's death. Specifically, the media portrayed Kennedy as a pure politician who had been gunned down before his time. *LIFE* magazine, for instance, rationalized Kennedy's traumatic passing by emphasizing the personal attributes of Kennedy through articles like "President's empty chair," "Intelligent, courageous presidency," and "Warmest way to remember him."⁹ Iconic images and personal stories of the handsome and tranquil Kennedy demonstrated his

⁵ CBS Sunday Morning, "JFK assassination: Cronkite informs a shocked nation," YouTube Video, 1:50, November 17, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PXORQE5-CY>.

⁶ David Von Pein's JFK Channel, "EXTENDED BOSTON SYMPHONY ANNOUNCEMENT OF JFK'S ASSASSINATION ON 11/22/63," YouTube Video, 3:57, February 24, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRO9bsaHuic>.

⁷ David Von Pein's JFK Channel, "ERRORS BY THE NEWS MEDIA IN REPORTING JFK'S ASSASSINATION," YouTube Video, 19:27, February 3, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LyuD9bvvis&list=PL005WNzrZqIOtDpbimTY_O9Yw2Yil0PZF&index=44.

⁸ Barbie Zelizer, *Covering The Body: The Kennedy Assassination, The Media, and The Shaping of Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁹ "Murder of the President," *LIFE*, November 29, 1963, 22–39.

personal integrity and political success—a narrative that the grieving public readily accepted. In this manner, attempts to rationalize and commemorate the death of Kennedy resulted in an idealized interpretative foundation.

While the media constructed a digestible narrative, Kennedy was already a culturally relevant figure prior to his death. As a World War II hero, Kennedy embodied an idealized manhood, while his Pulitzer Prize in 1957 for *Profiles in Courage* brought him national recognition. This was supplemented by his service in the House of Representatives (1947-1953) and in the U.S. Senate (1953-1960). During this time, Kennedy exploited the camera through captivating photos and media coverage to acquire celebrity status.¹⁰ As a result, the media after his death did not have to fabricate the image of Camelot entirely, since Kennedy had already amassed a public following and swath of iconography. Kennedy's role as a stable cultural and political figure, however, amplified public outrage. As a result, while Kennedy was lionized, Lee Harvey Oswald—the assassin—was demonized. In this manner, the “angry and disorganized intelligence” of Oswald—combined with his subsequent murder by Jack Ruby—completed the assassination melodrama and adequately explained Kennedy's sudden end.¹¹

Kennedy was the first president to effectively use television to personally connect with the people of the United States. However, it was the unprecedented media coverage of his funeral that truly enshrined him as the embodiment of the ideal “American.” Millions spectated the funeral procession to Washington, the pilgrimage of the flag-draped coffin to the U.S. Capitol, the Requiem Mass at St. Matthew's Cathedral, and the final burial of Kennedy at Arlington National Cemetery. Each phase symbolized aspects of the Kennedy saga and appropriately conveyed his status as a president, soldier, Catholic, and citizen.¹² Finally, the captivating salute of John F. Kennedy Jr. on his third birthday, the silent honor guard of twenty-seven Irish Army cadets, the image of the riderless horse, the bugler's “Taps,” the lighting of the eternal flame by Jacqueline Kennedy, and the desperate grief she portrayed completed the Kennedy chronicle and became iconic moments in and of themselves.¹³ However, although the historic Kennedy was gone, the nationally performed rituals demanded further devotion from the American public.

¹⁰ John Hellmann, *The Kennedy Obsession: The American Myth of JFK* (Columbia University Press, 2010).

¹¹ “Murder of the President,” *LIFE*, November 29, 1963. pp. 22–39.

¹² Tom Wicker, “A Hero's Burial,” *New York Times*, 26 November 1963.

¹³ Tapsbugler, “John F. Kennedy Funeral November 25, 1963,” YouTube Video, 43:03, April 17, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KJQkn6zUvM>.

Kennedy as a Pure Politician (1963-1973)

In many ways, the death of Kennedy served as a symbolic precursor for the next decade, a somber reminder of national loss in the midst of tumultuous times. Indeed, the remainder of the 1960s was characterized by social tensions caused by the Vietnam War, the struggle for civil rights, and the radicalization of certain student activist groups. President Lyndon Johnson, as the inheritor of the burden of Camelot, was resisted by many ardent Kennedy supporters. Meanwhile, newspapers and authors like Arthur Schlesinger, Theodore Sorenson, William Manchester, and Pierre Salinger disseminated idealized depictions of Kennedy. The turmoil of the 1960s intensified commemorative mourning as many recalled Kennedy's promise of a "New Frontier." The recency of the assassination limited the approachability of the "Kennedy image" and caused much memorialization to occur through classical music.¹⁴ As the decade progressed, a somber tone would persist—reflecting the remarkability of Kennedy as it had been depicted through the media—but the now rationalized Kennedy was increasingly used to define cultural realities.

To an extent, the preservation and utilization of the Kennedy image through music were only possible because the assassination itself occurred at the apex of an era of accessible technology, thus allowing music to become a prominent vehicle of cultural expression. The longer playtime of vinyl records let artists create concept albums and helped popularize various genres. Thus, in the 1940s, blues became the basis for the rock and roll of the 1950s, while country and folk music gained newfound acclaim. The 1960s, then, was a particularly revolutionary period as pop and rock trends refined themselves and became associated with certain political-social causes. The rise of a youth culture, in turn, popularized these genres and provoked a wave of folk musicians.¹⁵ In this manner, folk music of the 1960s actualized broader political occurrences by informing and integrating regional communities through these artistic processes.

One of the most popular forms of Kennedy commemoration were spoken-word albums. Four million copies of *John Fitzgerald Kennedy: A Memorial Album* and one million copies of *The Presidential Years 1960–1963*,

¹⁴ WOSU Public Media, "Return to Camelot: Music of the Kennedy Years," <http://wosu.org/2012/archive/jfk/remembrance.php> (accessed April 25, 2017); fenderwoods, "The Joe Meek Orchestra "The Kennedy March"," YouTube Video, 2:26, November 20, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0el4gmBRZo>.

¹⁵ Gillian Mitchell, *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945-1980* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Company, 2007), 72-96; Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1-30.

for instance, were sold in six days after their respective releases.¹⁶ Meanwhile, *Self-Portrait in Red* fueled morbid curiosity about Lee Harvey Oswald, while *Of Poetry and Power* provided commemorative pieces from fifty-two prominent poets. However, while the public depended on albums of this kind to solidify a mythic Kennedy narrative, they ultimately relied on music to interpret his legacy. Although a variety of regional artists uniquely actualized the loss of Kennedy, country as a musical genre was particularly prone to proclaim the “Kennedy image” since it already relied upon historic claims of authenticity and sincerity to affirm its southern lineage. Charles Deemer’s “The Ballad of JFK” noted “For hatred lurks in hearts that fear the unity of Man/Who fear the ultimate brotherhood of white man, black, and tan/The President he knew this, he pledged Universal Law/Was a bullet took our leader, was Hatred was the cause.”¹⁷ Meanwhile, Red River Dave—a popular singing cowboy who often commented on current events through music—“celebrated” JFK Jr.’s birthday in the song “God’s game of Checkers.” In “Ballad of Lee Oswald,” however, he ranted, “Lee Oswald you’re the wickedest one of all and we will always remember you with shame/your soul is a million miles from god/ you wicked evil Marxist and black assassin you/ In Roseville Cemetery you taint our Texas soil.”¹⁸ Many artists memorialized Kennedy without the aid of an official record. Clifford Joseph Trahan’s “Keep A Workin’ Big Jim,” for instance, did not only portray Kennedy’s death as a national tragedy but also localized it with specific references. “Oswald was the man/No one conspired with him to plan the crime/Big Jim Garrison, a lawyer from New Orleans, didn’t think the case was really solved/In his investigation he’s come up with a lot/He’s gonna prove somebody else was involved/ Keep a-workin’ Big Jim/We wanna know the truth.”¹⁹ In this manner, prominent artists like Doc Williams and Bobby Atkins modeled appropriate responses to the legacy of Kennedy and expanded the “Kennedy image” through music—an accepted form of cultural commentary—by affiliating it with regional ideologies.

If country popularized Kennedy as a pure politician in the southern United States, blues did so in the northern United States. While a number of country songs positively stressed Kennedy’s political grit and masculine

¹⁶ History Channel, “JFK Memorial Album Sets Record for Sales,” <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jfk-memorial-album-sets-record-for-sales> (accessed April 25, 2017).

¹⁷ ibiblio, “THE BALLAD OF JFK,” <http://www.ibiblio.org/cdeemer/jfk.htm> (accessed April 25, 2017).

¹⁸ Junorecords, “The Ballad Of JFK: A Musical History Of The John F Kennedy Assassination (1963 1968) (Deluxe Edition),” <http://www.juno.co.uk/products/the-ballad-of-jfk-a-musical/624681-01/> (accessed May 7, 2017).

¹⁹ Junorecords.

uprightness, many blues songs subtly spiritualized Kennedy by mourning the passing of a political friend. Son House's song "President Kennedy" mentioned "He's the best friend we had/He's from the rich and the poor" and Alex Harvey used his Scottish blues to boldly state, "the Ku Klux Klan have claimed another man."²⁰ Lee Roy Abernathy, meanwhile, acknowledged Kennedy's spiritual qualities by lamenting that "he's gone home, gone back home/Rode from town to town holdin' up for our rights/I think Mr. Kennedy have a right to this long white robe."²¹ Notably, although many blues artists were African Americans from urban areas of the northern United States and many country artists were white from rural areas of the south, no genre was solely performed by a single ethnicity and thus it is difficult to attribute this difference to solely racial tensions.²² Indeed, while Otis Spann and Sleepy John Estes commemorated Kennedy through blues, Mahalia Jackson recorded the infamous "In the Summer of His Years" that was originally performed by Millicent Martin. In this fashion, memorialization of Kennedy transcended geographic, racial, and genre barriers.

Although the commemorative music of the first decade of the Kennedy assassination was largely dominated by regional manifestations, a number of nationally recognized pop musicians celebrated Kennedy. Understandably, however, the nature of their memorialization was generally more subtle and infused with fewer sociopolitical issues and eschatological beliefs. Still, artists like Bobby Hebb, The Rolling Stones, The Buckingham, Don McLean, the Beach Boys, and Jerry Lee Lewis confirmed the positive framework of interpretation that was created by the Kennedys, the media, and regional musicians. Indeed, in claiming that Kennedy was a "good" man, these artists participated in the ritual of popular Kennedy commemoration.²³ As Mike Love, the lead singer of The Beach Boys later wrote, "I'll never be able to hear or perform ["The Warmth of the Sun"] without recalling the loss of President Kennedy fifty years ago."²⁴ Beyond this, certain commemorative songs by

²⁰ MrsBluesChick, "Son House - President Kennedy," YouTube Video, 3:45, March 26, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVf6dRKWLH0>; Data-Code, "Alex Harvey And His Soul Band - The Blind Man," YouTube Video, August 9, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRIU01FFyo4>.

²¹ WFMU's Beware of the Blog, "JFK - The Greatest Of All (MP3)," <http://blog.wfmu.org/freeform/2011/11/jfk-the-greatest-of-all-mp3.html> (accessed April 25, 2017).

²² Guido van Rijn, *Kennedy's Blues: African-American Blues and Gospel Songs on JFK* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 3-8, 113-119, 163-173; Charles L. Hughes, *Country Soul: Making Music and Making Race in the American South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 1-53.

²³ Bobby Cole, "The Buckingham's - Foreign Policy," YouTube Video, 4:24, February 16, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWHRxQ7KJYs>.

²⁴ Mike Love, "JFK and the Story Behind 'The Warmth of the Sun'," *The Huffington Post*, November 21, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-love/jfk-warmth-of-the-sun_b_4318208.html.

artists like Phil Ochs, the Byrds, and the Keys provided a musical framework of commemoration that would be emulated for decades to come. The infamous song “Abraham, Martin and John,” for instance, reminisced “Has anybody here seen my old friend John/ Can you tell me where he's gone?/He freed a lotta people, but it seems the good die young.”²⁵ In this manner, as artists regionally grappled with the symbolism of Kennedy, Kennedy emerged as a recognized political standard beyond his tangible personhood. Thus, during the decade following Kennedy’s assassination, the ethos of the somber funeral music and commemorative spoken-word albums of the mid-1960s was practiced in a regionally specific context before it was nationally adopted. Unilateral memorialization efforts—compelled by the media and social turbulence—caused artists to portray Kennedy as a pure politician and friend. Indeed, by the early 1970s, the “Kennedy image” was approachable enough to represent a widespread cultural consensus.

Kennedy as a Righteous Activist (1973-1983)

The 1970s were a turbulent time, which was defined by the Watergate scandal, legacy of the Vietnam War, and tensions between the “New Right” and “New Left.” Neither Lyndon B. Johnson’s attempts to create a “Great Society” nor Richard Nixon’s promise of “Peace with Honor” alleviated the United States’ social unrest nor the decline of public confidence in the government. Meanwhile, although popular culture thrived, the economic recession of the 1970s seemed to signify the end of postwar prosperity. As the idealistic dreams of the 1960s, which Kennedy embodied, gave way to radical activism in the 1970s, Camelot became an iconic symbol of youth counterculture. However, while musicians of this movement continued to rely upon the positive framework of interpretation, they used Kennedy’s image for their own political agenda. Specifically, instead of merely viewing Kennedy as the pure politician who cooperated with the government to bring about social justice, the music of the 1970s and early 1980s portrayed Kennedy as a righteous activist who had been betrayed by the government. In essence, popular music of the 1970s reveals that the Kennedy image transitioned from a lost symbol of the government to a medium by which to scrutinize the government itself.²⁶ Thus, the commemorative mourning of the historic Kennedy was replaced by

²⁵ Cletus Hunnicutt, “(((MONO))) Dion - Abraham, Martin and John 45 rpm 1968,” YouTube Video, 3:22, January 12, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZfRyWPZAIL>.

²⁶ Michael Stewart Foley, *Dead Kennedys' Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

celebrations of an increasingly political, abstract, and approachable “Kennedy image” that did not need to be regionally appropriated.

Published works in the 1960s concentrated on the positive character of Kennedy and were written by close associates of the president. In the 1970s, however, journalists viciously reevaluated the “Kennedy Myth.” Following the early example of Victor Lasky, authors like Nancy Clinch, Bruce Miroff, Richard Walton, Henry Fairlie, Garry Wills, Peter Collier, Jim Heath, Carl Brauer, Herbert Parmet, and Peter Collier coldly attributed cultural obsession with Kennedy to a cult of personality. Remarkably, however, popular culture retained its affirmation of Kennedy. As a result, although numerous voices in the media mistrusted Kennedy as a component of government abuse, popular memory divorced Kennedy from their government scrutiny. Indeed, novels by authors like Robert Shea, Robert Anton Wilson, Joseph DiMona, Charles McCarry, Richard Condon, Edmund Aubrey, and Bryan Woolley preferred to meditate upon the plausibility of government conspiracies.

Music also repressed this critical genre by promoting an idealized Kennedy. The adoption of Kennedy as a legitimizing symbol of the counterculture movement allowed genres associated with youth movements (primarily pop and rock) to dominate Kennedy memorialization. Essentially, Kennedy served as the ultimate martyr for the counterculture movement, which was largely comprised of white middle-class youth. Accordingly, many artists attempted to optimistically revitalize the “Kennedy image” by linking it to progressive ideologies. In “The Day John Kennedy Died,” Lou Reed “dreamed” that he accomplished Kennedy’s promises, and did “the job that others hadn’t done.”²⁷ Similarly, Harry Chapin recalled his experiences in the song “She Is Always Seventeen,” in which a feminized abstraction of youth maintained an alliance with Kennedy to obtain peace.²⁸ Finally, in a more direct manner, the symbolic death of Kennedy justified The Police to lash out against traditional authorities “You don’t understand us/So don’t reprimand us/We’re taking the future/We don’t need no teacher.”²⁹ Thus, artists memorialized Kennedy by inspiring listeners to model his example.

While many artists invoked the Kennedy image to inspire affirmative action, far more used the Kennedy image to subvert the United States government. “Now your Dead” cynically reasoned that it “Must’ve been

²⁷ LouReedDiscography, “Lou Reed ~ The Day John Kennedy Died,” YouTube Video, 4:07, February 22, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlWwA5x-P9k>.

²⁸ sirpsycho, “Harry Chapin- She Is Always Seventeen,” YouTube Video, 4:16, November 16, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHtLi8P5s2c>.

²⁹ Andrew Lauder, “The Police – Born In The 50s,” YouTube Video, 3:45, April 12, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOB5TmfQxZ8>.

somehin' you said/ Musta been bad, now you're dead/ Poor Johnny got put away by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA."³⁰ Similarly, Destroy All Monsters reminded listeners the prophetic revelation the Kennedys had about getting shot and that "Not one shot rang out but three."³¹ Meanwhile, other artists creatively expanded the martyrdom of Kennedy to Robert Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald, and Jack Ruby. In a song by New Race, the singer pleaded with Oswald saying, "Don't you know it's a government plan?"³² Still, others maintained the heroic stature of Jack Ruby through songs like "The Ballad of Jack Ruby," "Bicentennial," and "Jack Ruby Special."³³ In this manner, Kennedy was not chosen as a person worthy of commemoration because of his own personal or political merits but because the assassination narrative became symbolic of cultural activism and government victimization.

Finally, several activist songs of the 1970s cited the Kennedy narrative as evidence of the wanton condition of society. Indeed, a byproduct of the approachability of the Kennedy image was the prevalence of more graphic descriptions. "Catholic Day" by Adam and the Antz irreverently notes, "No more messing round, playing with Monroe/No more turning on the middle-aged ladies/All I remember was your sporty young hairstyle/All I remember was the Catholic day/Kennedy died in '63/Kennedy's wife with his brain on her knee."³⁴ While "The American in Me" by Avengers adds, "It's the American in me that makes me watch the blood running out of the bullet hole in his head/It's the American in me that never wonders why Kennedy was murdered by the FBI/Ask not what you can do for your country/what's your country been doing to you?"³⁵ Meanwhile, other artists nihilistically commented on the apathy of non-activists. "Less Than Zero" by Elvis Costello begins with "Jenny" having an affair while Kennedy gets shot, to which the chorus urges listeners to "Turn up the TV/No one listening will suspect/They think that I've got no respect/But everything means less than zero."³⁶ Ultimately, many counterculture songs from

³⁰ SpikededgeXXX, "Fear-"Now Your Dead"," YouTube Video, 2:09, September 28, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btvKZP0dgSA>.

³¹ FillTheGaps, "Destroy All Monsters - November 22nd 1963," YouTube Video, 4:17, September 5, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2i0LSQNDqz4>.

³² Darryl Mckay, "New Race-November 22, 1963," YouTube Video, 5:08, March 11, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rx9YFWqu8Z4>.

³³ 70sheavyrockfan, "Ozzie-The Ballad of Jack Ruby(1968-75)," YouTube Video, 4:24, May 18, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw25ZZ6zo5Y>.

³⁴ Succubus Alice, "Adam Ant: Catholic Day," YouTube Video, 3:05, March 24, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kmv5R9y0Ouo>.

³⁵ johnnynotty, "The Avengers - The American In Me," YouTube Video, 2:07, October 13, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nho42QE2jKE>.

³⁶ Anglerfish Deepcuts, "Elvis Costello – Less Than Zero – My Aim Is True [1977]," YouTube Video, 3:11, April 23, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKAZ4FTzvNg>.

the 1970s, like “Motorcade” by Magazine, “Lee Harvey Oswald” by Disco Zombies, “Dallas 1 PM” by Saxon, and “Magnets” by the Vapors, ritualistically portrayed Kennedy’s death as an unjust occurrence partially orchestrated by a depraved government and indifferent populace. This depiction, in turn, glorified their own activism. Indeed, musically, the counterculture ideologies dominated popular memory of Kennedy. While preserving the integrity Kennedy merited, it expanded his image by portraying him as an early advocate of counterculture ideologies—imbuing the “Kennedy image” with increasing political and cultural meaning.³⁷

Kennedy as a National Epic (1983-1993)

The domestic tensions and concerns of the 1970s gave way to the international crises of the 1980s. The final decade of the Cold War, uncertainty in the Middle East, and global economic failure compelled a new conservatism to arise—embodied by Ronald Reagan. Accordingly, emphasis upon Kennedy himself, either as a righteous activist to emulate or a pure politician to mourn, dissipated into a broader historical narrative. Indeed, although social concerns had not diminished and popular culture served as a sphere in which dissatisfaction was expressed, enough time had passed for Kennedy’s image to transform into a national epic. As a result, historians like David Burner, Paul Harper, James Giglio, and Thomas Reeves attempted to place Kennedy within a broader historical context, while the now prevalent “Generation X” music genres impersonally cited Kennedy.³⁸ Nevertheless, although the “Kennedy image” was historicized during this third decade, the music of this period still emphasized both his righteous integrity (derived from the 1960s) and suspicion of the government (derived from the 1970s). Overall, however, the unfamiliarity of “Generation X” with the historic Kennedy caused him to be generically portrayed throughout the 1980s.

During the 1970s, Kennedy served as the quintessential example of government flaws or victimization. However, the music of the 1980s portrayed Kennedy’s legacy as but one of many national epics. Guns N’ Roses famously reminisced, “D’you wear a black armband when they shot the man who said ‘peace could last forever’/And in my first memories they shot Kennedy/I went numb when I learned to see so I never fell for Vietnam/you can’t trust freedom

³⁷ Paul Simon – Topic, “The Late Great Johnny Ace (Remastered),” YouTube Video, 4:47, Nov 7, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kbq9ujlNvD0>.

³⁸ David Burner, *John F. Kennedy and a New Generation* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2008).

when it's not in your hands."³⁹ Meanwhile, Living Colour provocatively argued that "like Mussolini and Kennedy/Like Joseph Stalin and Gandhi/I'm the cult of personality."⁴⁰ Other artists fueled public fascination with the martyrdom of characters like Oswald and Ruby. However, songs of this ilk either reiterated classics of the previous decades or were less political.⁴¹ Overall, although popular memory subtly distanced itself from the "Kennedy image" by portraying him as a national epic, this did not mean that Kennedy was perceived any less zealously. Indeed, Ice Cube in "When Will They Shoot?" reasoned that "They killed JFK in '63 so what the fuck you think they'll do to me?"⁴²

More frequently, the Kennedy image was used to provoke philosophical speculation about one's own mortality. In "Tomorrow Wendy," for instance, Concrete Blonde sarcastically stated that "We can make believe that Kennedy is still alive and we're shooting for the moon."⁴³ However, this nostalgic supposition does not change the fact that "tomorrow Wendy is going to die." Meanwhile, "Nobody Knows" by Paul Brady supposed that "Johnny will keep his illusions/What else can he do?"⁴⁴ In this sense, many artists merely use the iconic Kennedy to convey the passage of time rather than imbue it with significant political meaning.⁴⁵ Whereas many songs of the 1970s attempted to provoke listeners to emulate Kennedy's activism, Shona Laing in "Glad I'm Not a Kennedy" conveyed her relief that she did not have to make such sacrifices and even wondered if zealous involvement was profitable.⁴⁶ As the historic Kennedy became increasingly impersonal, artists like The Misfits in "Bullet" provided graphic and sexually perverted commentaries on the assassination.⁴⁷ While "Bullets For You," irreverently quipped "I am a donut/There's a hole in

³⁹ Guns N' Roses, "Guns N' Roses - Civil War [Music Video] [1991]," YouTube Video, 7:42, January 04, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYoIgKxOK4A>.

⁴⁰ Living Colour – Topic, "Cult of Personality," YouTube Video, 4:52, January 25, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0VNLhyuxg0>.

⁴¹ Mick Trashman, "Homer Henderson – Lee Harvey Was A Friend Of Mine", YouTube Video, 3:22, May 25, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMHARZXPSPY>.

⁴² O'Shea Jackson, "02. Ice Cube - When Will They Shoot," YouTube Video, 4:40, June 30, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9sXKHnf9R8>.

⁴³ wendy underravenskies, "Tomorrow, Wendy - Concrete Blonde (HQ) Lyrics," YouTube Video, 5:09, November 29, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCwIHwSt8RU>.

⁴⁴ Caitlin ó Ceallacháin, "Paul Brady - Nobody Knows," YouTube Video, 4:56, April 27, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h3JH_T8Cc.

⁴⁵ TheDreamAcademy, "Dream Academy - "Life In A Northern Town" (Official Music Video)," YouTube Video, 4:14, October 29, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UXnulANF8g>.

⁴⁶ KneesTease, "Shona Laing - (Glad I'm) Not A Kennedy," YouTube Video, 3:25, April 21, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7a6hu6Z7Pkg>.

⁴⁷ deadonanimation, "Misfits bullet," YouTube Video, 2:00, July 27, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVfeLAvkFso>.

my head/Ich bin ein Berliner/That's what Jack said/And now Jack is dead.”⁴⁸ Ultimately, although the Kennedy epic often served as an unhappy reminder that not all good efforts are rewarded, the majority of artists innocently used the Kennedy narrative as subject matter for experimental music genres.⁴⁹ The establishment of the Kennedy image as a national epic, during the 1980s, allowed the “Kennedy image” to be explored in a variety of fashions that prominently positioned Kennedy within the cultural and historical consciousness of the United States.

Kennedy as a Nostalgic Legend (1993-Present)

In 1991 on Christmas Day, President George H. W. Bush declared U.S. victory in the Cold War. The “triumph” of democratic values over communism legitimized capitalism, strengthened the United States’ authority in NATO, and symbolized a new era of U.S. history. The following twenty years would be characterized by the rise of multiculturalism, an immense population boom, tremendous advancements in technology, the mass mobilization of capital markets, globalization, and rising concern about terrorist activities. In light of these drastic changes, the fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries of Kennedy’s assassination were used to reassess the past. The result was an insurmountable volume of Kennedy memorabilia that nostalgically commemorated the past but evaluated the present was generated.⁵⁰ The establishment of Kennedy as a cultural icon to mourn in the 1960s, as a political activist to emulate in the 1970s, and as a historical figure in the 1980s not only ensured his status as the iconoclast “American” hero but also equipped contemporary artists with an arsenal of expression.

Many portrayed Kennedy as a nostalgic legend by simply reiterating past commemoration songs and themes. Indeed, a tremendous number of artists enthusiastically harped upon tried and true themes like Jack Ruby, Lee Harvey Oswald, the Zappadur Film, and Jacqueline Kennedy.⁵¹ In fact, many of these figures are now treated as historic celebrities in their own right, while others

⁴⁸ Bezobrazni Kosmopolita, “blurt - bullets for you,” YouTube Video, 3:06, November 15, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjSMsx-hxB8>.

⁴⁹ indiedancepop, “Misteria – Who Killed JFK (Energetic Cut),” YouTube Video, 5:36, January 24, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XoZHqzVuD4>; ressla, “Steinski & The Mass Media-The Motorcade Sped On,” YouTube Video, 3:57, March 16, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLwWHIqObkg>.

⁵⁰ Michael M. Katz, “As the 50th Anniversary Nears, Dallas Reflects,” *The New York Times*, November 18, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/19/opinion/as-the-50th-anniversary-nears-dallas-reflects.html> (accessed May 7, 2017).

⁵¹ metalhead4ever1987, “Deep purple - Jack Ruby,” YouTube Video, 6:05, February 4, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zKBCNb-O4g>.

regard them as morbid curiosities that can provide moral anecdotes. Other artists creatively tried to preserve the Kennedy image through albums like *Tragic Songs From the Grassy Knoll: JFK 50th Anniversary Collection* and *The Ballad of JFK: A Musical History Of The John F. Kennedy Assassination (1963-1968)*—each of which is a collection of historically significant songs.⁵² Still, other albums like *Conspiracy A-Go-Go*, *Whitewash: A Musical Revue of the JFK Assassination Cover-up*, *Four Days That Shocked the World*, and *The Kennedy Assassination: A Pop Opera* intentionally captured past sentiments with modern music.⁵³ In this style, many artists look to past themes and interpretations to rage, mourn, and speculate within a modern context.⁵⁴

The variety of ways in which the “Kennedy image” has been referenced in recent years makes it impossible to both deny and generalize about Kennedy’s role in contemporary music. True to themes of the 1970s, artists like Marilyn Manson and The Bonnevilles echoed the morbid curiosity of the Kennedy assassination.⁵⁵ However, Luke Powers, in “I Saw John Kennedy Today,” provides an alternative history, in which, he has a conversation with a living JFK—similar in some ways to some of the music of the 1960s.⁵⁶ Five Finger Death Punch, meanwhile, includes “JFK and Mickey Mouse/John Wayne/Springsteen/Eastwood/James Dean/Coca-Cola/Pepsi/Playboy” as essential components of their American identity—historicizing Kennedy like many did in the 1980s.⁵⁷ Finally, artists such as Eminem—like Ice Cube before him—identified with Kennedy by claiming that he was also “Public Enemy #1.”⁵⁸ Other rap artists similarly wondered what it would be like to

⁵² James Dotson – Topic, “A Tragedy in Dallas,” YouTube Video, 1:56, April 04, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aRrmMXVMPo&list=PLVRhKWScmdo2rO8_taHXQxPS5DnuYmooO.

⁵³ Turn Me On, Dead Man Recordings, “Conspiracy A-Go-Go,” (November 1, 2013), <https://turnmeondeadman.bandcamp.com/album/conspiracy-a-go-go> (accessed April 27, 2017).

⁵⁴ Hip-Hop Stacks 02, “Saigon - Blown Away,” YouTube Video, 3:08, May 18, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpSB1T1g4wA>.

⁵⁵ Dark Angel, “The Bonnevilles. The Drag,” YouTube Video, 5:22, June 18, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAx6V37zgnk>; Various Artists – Topic, “I Shot JFK,” YouTube Video,

⁵⁶ Luke Powers, “I Saw John Kennedy Today,” YouTube Video, 2:12, November 15, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VD5sz8Trnxs>.

⁵⁷ 5FDPVEVO, “Five Finger Death Punch – The Pride,” YouTube Video, 4:02, October 8, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuQGx1H1Qh8>.

⁵⁸ 3:17, October 13, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30hB7YjMKNk>; MarilynMansonVEVO, “Marilyn Manson - Coma White,” YouTube Video, 4:22, October 08, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQPJYnr48yU>.

MrTruth178, “Eminem - Public Enemy #1 (lyrics),” YouTube Video, 1:54, July 20, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fy4E6blN01M>.

be “swaggin’ like a Kennedy” or “rollin’ presidential.”⁵⁹ In this manner, many artists have affirmed Kennedy’s celebrity status by presenting him as the embodiment of individualism.

Demonstrably, then, the legacy of John F. Kennedy expanded beyond the mortality of the man himself, thereby proving itself an organic entity subject to a negotiated meaning. Significantly, however, this “Kennedy image” is not a singular entity, but, as is evidenced by the published works of the 1970s, coexists with other perceptions of JFK. Remarkably, however, popular memory’s rendering of the “Kennedy image,” as expressed through popular music, remained surprisingly uniform. That is, the “Kennedy image” was neither forgotten nor obtained a negative connotation but retained a positive status throughout the twentieth century. Indeed, although music is but one vehicle of popular memory and is not necessarily the primary medium through which the Kennedy image was preserved or transferred, it nevertheless presents itself as a unique indicator and contributor of the Kennedy legacy.⁶⁰ Indeed, popular music did not merely inform each subsequent generation about Kennedy but it appropriated and actualized his image by adjusting the musical genre and ideological significance associated with him. Thus, although contemporaries are not familiar with the historic Kennedy, they reiterate his celebrity status by associating him with Americanism. Indeed, in each decade, artists awarded Kennedy the highest status they knew, even if it varied. Thus, Kennedy’s externalized self, which was captured by the media, was ultimately promoted and imbued with new meaning by subsequent generations.

Exploration of the Kennedy obsession does not quickly demystify the legacy of this intriguing figure. Indeed, the “Kennedy image” is an entirely different entity than the historic Kennedy, since it is shaped by the whims of popular memory.⁶¹ Problematically, popular memory is comprised of a plethora of factors and expressed in numerous ways. Accordingly, the “Kennedy image” was susceptible to historical, cultural, technological, and political changes. There is then much to be explored regarding the function of popular memory and its relation to Kennedy. Nevertheless, in briefly exploring the ways in which popular memory conceived of Kennedy through music, this essay partially reveals both its longevity and fickleness. Beyond this, it reveals how popular memory fosters an ongoing dialogue between past and present,

⁵⁹ Tum Tum - Topic, “Grassy Knoll,” YouTube Video, 4:17, April 14, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=300XnsQDli4>.

⁶⁰ Raluca Lucia Cimpean, *The JFK Image: Profiles in Docudrama* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014).

⁶¹ Paul A. Cohen, *History and Popular Memory: The Power of Story in Moments of Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), xi-xvii, 193-198.

one that actualizes and appropriates ideologies. In the case of the “Kennedy image,” contemporary music allows the fading notes of Camelot carols to still be heard today.

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**Come One, Come All, to the Most Educational
Experience of Them All:
An Analysis of Circus Advertisements and Their
Influence on Mass Education**

By Gabriel Buckrop

Directed by Dr. Monica Noraian

In a world where technology delivers stunning displays and world-class entertainment with the touch of a button, live shows like the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus may seem antiquated. In fact, in 2017, the “Greatest Show on Earth” was closed and now is part of American history. Yet at its beginning, the circus was a groundbreaking spectacle where performers presented engaging acts for captivated audiences. The circus days of old brought a deeper, more influential experience than our present day understanding of circuses. At their height, circuses even left an everlasting impression on the viewers’ perception of reality. When the circus rolled in, whole towns essentially shut down and the focus shifted to the circus. The hum of the trains rolling in created a newfound energy within the community. Circuses also brought hundreds of new people into towns, which added diversity to small towns scattered all over rural America. Overnight towns were transformed into new and exciting places, offering fresh sights, sounds and smells. Many of the towns had a make-over which benefitted the residents after the circuses left. Finally, the circuses activated and stimulated the minds of the townspeople and sparked new interests and curiosities. The circus opened up a whole new world beyond the small confines of their town when they welcomed “The Greatest Show On Earth.”

Careful analysis of the unique way circus events were advertised across America shows just how influential the circuses were during its height from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. Advertisements of

circuses left a huge impact on everyone who experienced these live events. Even those who could not afford to see the shows still benefited from their presence in a town, as the posters displayed captivating, never-seen-before images. Newspapers advertisements used ornate ways of advertising and introduced a whole new language to society. Circus advertisements impacted the lives of those who saw them. Circus advertising was the first of its kind and offered a new approach to learning.

Several historians have focused on the educational value of circuses. Few historians, however, have looked at advertisements specifically related to the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus and linked them to education. I examined Ringling Brothers advertisements to answer several key questions. How did the Ringling brothers' life and relationship as brothers influence their circus and advertisements? What do their advertisements tell us about the values and ideas promoted by the Ringling Brothers? What role did the selection of themes and spectacles play in educating the public? What was the extent of the Ringling Brothers' name and influence? How did the entertainment of circuses double as a stimulating form of education? Finally, what is lost with the demise of circuses? In response to these questions, this paper argues that circuses and their advertisements influenced the education of thousands of Americans. Circuses were more than just entertainment; they provided a form of mass education that stimulated minds all across the nation.

Historians and the Circus

Historians can choose many different lenses of analysis through which to study circuses. For example, art historian Donna Gustafson, Chief Curator of Exhibitions at the American Federation of Arts in New York City, wrote an article about twentieth century art and the cultural importance of circuses for society. She argued that circuses influenced the lives of the artists and their creations at the time. According to Gustafson, "for many, the self-contained world of the circus was a metaphor for contemporary society."¹ Circus imagery tells historians, and the people viewing them, about the life of the people who created them. Artists portrayed themselves and their world in the pictures they created and helped to give their viewers a look into how their lives were similar to the circuses seen around them. Gustafson's article illustrated how the circuses influenced society and the American people, which in turn influenced their art.

¹ Donna Gustafson, "The Circus in the 20th-Century American Art," *USA Today Magazine* 130, no. 2676 (September 2001): 36.

*Come One, Come All, to the Most Educational Experience of Them All:
An Analysis of Circus Advertisements and Their Influence on Mass Education*

Step Right Up!, by LaVenne Hoh and William Rough, is a history of the American circus. The authors grab readers' attention by listing some common memories that are associated with circuses including the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that one might experience at a circus. Hoh and Rough argue that although it may have been years since a person attended a circus, the memory that surrounds a circus lasts a lifetime.² By tracing the historical roots of circuses in America and exploring the sideshows and music, Hoh and Rough view the circus as a true entertainment art form. While they acknowledge that circuses have declined in popularity in recent years, they believe that they will remain in collective memory due to the permeation of circus life into technology, language, and arts. Through their analysis, circuses are more complexly defined; this new way of viewing them illustrates the significance circuses have made on everyday life, even into the present day.

A vital component of circuses was their dependency on advertisements. Throughout the 1900s, advertisements helped to fuel a huge growth in commerce. Historian James Norris points out that many people feared the power that advertisements would hold over people's lives. In his book *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, Norris argued that advertisements reflect the society that produced them. He noted that advertisements after the Civil War reflected what was being sold, but then shifted, and by the 1920s the "American Dream" was greatly rooted in advertisements promising social acceptance and a promotion of status through the purchase of their products.³ Norris analyzed both popular journals and magazines to look at the ways products were being advertised. He explained that advertisements played a huge role in how one constructs views about themselves; advertisements also shaped society's views.

While Norris examined advertisements in general, Gregory J. Renoff focused specifically on circus advertisements. In *The Big Tent: The Traveling Circus in Georgia*, Renoff discussed the impact "Circus Day" had on small towns in Georgia. Renoff emphasized the events that took place outside the big tent before, during, and after the main circus event. Renoff made an interesting point about the interaction between people, the circus advertisements, technology, and amusement. He argued that the circus brought together people

² LaVahn G. Hoh and William H. Rough, *Step Right Up!: The Adventure of Circus in America* (Crozet, VA: Betterway Publications, Inc., 1990), 14.

³ James D. Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 1990), xvi.

of all classes and races to enjoy the “democratic form of entertainment.”⁴ Using Georgia as a case study, Renoff argued that circuses reflected important themes in southern society at the time, including race, class, gender, religion, and consumerism. “Circus day” provided an experience for all, drawing in huge crowds from all over the surrounding areas, thereby widening the exposure of attendees to other cultures. Although the South was fundamentally different than the North during this time, the circus provided a way to bring communities together.

The World’s Fair in Seattle was another event that provided an experience similar to the circus. An article by Erik Smith, “Selling Seattle’s First World’s Fair,” showed how Seattle marketed its unique event to the public. When a city wanted to host a World’s Fair, they had to put in a bid. His article focused on how Seattle promoted and sold the city on the fair. He showed how complicated the journey was for Seattle to win the bid. They started the work in 1905 for the 1909 World’s Fair.⁵ Smith claims it was due to the way in which they sold the experience through public advocacy and campaign work that led them to get the fair. Creative men behind the scenes sold the fair’s experience by advertising that the event would give a glimpse into the future by giving the attendees a look into the new technologies that were being created and used during the time. They advertised to families by not allowing beer gardens and making everyone feel welcomed and safe when they came to the World’s Fair.

These authors and their writings highlight many the themes discussed in this article. The authors Renoff and Gustafson show how circuses reflected society at the time. *Step Right Up!* also focused on the issue of reflection, but went further to argue the permeation of circuses into society. Norris illustrated how advertisements affect society and people’s perception of themselves. The World’s Fair article provided a glimpse into how other events were advertising as an educational experience as well. Together, these writings provide a greater understanding of the way in which circus advertising allowed for a mass educational experience.

The Brothers in Business

The Ringling Brothers provide a unique opportunity to study the role that advertisements played in educating the public at the turn-of-the-century.

⁴ Gregory J. Renoff, *The Big Tent: The Traveling Circus in Georgia 1820-1930* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 2.

⁵ Erik Smith, “Selling Seattle’s First World’s Fair,” *Columbia: The Magazine of Northwest History* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 4-12.

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The brothers' knowledge as businessmen, deep love for circuses, and complex relationship as brothers took them through tough times and led them to create one of the top circuses of all time. Their passion for the art form of circuses created spectacular shows with meaningful themes and lessons that left lasting impressions on its viewers. Promoting family first, the Ringling Brothers cultivated a positive, wholesome image of their circus. The brothers each played an active and critical role in producing their shows. The success of their circus was due to the Ringling brothers' dedication to their life-long dream of producing the world's greatest show. This allowed them to persevere through all of the dead ends, conflicts, and failures to create the "greatest show on earth."

The Ringling family included the five famous brothers, Albert (Al), William (Otto), Alfred Theodore (Alf T.), Carl (Charles), and John, and two other brothers, Henry and Augustus. The Ringling brothers faced a difficult childhood. Due to poor finances, the Ringling family often had to relocate to seek new economic ventures. While they eventually settled in Baraboo, Wisconsin, the boys grew up all throughout the Midwest. The brothers gained a strong work ethic and learned the value of teamwork by helping in their father's harness shops as they traveled from town to town.

It was actually a circus poster that first sparked an interest in circuses for the young brothers. In a book about the Ringling brothers' lives written by Alf T., he recalled "the great day in the lives of these boys, who for two weeks had read and reread the crude posters on the dead walls of McGregor (Iowa), which announced that on this particular morning a circus was coming to town."⁶ From an early age, the boys helped out when the circuses came to town by unloading and loading the equipment.⁷ This particular circus had come to town via boat, but the boys got an experience they would use later in life when hauling supplies for their own circus. To further their experiments in circus life, the brothers created their own circuses that they performed for the neighborhood children. They would recreate the acts that they had seen in the circuses, such as riding horses bareback.⁸ From a young age, the brothers knew how to work together to create shows that entertained and gathered an audience, no matter how small.

The five brothers gained experience with circuses from an early age. Al and John were the first to get into the circus fun by joining and performing in a circus. Alf T. and Charles worked on their music skills. Together, the boys

⁶ Alfred Ringling, *Life Story of the Ringling Brothers* (Chicago: RR Donnelly and Sons, 1900), 21.

⁷ Jerry Apps, *Ringlingville: The Stupendous Story of Seven Siblings and Their Stunning Circus Success* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2005), 5.

⁸ Ringling, *Life Story of the Ringling Brothers*, 6.

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created a show business of music and acting. Al gained experience as an equestrian director with the Great Grecian Circus in 1853.⁹ The boys traveled around Wisconsin performing, but their true dream was to own their own circus. In 1884, the Ringling Brothers arranged their first circus with help from Fayette “Yankee” Robinson, with whom Al had worked previously as the equestrian director of the Robinson Circus. “The Old Yankee Robinson and Ringling Brothers Double Show” consisted of three wagons and the five famous brothers, including Otto who had joined the family business by then.¹⁰

After the death of Yankee Robinson, the brothers were left on their own. His death was particularly difficult for the young entrepreneurs because without the name Yankee Robinson, the show had little reputation and draw. By working together and taking their roles as both performers and managers seriously, the brothers expanded their audience to the surrounding areas of the Midwest and grew their wagonload. Although they built their status by adding more wagons and eventually animal displays as sideshows, they still lacked an elephant, the true mark of a great circus. In 1887, they had finally saved up enough money and were able to add this missing element. This meant they could charge more money for their show because few Midwesterners had previously seen an elephant.¹¹ It was not smooth sailing from here, though; dirt roads were dependent on good, dry weather and wagons did not mix well with wet, sticky roads. Finally, in 1890, the brothers were able to move their show from wagons to the railroad, which allowed them to move in all weather. This investment expanded their potential financial earnings as well as their popularity.

From 1895 to 1899, the Ringling Brothers Circus became one of the leading shows in America. Although railroads made travel much more efficient, they were not without their own set of problems such as derailling and needing frequent repairs. Animals and performers also got hurt and required much attention and effort to get them well. The Ringling Brothers needed their performers in top shape, so they published “Suggestions and Rules” for their performers to follow, such as “girls are not permitted to visit with male members of the company excepting management.”¹² Charles had written the rules and noted that they were harsh, but that it was in the interest of the performers to keep them happy and safe.

⁹ Apps, *Ringlingville*, 15.

¹⁰ Ringling, *Life Story of the Ringling Brothers*, 18.

¹¹ Ringling, *Life Story of the Ringling Brothers*, 30.

¹² Apps, *Ringlingville*, 43.

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Eventually they added many more animals, trains, and spectacles to their show. As the circus grew, they started to acquire other circuses as well. In 1906, the Ringling Circus signed an agreement to pay one-half of the Forepaugh-Sells, purchasing the rights from Ruth Louisa Bailey who was represented by A.A. Steward.¹³ A.A. Steward played a significant role in the circus world. He worked for a lithography company in Cincinnati that made posters for the Ringling Circus and owned Barnum & Bailey for a day.¹⁴ Lithography is a type of printing process which involves a giant block of stone that has the desired design carved into it. His involvement and interactions with the circus ended too soon as he did not return from his voyage on the *Titanic* in 1912. When the Barnum & Bailey Circus went up for sale, the brothers debated but finally ended up buying the circus on October 22, 1907. During the 1907 panic, Otto Ringling, the brother in charge of finances, wrote a letter to his brothers about how to deal with the situation of owning and managing the three circuses. Otto advised that their “finances would be stronger than ever as the country has never been able to meet the demands made upon Wall Street and The New York Banks.”¹⁵ After assessing the recently acquired equipment from the Barnum & Bailey, he suggested selling horses, which brought in money and saved on expenses.¹⁶

Each of the brothers had a specific role in the management of their circus. According to Alfred Ringling, the brothers naturally “...developed into a perfectly organized executive body without the usual preliminary discussion as to ‘who should be who.’”¹⁷ The brothers credited their greatness to their ability to work together in equal ownership and authority. Otto took charge of the finances, which entailed handling thousands of dollars from a single night. John planned the transportation and routing of the circus, which required knowledge of the economy of nearby towns, as well as scheduling of train itinerary. Alf T. handled the press because he could communicate well via the written word, as evidenced by his authorship of the brothers’ life story. Al held the most positions as the equestrian director; he was also responsible for selecting and rehearsing the acts. Lastly, he made sure the music enhanced the overall show by matching the themes and acts. Charlie got the audiences into the tent by

¹³ Ruth Louisa Bailey, “Bailey Sells to Ringling Bros,” June 5, 1906, Letter, Courtesy of Milner Library’s Circus and Allied Arts Special Collection.

¹⁴ “Albert Ankeny Stewart,” *Encyclopedia Titanic*, June 12, 2013, <https://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-victim/albert-stewart.html>

¹⁵ “Otto Ringling to Ringling Brother,” Original Letter and transcript, October 26, 1907, Courtesy of Milner Library Circus and Allied Arts Special Collections, Illinois State University.

¹⁶ “Otto Ringling to Ringling Brothers.”

¹⁷ Ringling, *Life Story of the Ringling Brothers*, 241-242.

manning the advertisements. He directed the billing cars and sent out the squads of lithographers. He knew the fierce competition in the field and had to be on top of his game to spread the word about their circus. Together, the brothers were an unstoppable force. They knew each other, they knew the circus world, and they knew how to educate the masses.

Advertising to All

Circus advertisements were unlike anything of the time. They used a unique process of advertising that required advanced planning and multiple means of expression through image and uniquely ornate language. Circuses spent more money on advertisements than any other sector of its operation, as the shows depended upon spreading the word to get audiences interested in seeing the circus.¹⁸ The first to roll into town was the advance, or bill, car. This was a train car that carried the advance men who would come into towns a few weeks before the show was set to arrive. At each stop, the advance team would paste advertisements onto walls and fences, hang cloth posters from buildings for all to see, spread the colorful posters around the town, and hand out heralds and couriers.¹⁹ This initial process of advertisements transformed the town. It brought a new experience to each town they entered. People could not help but read the huge 5,184-point super-type that was displayed across town.²⁰ Bright colors caught the attention of every man, woman, and child who passed the poster advertising the new and exciting animals, events, and people that were coming to town.

As if the plethora of colorful advertisements could be ignored, the circus still advertised in a more traditional black and white way with newspaper ads. In staying true to circuses' distinctive fashion, the newspapers had unusual ads. They were different from the other products being sold in newspapers, not only from the exciting learning experience they were selling, but also from the use of images and ornate language that stood out in stark contrast to the other products being advertised. By 1835, circuses spearheaded the movement to use bigger and wider ads in newspapers than anyone else.²¹

Other companies took note on how the Ringling Brothers advertised their show. Geise-Hood, a hardware company, took out an advertisement that compared the ways in which the Ringling Brothers and Buffalo Bill's Wild West

¹⁸ Charles Philip Fox and Tom Parkinson, *Billers, Banners, and Bombast* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Pub Co, 1985), 9.

¹⁹ Fox and Parkinson, *Billers, Banners, and Bombast*, 9.

²⁰ Fox and Parkinson, *Billers, Banners, and Bombast*, 9.

²¹ Fox and Parkinson, *Billers, Banners, and Bombast*, 149.

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Show advertised to the more simplistic products that Geise-Hood sold. They praised the shows for advertising "...so great and so grand, one claims this, one claims that. Both are so great to see. But when it comes to stoves and hardware, Geise Hood is the store for me."²² Companies observed how well circus advertisements worked. They saw their elaborate language and, in this case, used it to compare to their stores.

Circus advertising was more unique than most other sources of advertising. Couriers were multiple-page, long documents that described everything about the upcoming circus. Heralds were similar to couriers in that they were also long documents about the upcoming events, but they are only two-sided and did not give as much detail. The post office offered low rates to encourage the circulation of educational materials, such as couriers and heralds, and the brothers used this loophole to send their advertisements ahead of their arrival.²³ Circuses also used the lithography process to make their posters.

Both the couriers and heralds used ornate language to capture the attention of the readers. If the reader was only going to read a few words on the advertisement, they must stick. That is why the heralds and couriers featured hyperbolic language; they needed to persuade the readers to attend the show. Fox, a well-known circus historian, described the language used on heralds as, "the amazing amalgamation of alliteration awing all the ages and antedating antediluvian arrangers of alphabetic attraction."²⁴ Although an extreme example, the posters did contain alliterations. In 1892, a courier strung together ten alliterations just on the top half, including "Mammoth Moral Museums, Millionaire Menagerie, Most Magnificent Amusement Enterprise, and Ponderous Performing Elephants."²⁵ To catch the eye, the alliterations were on the top portion of the herald. The language sought to sell their name. In one sentence they claimed, "fully five times larger than any show we ever managed before. A solid fact, a substantial reality! A stupendous show!"²⁶ They truly wanted their readers to be convinced of their grandeur.

From 1870 to 1920, American literacy rates increased from 80% to 94%, which meant that the majority of Americans could read the advertisements.²⁷ However, Americans also needed to carefully analyze the

²² "Bucks Stoves and Ranges Advertisement," *The Times* in Greenville Mississippi on November 17, 1900, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/268075813/Geise-Hood%2BHardware>.

²³ Fox and Parkinson, *Billers, Banners, and Bombast*, 171.

²⁴ Fox and Parkinson, *Billers, Banners, and Bombast*, 171.

²⁵ "Ringling Brothers World's Greatest," *Ringling Brother Herald*, July 22, 1892, Courtesy of Circus World, Baraboo, Wisconsin, CWI-6559A.

²⁶ "Ringling Brothers World's Greatest," 1892.

²⁷ Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society*, 9.

information on the goods and services that they were consuming. Most magazines and newspapers advertised products from gowns, cosmetics, and fabrics, to household items such as carpets, silverware, and crystal.²⁸ This lies in contrast with the services that circus advertisements sold. Circuses served large populations with their huge productions full of meaningful content. When reading or viewing any circus advertisement, Americans were consuming historical drama narratives, reading about diverse cultures and countries, exotic animals, and unbelievable illusions done by performers, all written in new ways that stirred up audiences.

Selecting Spectacles

While circuses are remembered for the tricks and illusions of performers and the amazing animals, they also included “spectacles.” A spectacle, or spec, was the part of the show that was “fictionalized reality and theatrical in nature.”²⁹ It incorporated as many of the performers and animals as possible to provide the audience with an additional entertainment through a colorful moving display. The specs also gave a break to the viewers. Watching the performances was an intimate and somewhat exhaustive experience, so the specs helped to move the show along and to give a break in between the performers. The specs also stood as a form of competition for the larger traveling shows.³⁰ The grander the spectacles, the more viewers that would come to a show. The inspiration for the themes of the spectacles came from many different sources such as the Bible, fairy tales, mythology, and history.³¹ These spectacles added to the overall educational experience. While it might be difficult for a parent to be sold on the idea of their children going to see acrobats and other odd acts, no parent could deny how beneficial it would be for their child to go see a scene from the Bible or some other historical event.

For these reasons and many more, choosing the themes for the spectacles was a daunting task. For the 1891 and 1892 spec, the Ringling Circus presented “Caesar’s Triumphant Entry to Rome.”³² In 1903 and 1904, the brothers produced their largest spec yet, “Jerusalem and the Crusade.”³³ This

²⁸ Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society*, 40.

²⁹ Jennifer Lemmer Posey, “Spectacular Representation: Ringling Bros and Barnum and Bailey’s Marco Polo Spree as Exploration of Change,” in *The Many Worlds of Circus* ed. Robert Sugarman (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 26.

³⁰ Posey, “Spectacular Representation,” 28.

³¹ Fred. D. Pfering Jr, “Specology of the Circus,” *Bandwagon* 47, no. 6, (Nov-Dec, 2003), 5.

³² Posey, “Spectacular Representation,” 28.

³³ Posey, “Spectacular Representation,” 28.

allowed the brothers to participate in the competition that existed among the big shows because it displayed their ability to make such a lavish production. Keeping with the historical timeline, they produced “The Field of the Cloth of Gold” that featured events on the border of France between England and France, including characters such as King Henry VIII and King Francis.³⁴ In 1907 and 1908, they went back to days of Rome. In 1909 through 1911, the brothers featured the “Pomp and Splendor of Ancient Egyptians.”³⁵ In 1912, they produced their largest spec, “Joan of Arc,” which lasted them through the 1913 season as well.

During the 1903 season, the Ringling Circus produced the spectacle “Jerusalem and the Crusades,” which was a “historical drama.”³⁶ It started by having the Knights of the Crusades assemble in Auvergne, France in 1099. Next, they met in Constantinople with Emperor Alexis and the leaders of the Crusade. The second phase of the narrative featured them in Jerusalem in the courtyard of Emir’s Palace. The spec ended with the Battle of Jerusalem.³⁷ Perhaps the Ringling brothers chose this particular drama as a metaphor for their show. Jerusalem stood as the mecca of religion, drawing millions of followers to bask in its glory, just as the Ringling Brothers Circus attracted thousands to see their show. The historical aspect of the show also helped to add to the educational and “clean” element that the brothers yearned to attach to the family name. By choosing a religious theme, the brothers were able to add another source of credibility to the list of reasons to come to the show.

The “Joan of Arc” spec of 1912 drew enough attention that during the 1913 season, Joan stood alone on the cover of the courier. Her story of bravery was strong enough to entice readers to take a look inside (see Figure 1). A few pages into the courier, a paragraph, bolded by a black box, promoted reasons for seeing this particular spectacle. Joan of Arc was “A story lesson that every child should know. With an earnest appeal to youthful minds and a deep underlying moral of purity, patriotism, courage and the power of Christian Faith.”³⁸ The storyline of Joan of Arc caught the attention of a multitude of audiences. Joan of Arc did have a complex storyline, but the entertainment woven into the production kept it suitable for the youth. Those who were skeptical of the morality of the circus saw the value of the show as Joan stood as the perfect role

³⁴ Pfering, “Specology of the Circus,” 12.

³⁵ Pfering, “Specology of the Circus,” 12.

³⁶ “Jerusalem and the Crusades,” *Ringling Brothers Courier*, 1903, Courtesy of the Circus World Museum, Baraboo Wisconsin.

³⁷ Pfering, “Specology of the Circus,” 12.

³⁸ “Joan of Arc,” *Ringling Brothers Courier*, 1913, Courtesy of Milner Library in the Circus and Allied Arts Special Collection, Illinois State University.

model. The “wordless, yet more graphic and more impressive than most eloquent human speech” spectacle gave viewers a chance to see a moral show that promoted the values of patriotism and courage.³⁹ Although the Ringling Brothers celebrated diversity and other cultures, they still promoted patriotism by telling the story of a woman who died for her country. But perhaps the most important part of Joan’s story was her ability to show the power of Christian faith. Joan of Arc’s historical narrative brought what the children heard in church to life by portraying a woman who was so dedicated to her religion that she would suffer being burned at the stake.

There was an entire spread within the courier dedicated to the life story of Joan of Arc. It started out with her birth and life as a peasant and ended with the sad days of imprisonment before her heroic death.⁴⁰ The ending was brief, but the brothers promised that they would do her a great honor in the spectacle and give a great show in her name. The courier included other acts that were seen in the show, such as “The Great Flying Nelsons” and the “Ty-Bell Sisters,” but it devoted many more pages to the Joan of Arc show.⁴¹ The courier also promoted how the spec used electrical effects and scenic mountings. The spectacle gave the audience a chance to see groundbreaking technology. The modernity of it all, coupled with its massive production size, and the amount of people and animals involved, left spectators in awe.

An Homage to Hippodrome History

The brothers always chose historical themes for their shows. As seen in a poster from 1894, the Brothers portrayed Roman horse racing in a hippodrome (see Figure 2). It showed three men dressed in Roman attire, standing on two horses racing each other.⁴² This poster required a great deal of historical background to be able to understand what type of event would take place at the circus. To first define and understand what a hippodrome was in historical context, one must be familiar with Greek and Roman history. A hippodrome was an oval track that was used for horse and chariot racing. The poster does not help the reader to understand the shape, but one could predict racing given the nature of the men and their grimacing faces. The poster advertised that they were going to be accurately reproducing the racing that happened at the “famed

³⁹ “Joan of Arc.”

⁴⁰ “Joan of Arc.”

⁴¹ “Joan of Arc.”

⁴² “Ringling Brother Circus in Potsdam,” Poster, August 21, 1894, Courtesy of Circus World, Baraboo, Wisconsin, CWI 18167.

Maximus.”⁴³ They were referring to the Circus Maximus in Rome, Italy. The Romans created this stadium for public events, such as Gladiator fights and Olympic games, but it is best known for the chariot racing that took place within its walls.⁴⁴ Again, the reader would have to know ancient history to understand the significance of this stadium.

The average reader might not have caught the reference, but this famous stadium is also important to circus history. The word ‘circus’ originated in Rome, meaning round, but Roman circuses focused less on friendly amusement and more on competition versus the versions that the Ringling Brothers performed. But it is in Rome that the word evolved to become much more about entertainment that is present in circuses to this day.⁴⁵ Through their spectacles and advertising, the brothers paid homage to the unique history of circuses when replicating the horse racing that took place in the famous hippodrome. Although the poster required a historical context to understand, the Ringling Brothers sparked the curiosity of their readers. They had done their research and they knew the historical value of the Circus Maximus.

Reaching the Masses

The Ringling Bros. Circus worked to make sure that everyone had access to their show. In 1912, a newspaper advertisement in the *L’Anse Sentinel* promoted the addition of the Joan of Arc spectacle to the Ringling Brothers Circus. L’Anse is a small town in Michigan and the advertisement noted how the circus would bring thousands of visitors from the surrounding counties.⁴⁶ During this time, urbanization was rising, but there was still a significant number of small towns around the country. Circuses united these small towns such as L’Anse. Thousands of people congregated who might not have ever met one and another. The circus exposed the crowds to new sights on a stage bigger than what claimed to be “one-hundred theaters.”⁴⁷ The Ringling Circus knew its audience and prepared accommodations for the large viewership. However unlikely it was that their stage was actually one hundred theaters wide, it allowed 1000s to look upon it and see the 1,200 characters present a historical portrayal of Joan of Arc. The article gave a historically accurate background of

⁴³ “Ringling Brother Circus in Potsdam.”

⁴⁴ Mark Cartwright, “Circus Maximus,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, last modified June 12, 2013, http://www.ancient.eu/Circus_Maximus/.

⁴⁵ Hoh and Rough, *Step Right Up!*, 14.

⁴⁶ *The L’Anse Sentinel* (L’Anse, L.S., Mich.), June 29, 1912. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress.

⁴⁷ *The L’Anse Sentinel*.

the Joan of Arc, much like the one included in the courier. Even if people did not have enough money to attend the show, they could still learn about the story of the Joan of Arc from reading the newspaper ad or picking up the couriers around town.

Another way the Ringling Brothers reached the masses was through the street carnivals and parades that accompanied the shows. A courier encouraged everyone to attend by promoting the event as “tremendously free.”⁴⁸ The carnival featured music of many nations, including Japan, Turkey, India, Russia, Spain, Italy, and France. They including references “from all civilized countries to give proper setting to this background of solid exhibitional worth and size.”⁴⁹ In this way, the carnival acquainted small towns with cultures from all around the world. The spectators also saw six-hundred and fifty horses, including some wild horses.⁵⁰ Other animals toured with the circus, making up a menagerie featuring exotic animals from around the world which made it “an educational feature without parallel.”⁵¹ The menagerie brought all the animals together in one place for everyone to view. The courier marketed that they had the biggest menagerie in the world. Although the street carnival and animals were used to lure people to the main event, it cannot be ignored that even those without tickets could enjoy the circus from the surrounding areas.

Even with its promotion of all of the cultures and diversity experienced through the circus, they stayed true to America in the most circus style way, by having an “American-born” elephant. During the 1912 season, the Ringling Brothers promoted a baby elephant that had been born in America in the small hometown of the brothers, Baraboo, Wisconsin. Americans loved to see the exotic animals, but nothing sold more than an elephant, and an American-born one had people swooning.

Ringling’s Ravishing Reputation

The Ringling Brothers wanted to maintain a positive image of themselves and the circus that they had worked so hard to create. The brothers kept the business in the family, promoting a wholesome “Sunday school” image.⁵² Many of their posters and heralds included profile pictures of the Ringling Brothers. The brothers wanted the family name to help give credibility

⁴⁸ “Jerusalem and the Crusades.”

⁴⁹ “Jerusalem and the Crusades.”

⁵⁰ *The L’Anse Sentinel*.

⁵¹ *The L’Anse Sentinel*.

⁵² Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture and Society under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 6.

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to their show, as it was a family show borne from the collective ideas of brothers. They stood as an example of the true American dream. They came from an impoverished background, but through hard work, failures, and finally, great successes, they prevailed as a family unit. Reputation makes and breaks shows, so the family ties were critical to maintaining the positive images. They promoted patriotism by selecting specs that show cased heroines fighting for their country like “Joan of Arc” and talking about their “American-born” baby elephants. The viewers were exposed to Christianity during the shows by witnessing the Crusades. Every part of the circus had meaning and gave audiences a completely new type of experience.

As advertised in a herald from 1892, the Ringling Brothers credited their success as the greatest show on earth to their morality and wealth.⁵³ The brothers displayed their wealth as a driving force to get their audiences to realize the production value of the show. They took pride in how far they had come; the “millionaire menagerie, museum, aquarium” was not advertised to show off their status, but rather to give the viewer an idea of how much work had gone into assembling such a magnificent show.⁵⁴ They also promoted that they paid \$800 dollars per week to Europe’s most famous equestrian stars, the Reed Sisters.⁵⁵ The brothers verified that they treated stars with respect and that they were able to pay them fairly for their amazing talents. The amount of money they spent on salaries and production proved to the audience that their show was worth seeing. The brothers did have an obsession with including the prices that they spent, but for good reason. By 1913, the Ringling Circus had \$3,500,000 in capital invested and the daily expenses were at \$7,500, raising in proportion with its growth. Through all of the increasing expenses, the price of admission stayed the same.⁵⁶

On the last page of a 1913 courier, the Ringling Circus devoted a whole section to defending their purchases of competing circuses. They did not want the public to think that they were monopolizing the circus industry. While they did purchase some of the larger circuses, they assured the public that they owned less than 2% of the shows that operated in the U.S. and that they would have to

⁵³ “Ringling Brothers World’s Greatest,” *Ringling Brother Herald*, 1892, Courtesy of Circus World, Baraboo, Wisconsin, CWI-6559B.

⁵⁴ “Ringling Brothers World’s Greatest.”

⁵⁵ “Ringling Brothers World’s Greatest Show,” *Ringling Brother Herald*, 1892, Courtesy of Circus World, Baraboo, Wisconsin, CWI-6559A.

⁵⁶ “Joan of Arc,” *Ringling Brothers Courier*, 1913, Courtesy of Milner Library Circus and Allied Art Special Collection, Illinois State University.

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buy 98 other shows to be considered a monopoly.⁵⁷ To further their seriousness of the issue, they also offered \$100,000 to someone, circus affiliated or not, who could prove they were a monopoly.

The Ringling Brothers took their profession seriously; no detail was overlooked. They had a name to protect and controlled every step of the process. The brothers wanted the experience to be as accurate as possible. In a letter to Mr. A.A. Steward, Alf T. even focused on the details of their lithographs. He asked Steward to fix a lithograph that featured an act performed by Persians. He wanted the lithograph to reflect the Persian culture in both “costume and decorative features.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, he wanted to put the instruments in the hands of the Persian act to add to the novelty of the bill. No detail was too insignificant for Alf T. to ignore. In another correspondence with A. A. Steward, the Strobridge Lithograph Company had designed a poster that featured dark colors on the big top and clown clothes, but the brothers wanted the printer to use a lighter color.⁵⁹ They required that their posters stayed true to the nature of the light-hearted show it truly was.

Expansive Education for Everyone

Circus historian Janet M. Davis described the experiences of Circus Day. “On ‘Circus Day’ (as it was called in newspapers, memoirs, and show programs across the nation), shops closed their doors, schools canceled classes, and factories shut down. In 1907, the Board of Education in Bridgeport, Connecticut voted to close the schools on Circus Day, and children in Paterson, New Jersey successfully lobbied school authorities to dismiss classes.”⁶⁰ This new experiential learning took precedence over what classroom instruction. The schools knew the importance of seeing the once-in-a-lifetime acts that the circus brought to town.

The circus advertisements actively promoted their show as education. They especially provided the consumer with an outlet to the world beyond the confines of their rural town. Circuses brought with them diverse people, animals, and most importantly outside ideas about the world. To the average person in 1908, seeing an elephant was truly life changing. Experiencing the sights, sounds, and modernity of the circus did seem like the “most magnificent

⁵⁷ “Joan of Arc.”

⁵⁸ “Ringling Brothers letter to A.A. Steward,” Letter, Jan. 14th, 1908, Courtesy of Milner Library Circus and Allied Arts Special Collection.

⁵⁹ “Ringling Letter to Strobridge Lithography Company,” Letter, December 1911. Courtesy of Milner Library Circus and Allied Arts Special Collection, Illinois State University.

⁶⁰ Davis, *The Circus Age*, 2.

amusement” that one could have.⁶¹ The circus relied on advertisements to market shows, but the unique nature of the advertisement’s stories, colors, words, and designs were also an important part of the educational experience.

The Ringling Brothers history helped give credibility and honesty to the field of circus. Their dedication to the art allowed many Americans the opportunity to experience a life beyond their small rural roots. They brought history alive and made learning a sensory activity. They added color and action to the lives of many. Circuses arose at the same time as an influx of new people in the country, and their existence helped Americans find entertainment among the chaos. Circuses brought people together to see how connected the world was and to help them make those connections right in their own small towns. The Ringling Brothers first interaction with the circus came from reading a poster. It stirred up passion within them that led them to create a show to share with others. The circus advertisements gave Americans a new curiosity for the amazing world around them.

Conclusion

Today, we take for granted the educational and amusement elements that the circus brought to thousands through their advertisements, parades, and shows. In May 2017, the Ringling Brothers circus performed their last show. Due in part to animal rights activists who protested their use of elephants and other animals within the circus, the Ringling Brothers saw a large decline in the popularity of its show.⁶² Without those essential pieces, the show lost much of its appeal. It is a bit ironic that throughout the 146 years the show ran, the elephants remained the draw that led to its huge success in the late 1800s and its demise in the 2000s. While the treatment and use of animals in circuses is highly debated, it comes at an unfortunate cost of shutting down the circus entirely. There is not much live entertainment left for future generations to analyze and assess. With new technology, people are able to bring entertainment directly into the home so there is less incentive or necessity to seek out live entertainment. There is no doubt that the awe and amazement of seeing live shows and live animals conveys a deeper connection to our lives than simply seeing it on a screen.

⁶¹ “Jerusalem and the Crusades.”

⁶² Tony Marco and Azadeh Ansari, “Famed Ringling Brothers circus closing after more than 100 years.” *CNN*, last modified May 21, 2017.

Appendix

Figure 1



"Joan of Arc." *Ringling Brothers Courier*, 1913, Courtesy of Milner Library in the Circus and Allied Arts Special Collection, Illinois State University. Used with Permission of Milner Library.

*Come One, Come All, to the Most Educational Experience of Them All:
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Figure 2



“Ringling Brother Circus in Potsdam.” Poster. August 21, 1894. Courtesy of Circus World, Baraboo, Wisconsin, CWi 18167. Used with permission of Circus World.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the devoted and passionate individuals who helped me find such a creative and interesting topic for my paper. First, thank you to Peter Shrake from Robert L. Parkinson Library in Baraboo, Wisconsin for opening my eyes to the world of circus advertisements and the Ringling Brother's history. A special thanks to Maureen Brunsdale and Mark Schmitt from Milner Library for helping me to find the perfect resources and showing me how important circuses are to our history. This paper benefitted from these professionals who helped to shape my thoughts and perspective on all things circus.

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Cross-Cultural Encounters: Fetishizing Beauty and Sexuality under British Colonialism in India, 1858-1947

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Directed by Dr. Sudipa Topdar

Competing European powers in the seventeenth century pressured ruling countries to expand their influence into formerly uncharted territories and to strengthen their place as world powers. South Asian countries became a targeted area for exploration and expansion. To the western world, these countries were viewed as strange and exotic places filled with luxurious fabrics, unique spices, dangerous animals, and bizarre native peoples. India specifically became a central focus for Great Britain in their quest for ultimate domination and total world power. Great Britain viewed India and its people as inferior, and sometimes even barbaric in their culture and ways, which made them a desirable target for Great Britain's quest for power through expansion. British imperialism played an influential role in India starting in the mid-nineteenth century when British colonial rule began to grow substantially after the failed Rebellion of 1857. The influence of the British Raj (the British rule of India between 1858 and 1947), can be seen in all aspects of Indian culture and life. This paper will specifically examine how Indian women's lives changed with the influx of western ideals that were forced upon them by the British during colonial rule, which lasted nearly a century.

With the rule of the British Empire in India, the growing influence of western ideals greatly shifted the lives of Indian women. Under the rule of the British Raj in India, women's standards of beauty, gender roles, and ideas of sexuality transformed. As a reaction to these cultural changes, many women opted to conform to these standards to fit in, while other women simply did not have a choice in the way that they defined themselves.

By examining historiographical trends, this article seeks to answer four core research questions while highlighting the main ways that British rule affected Indian women's lives. The research questions are as follows: How did the British Empire influence women's lives in the public and private spheres? How did Indian women in cinema transform ideals of beauty? How were gender roles propagated throughout the Empire? How did the fetishizing of non-white bodies impact native women?

Historians, Gender, and Colonization

Throughout this article I will examine different monographs and articles that reflect on the impact of cross-cultural encounters of not only Indian women but African women as well. Despite being geographically separated across the world from each other, Indian and African women shared many similar experiences of globalization at the hands of European expansion. Written history around the world and across different cultures has been male dominated for centuries. The erasure of women and gendered histories has left a knowledge gap in our understanding and perceptions of cross-cultural encounters. I will attempt to shed light on many of the forgotten stories of women and give a voice to those whose histories have been silenced.

Many articles and monographs examine the transformation of beauty standards under British imperialism and rule. Indian and African women faced increased pressure to not only act like, but also to physically resemble, white British women's appearances. They were constantly bombarded with advertisements and images of what the ideal woman should look like. White woman became the ideal image of beauty not only for women, but for men as well. Timothy Burke's article, "Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe," argued that consumerism of British products shaped views of native beauty standards in Africa.¹ In Africa, as well as India, companies marketed products to women of color, including skin whiteners, and light-colored face powders and lipsticks. Consumerism is a large theme in what affects the ideal image of beauty. This is displayed through beauty and hygiene product advertisements marketed to women.

Historians also examine how the strict gender roles followed by traditional Indian culture began to blur and transform for women under the

¹ Timothy Burke, "Bodies and Things: Toiletries and Commodity Culture in Postwar Zimbabwe," in *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

British Raj. British schools in India were the main place where gender roles became established through teachings and discipline. This theme is outlined in historian Sudipa Topdar's article, "The Corporeal Empire: Physical Education and Politicizing Children's Bodies in Late Colonial Bengal."² Over time, gender roles for women in the public and private spheres changed for various reasons. One reason was the use of guns by women as a means of sports and protection, which is outlined in the article "Good Sports and Right Sorts: Guns, Gender and Imperialism in British India," by Mary Procida.³

Finally, historians have researched female sexuality and empire. Throughout the rule of the British Empire, Indian women rarely defined their own sexuality for themselves. In the article "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus': The Making of a Native Commissioner in South West Africa," by Patricia Hayes, native women's bodies were often the subject of curious, yet inappropriate, examination.⁴ The fetishizing and sexualizing of non-white female bodies also is a common theme seen throughout the colonized period in India. The inappropriate and demeaning curiosity of native women's bodies is vividly illustrated through the image of "Hottentot Venus," more commonly known as Sarah Baartman. Sarah Baartman was a domestic servant who, because of her large buttocks and oddly shaped physique, was taken to London to be put on display. Europeans from all over came to ogle at and study her. Because she was different and unique, she was demoralized and sexualized. (See Figure 1) However, during the early twentieth century, women's sexualities in the public sphere were broadcasted in a much more positive light through the depiction of the Modern Girl in Indian cinema. In Priti Ramamurthy's piece, "All Consuming Nationalism: The Indian Modern Girl in the 1920s and 1930s," Indian women in cinema began to be portrayed as sensual heroines who were admired for their beauty and became idolized figures in the media.⁵

Beauty

Indian women's beauty standards constantly transitioned and changed throughout the rule of the British Empire. Under the British Raj, there was

² Sudipa Topdar, "The Corporeal Empire: Physical Education and Politicizing Children's Bodies in Late Colonial Bengal" *Gender & History*, Vol. 29, No. 1, (April 2017).

³ Mary Procida, "Good Sports and Right Sorts: Guns, Gender and Imperialism in British India" *Journal of British Studies* 40:4, (2001).

⁴ Patricia Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus': The Making of a Native Commissioner in South West Africa," *Gender and History*, (1996).

⁵ Priti Ramamurthy, "All Consuming Nationalism: The Indian Modern Girl in the 1920's and 1930's," *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

increased pressure for native women to appeal to the standards of English beauty. Beauty and hygiene products were marketed to native women to help them achieve the appearance of western beauty standards. Some products included soaps, skin lighteners, mascara, face powder, and lipstick. Burke discussed the opinion of one woman who used skin lighteners. She recalled the advertisements that she saw in her youth and how they always featured white women, so “when [she] thought of beauty, [she] thought of white women.”⁶

The use of hygienic and beauty enhancing products also came to represent a woman’s social class, status, personal sophistication, and modernity. Women felt increased pressure from not only society, but from Indian men as well, to conform to these standards. Burke stated that, “even male critiques acknowledged that cosmetics users were sexually alluring. The need for cosmetics is not rooted in women’s being, but instead comes from men.”⁷ Women were not only fighting a double standard when it came to consumption of beauty and hygiene products but also facing an unwinnable battle. Advertisements and marketing tactics told these women they needed these products in order to be beautiful and at the same time the “traditionalists” and men in society who were against outside western influence, still admitted that it made women more appealing. “In any case, from either perspective, cosmetics posed a challenge to each woman’s *own* identity and sense of her femininity, each woman’s personal struggle to construct what she considered to be a superior lifestyle for coping with the challenges of “modern” life and the demands of men.”⁸

Products like beauty powders advertised that using the product would give women instant beauty, attract men, and help achieve a perfect and admirable light skin tone. An advertisement for Pompeian Beauty Powder in 1925 depicted a woman at a party surrounded by attentive, attractive, and well-dressed men. The advertisement told the story of Judy’s night out at a dance. Judy was depressed and unhappy before the dance because she believed that no one liked her, found her attractive, or would dance with her. That was until her friend Linda introduced her to Pompeian Beauty Powder. Judy became the most sought-after girl at the dance that night and the advertisement stated: “to-day Judy has attained life’s highest happiness. The future looks golden indeed, and all—she says—is due to Pompeian Beauty Powder.”⁹ This told women that all

⁶ Burke, “Bodies and Things,” 192.

⁷ Burke, “Bodies and Things,” 198.

⁸ Burke, “Bodies and Things,” 198.

⁹ Pompeian Beauty Powder ad, *Statesman*, April 10, 1925, Calcutta, India.

they needed to achieve happiness was beauty and youth; all that women needed to achieve beauty and youth was that product.

Advertisements like Pompeian Beauty Powder stated that using the powder would make a woman's skin "gain the admired fair English peach bloom" and give them "instant girlish beauty."¹⁰ The advertisement emphasized age by using phrases like "girlish beauty" to make the reader self-conscious about aging skin and overall looks. The advertisement also implied that without their products, a girl could never achieve maximum happiness. This planted ideas into women's minds that they could and should not be happy without the approval of others. Further, the only way they would get approval was by appearing as white and feminine as possible. This in turn created a reliance on the products and on consumerism of British products.

Hygiene products like soap also were used to pressure women into certain ideals of beauty that would make them "civilized" and modern. Often times these products were advertised as a symbol of colonial power and status, which created a clear divide between what was seen as "civilized" and "uncivilized." An advertisement for Queens Honey Soap, a household soap product marketed in India in the early twentieth century, very clearly depicted the Queen of England sitting on a throne raised above a crowd that cheered and praised her. The crowd consisted of both British citizens and Indians, which symbolized that the soap was a product of royalty but both the British and Indians celebrated the Queen as a representation of grace and modernity.¹¹ This made it clear to native women that because they were not white and European, they were uncivilized and unclean. Therefore, these advertisements were marketed to Indian men and women with the message that everyone should use this soap if they wanted to be seen in the likeness of the Queen and other white European powers.

Companies marketed beauty products such as skin lighteners and face creams to Indian women, promising the women youthful, beautiful, and radiant skin that should be the ideal for all. The idea that dark skin was dirty, unclean, old, or unattractive was common among advertisements for skin creams. For instance, an advertisement for Pearlex skin bleach very clearly depicted a fair toned white woman contrasted against a darker skinned image of a woman.¹² The advertisement declared that women could possess desirable fair skin only before achievable by human nature, which stated that the desirable look was that

¹⁰ Pompeian Beauty Powder ad, *Statesman*, April 10, 1925, Calcutta, India.

¹¹ Advertisement for Queens Honey Soap, United Kingdom, 1880s, <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/media/advertising/queenspack.htm>.

¹² Advertisement for Pearlex, *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 1942.

of a fair-toned woman. Products like the Pearlex skin bleach were marketed to Indian women to tell them that pale, white, and fair skin was the ideal image of beauty and what they should aim for.

Films also marketed the same ideals of beauty to Indian women. In the early twentieth century, the image of the Indian Modern Girl began to appear in cinema. The Modern Girl was a beauty icon who was praised and adored for her role as a feminine heroine in Indian cinematic entertainment. Priti Ramamurthy described the Modern Girl as the stylish “It” girl. Patience Cooper, a famous Modern Girl, could be recognized from her beauty with her “bobbed hair, kiss curl, plucked eyebrows, and bold lipstick,” all common physical beauty features of the Indian Modern Girl.¹³ On film, the Modern girl was sexy, seductive, and powerful. In pictures, the Modern Girl posed in alluring ways to show off her beauty and full body. In one image, Patience Cooper was pictured reclining on two pillows with her arm stretched above her head in a sexy and alluring pose. In another portrait she was adorned with jewelry and beautiful makeup, with perfectly styled hair.¹⁴ (See Figure 2)

Actresses like Cooper were praised and adored by millions all around the world. The Modern Girl is another example of how British beauty standards and consumption of beauty products played a major role in Indian women’s lives. In the 1920s and 1930s, going to the cinema became a popular activity, especially for women who would frequent the theaters to fill up the “zenana” or women-only sections in movie halls. Through watching these movies, Indian women, and Indian society at large, had a visual representation of beauty standards from which to shape their standards.

Gender Roles

Gender roles in India had been established long before the British Empire began its rule in India. While colonialism did not create the original outline for gender roles in India, gender roles in the public and private spheres constantly went through transitions while under British rule. The place that influenced gender roles the earliest for Indian women was in schools. Topdar’s article, “The Corporeal Empire: Physical Education and Politicizing Children’s Bodies in Late Colonial Bengal,” outlined how native girls were viewed by European schoolteachers and inspectors. One inspector commented on the physical deformities of young females by stating that “anything carried on the hip, be it a baby or a water ghara [earthen pitcher] displaces the internal organs,

¹³ Ramamurthy, “All Consuming Nationalism,” 155.

¹⁴ Studio portraits of actress Patience Cooper. 1933. National Film Archive of India.

thereby jeopardizing childbearing capabilities.”¹⁵ This implied that the female body’s main job was childbearing, which in turn defined the role for females as mothers only. School inspectors also commented on the appearances of young Indian females by describing them as weak and malnourished, with unattractive physical traits such as bowlegs. Their goals were to make young girls as physically attractive as possible to help them later in life with child bearing. Physical education classes in Bengal also taught “correct” domestic roles for females inside the home. Girls would learn the basics of caring for the sick and for children as well as things such as cleanliness and hygiene. Although women as mothers in India were already a gendered norm, the idea that native girls were uncivilized, weak, unfit to be mothers, and even barbaric, put a different pressure on Indian women to adhere to the standards of what Europeans thought were appropriate for young women.

Another example of gender roles for women changing under the rule of British Imperialism can be seen through the article “Good Sports and Right Sorts: Guns, Gender and Imperialism in British India,” by Mary Procida.¹⁶ In this article, Procida examined how the use of guns by Anglo-Indian women shifted gender roles for women and the ideas of women in masculine roles transitioned as a result. In the early 20th century, women began to use guns for a range of reasons, including hunting and protection. Procida explained that while the use of guns may appear to be a rebellion against the patriarchal system of oppression that women faced, it was actually encouraged by male spouses and was seen as women’s introduction to the political backdrop of colonial tensions. Nonetheless, because guns often represent the hyper-masculine image of nationalism and imperialism, the use of them by women demonstrated a shift in gender norms in the public sphere for females as a result of the British Empire’s rule in India.

The use of firearms by women for protection is a drastic representation of a shift in gender roles. In one case, Hilda Borne was taught how to use a gun after her husband worried about her safety when she was home alone with the Indian servants. Her husband gathered all the servants to watch and set up a life sized human target. “At first I was hopeless, but by constant practice I could hit the figure at any spot he told me to. This, of course, greatly impressed [the servants] and he felt I would be in a better position to look after myself.”¹⁷ By possessing the ability to protect herself on her own *without* a man, the roles for both her and her husband shifted. Since men were supposed to be seen as the

¹⁵ Topdar, “The Corporeal Empire,” 184.

¹⁶ Procida, “Good Sports and Right Sorts,” 445-488.

¹⁷ Procida, “Good Sports and Right Sorts,” 478.

powerful and strong protector, this took away a small amount of power from men and gave it to the women. The use of guns by women was introduced under the British Empire and therefore transformed ideas of masculinity in gender roles.

Sexuality

Women's sexuality in India has only been defined through men's eyes. Rarely throughout history do women define and represent their own sexualities without the input from men. One of the earliest cases of women's personal sexualities being silenced due to the influence of British Imperialism was examined by Patricia Hayes in her piece, "Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus': The Making of a Native Commissioner in South West Africa".¹⁸ Hayes told the story of Cocky Hahn and his experiences in Ovamboland, South Africa. Hahn studied the native female bodies that he encountered during his time in Africa. The image of the "Hottentot Venus," a barely clothed African-American woman being examined by European onlookers, was popular during Hahn's time in South Africa. The image depicted Sarah Bartman, an African woman with an unusual physique, barely clothed and standing on a platform. There are three well-dressed European men and one woman who are examining her in a curious manner. One man who appeared shocked and aghast was looking at her from behind as if he was trying to visually measure the size of her posterior. Another man and woman examined her body closely from the front while the third man stood back and looked at her through an eyeglass.¹⁹

This image of the Hottentot Venus was just a representation of how native women's bodies were viewed and sexualized. Europeans saw non-white bodies as freakish and undesirable, yet there is a juxtaposition where at the same time they were fetishized and sexualized. Hayes believed that, "because of her race, the Black Venus is objectified and denigrated, and should not be desired. But because of her gender, she also stands to be sexualized by men."²⁰ By highlighting specific aspects of women's bodies such as their "unusual" private parts, this in turn sent the message to native women that they were nothing more than the bodies they inhabited; additionally, they did not have stories or histories

¹⁸ Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus.'"

¹⁹ Charon, Louis François, *The Curious in Ecstasy or Shoelaces*, 1815. The British Museum, London.

²⁰ Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus,'" 381-382.

besides the ones that imperialists placed upon them through the emphasis of their sexuality and their physical bodies. European treatment and opinions of women's sexuality set in stone the effects of how women, their bodies, and their sexualities were viewed for years to come.

During the early to mid-twentieth century, through the use of Indian cinema and the image of the Modern Girl, Indian women's views of their own sexualities again shifted. The Modern Girl, as discussed before, was portrayed in cinema as a beautiful, sexual, seductress that was envied by all who laid eyes upon her. Different roles, with the emphasis on sexuality, began to be portrayed by these women as well. Ramamurthy stated that "love marriages, heterosexual romance, and overt female sexuality were all celebrated in these films."²¹ These films also featured vamps and prostitutes who were portrayed as morally ambiguous heroines as opposed to outcasts and villains. Seeing these images of women's sexuality being celebrated and praised gave Indian women a sense of sexual freedom and the rights to define their sexualities during this time as their own.

Conclusion

Women in India during the time of the rule of the British Empire faced many challenges in defining for themselves their standards of beauty, their gender roles, and their own sexualities. With the overwhelming influence of imperialism, many factors contributed to a shift in all of these standards. Under the British Raj, advertisements, Indian cinema, European exploration, and consumerism had an impact on the way women were defined and how they viewed their own identities. Women's lives and the culture of Indian women has forever been impacted by the influence of British Imperialism.

²¹ Ramamurthy, "All Consuming Nationalism," 153.

Figures

Figure 1



Les Curieux en extase ou les Cordons de souliers, 1815,
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69543861> (open source image)

Cross-Cultural Encounters: Fetishizing Beauty and Sexuality under British Colonialism in India, 1858-1947

Figure 2



Studio portraits of Actress Patience Cooper. *National Film Archive of India*. 1933, https://www.oldindianphotos.in/2011_09_18_archive.html, (open source image)

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The Hearts of its Women: Native American Women and the Struggle to Organize against Sterilization in the 1970s¹

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What Every Indian Knows
Auschwitz ovens burn bright in America,
twenty-four million perished in the flame.
Nazi, not a people, but a way of life.
Trail of Tears, Humans ends in Oklahoma,
an Indian name for Red Earth.
Redder still, soaked in blood of two hundred removed tribes,
the ovens, burn bright, in America.
Ancestral ashes sweep the nation, carried in Prevailing winds.
Survivors know the oven door stands wide
and some like mouse, cat crazed and frenzied,
turn and run into the jaws
at night, the cat calls softly, to the resting, us²

In November of 1972, a young Native American woman entered the Los Angeles office of Dr. Connie Pinkerton-Uri, a physician and member of the Choctaw and Cherokee Nations.³ The young woman, only twenty-six years old,

¹ The first half of the title of this paper comes from the following Cheyenne proverb: “a nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then it’s finished; no matter how brave its warriors or how strong their weapons.”

² Poem by Pam Colorado titled “What Every Indian Knows” in *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), xv.

³ Although Dr. Pinkerton-Uri is of Cherokee and Choctaw heritage, she worked in Los Angeles as a physician. She later left her medical practice to pursue a law degree to help Indian women affected by forced and coerced sterilization.

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proceeded to ask her for a “womb transplant” because she and her husband were planning to start a family. After further investigation, Dr. Pinkerton-Uri found that the woman had been given a complete hysterectomy by an Indian Health Service (IHS) physician six years ago. At the time, the young woman had two children in foster homes and was having problems with alcoholism. Dr. Pinkerton-Uri had to tell the woman that despite what the physician had previously told her, the operation was irreversible and there was no such thing as a “womb transplant.” She would not be able to have children. The woman left Dr. Pinkerton-Uri’s office in tears and her husband later divorced her because of her inability to have children.⁴ This interaction sparked an investigation by Pinkerton-Uri.⁵

Sterilization abuses against Native American women went much further than just the one young woman treated by Dr. Pinkerton-Uri in the early 1970s. Society perceived most Native Americans on reservations as recipients of welfare and were thus considered a drain on the nation’s economy, further supporting the “need” to sterilize Native American women. This thinking deeply infringed upon the reproductive rights of these women, and physicians like Pinkerton-Uri began investigating how their patients could have been misled to believe a uterine transplant was possible. Their activism led to the realization that the Indian Health Services sanctioned these procedures by its personnel. These policies and practices by health administrators were based on the eugenic thinking that there was a need for population control and Native American women were “unfit” and not intelligent enough to use birth control.⁶

Over the same years that these sterilization abuses took place, the United States was rife with political activism, ignited by the Civil Rights Movement. Native Americans organized to address their grievances against the government. The American Indian Movement (AIM), as part of the larger “Red Power” Movement, expanded their influence and took hold of the national media through the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969 and the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. Although many Native women participated in the Red

⁴ Gail Mark Jarvis, “The Theft of Life,” *Akwesasne Notes*, September 1977, 30.

⁵ Falcia Schanche Hodge, “No Meaningful Apology for American Indian Unethical Research Abuses,” *Ethics & Behavior* 22, no. 6 (2012): 431-444; and Jane Lawrence, “The Indian Health Service and Sterilization of Native American Women,” *American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 400-419.

⁶ Gregory Rutecki, “Forced Sterilization of Native Americans: Later Twentieth Century Physician Cooperation with National Eugenic Policies?” *Ethics & Medicine: An International Journal of Bioethics* 27, no. 1 (2011): 33-42; Bruce, Johansen, “Reprise/Forced Sterilization: Native Americans and the Last Gasp of Eugenics,” *Native Americans* 15, no.4 (1998): 44-47; and Johanna Schoen, *Choice & Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

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Power Movement and specifically in AIM, none of them received the spotlight. There was a distinct gendered divide, which placed Native American women's reproductive rights on the back burner.

This paper focuses on Native American women activists who created an organization to combat rampant coerced sterilization. The Women of All Red Nations (WARN) combined aspects of both the Red Power movement and second wave feminism to create their own definition of reproductive rights and activist agenda. WARN was founded by women who came out of the Red Power movement such as Lorelei DeCora Means, Pat Bellanger, and Vicki Howard. The members of WARN denounced the IHS and the United States government for using sterilization to enact genocide against Native American people.⁷ The actions of WARN and other native activists helped to educate native women about sterilization and their rights. They also reminded women they had power over their bodies and should use that power to challenge sterilization. Eventually, their messages of education and empowerment played integral roles in ending sterilization.

Historians and the Sterilization of Native American Women

Few scholars have studied Native women's activism in this era making the study of WARN and all Native women's activism that much more important. The literature of Native women's activism in the 1970s is limited to Mary Crow Dog's memoir, *Lakota Woman*, Devon Mihesuah's article on Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash, a Mikmaq activist, and *Beloved Women: The Political Lives of LaDonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller*, by Sarah Eppler Janda, however that book does not focus on their activism during the Red Power movement (1960s-1970s), nor do these publications focus on Native American women's activism to stop forced sterilization.⁸

Instead of analyzing why the sterilization occurred, historians have typically focused on detailing the events by offering testimonials from victims and health officials. Starting in the early 2000s, historians began to identify the problem behind the sterilization: Native American women were sterilized

⁷ Kris Melrose, "On the Edge of Extinction: Interview with Pat Bellanger, Lorelie Means, and Vicki Howard," *Off Our Backs* 9 no. 5 (Mary 1979), 8.

⁸ Mary Crow Dog and Richard Eroles, *Lakota Woman* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990); Sarah Eppler Janda, *Beloved Women: The Political Lives of LaDonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001); Devon A. Mihesuah, "Anne Mae Pictou-Aquash: An American Indian Activist," in *Shifters: Native American Women's Lives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 204-222.

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because their relationship with and reliance on the government made them vulnerable to abuse.⁹ The United States government was entrusted with the care and wellbeing of the Native American tribes, but breached this trust through careless policies that allowed for the sterilization of Native women through the use of coercion and force.¹⁰

Historians like Angela Smith, Meg O’Sullivan, and Jennifer Nelson have broadened this analysis by looking at women of color and how they were affected by and in turn effected the reproductive movement of the 1970s. These historians look at the issues women of color face and state that they—and specifically Native American women—did not have a choice when it came to reproductive options. Choice must include the restraints that these Native American women were required to navigate in their reproductive lives.

Native American female scholars, like Angela Smith (Cherokee), also began to write about Native women’s reproductive rights. Their work included cultural traditions and issues of self-determination and sovereignty, which remain important into the present-day. Native Americans did not have sovereignty as a tribe and thus Native women did not have sovereignty over their body and their reproductive rights. The abuse went much deeper than just policy and eugenics, but also to patriarchy and colonization. Moreover, Native American women were forced to create their own definition of the word “choice” because they did not have the ability to “choose” in the white feminist definition of the word.¹¹

This paper will look at a variety of sources that other historians have neglected, including the case of *Buck v. Bell* and records and proceedings from the 95th Congress in order to understand the eugenics movement and the legalization of forced sterilization. It will also examine publications in

⁹ Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005); Sally Torpy, “Native American Women and Coerced Sterilization: On the Trail of Tears in the 1970s,” *American Indian Culture & Research Journal* 24, no. 2 (2000): 1-22.

¹⁰ In the Supreme Court case of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1830) it was decided that the Cherokee Nation was not a foreign state in the sense of the Constitution. This case was brought forth by the Cherokee Nation as an injunction to stop the state of Georgia from forcefully removing them their homes and seizing their lands. Because the Cherokee Nation was not deemed a foreign state it was concluded that they were in fact a “ward” of the state and “dependent on our government.” As a result of this court case the Cherokee Nation was removed from Georgia leading to forced relocation commonly known as “the trail of tears.”

¹¹ Meg O’Sullivan, “Informing Red Power and Transforming the Second Wave: Native American Women and the Struggle Against Coerced Sterilization in the 1970s,” *Women’s History Review* 25, no. 6 (2016): 965-982; Andrea Smith, “Beyond Pro-Choice Versus Pro-Life: Women of Color and Reproductive Justice,” *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 1 (2005) 1-22; Barbara Gurr, *Reproductive Justice: The Politics of Health Care for Native American Women* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015); and Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and The Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

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Akwesasne Notes, a Mohawk journal, and the Investigation of Allegations Concerning Indian Health Service by the General Accounting Office (GAO) along with the proceedings from the 95th Congress to illustrate what transgressed at IHS hospitals during the forced sterilization of Native women. Finally, publications by WARN, autobiographies of women and men who were part of the Red Power movement, and an interview with the founders of WARN will demonstrate how and why WARN was formed and their strategy to stop forced sterilization.

In reviewing these sources, several questions furthered my investigation. Why were so many Native American women sterilized? How did this sterilization affect the Native American community and activism of the Red Power movement? What led to the creation of WARN and were they successful in their fight against coerced sterilization? These questions led to a history of the eugenics movement and how it affected Native Americans in general, as well as how the Red Power movement and the feminist movements affected the direction of how Native women formed their own political agenda and their activism to stop sterilization.

While white, middle-class women involved in second wave feminism were staunch supporters of women's reproductive rights, they often ostracized women of color whose concerns differed from their own.¹² Women's organizations were extremely vocal in calling for greater reproductive choices and freedoms and they focused on issues such as access to safe abortion and birth control options.¹³ Women of color overwhelmingly rejected mainstream second wave feminism because its focus on greater accessibility to sterilization. However, women of color experienced sterilization not as a freedom, but as an attack on their bodies, their freedom, and their sovereignty.

The Eugenics Movement and Sterilization Policies

The Eugenics movement, based on the theories of Malthus and Darwin, was created by Sir Francis Galton in 1891 when he called for an "attack on the fertility of what he called the overgrowth of population." Galton called for the sterilization of those he deemed undesirable for society, including criminals, people with epilepsy, the mentally ill, or other "feeble-minded," dependent

¹² Nelson, *Women of Color and The Reproductive Rights Movement*, 4.

¹³ Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2007; and Annelise Orleck, *Rethinking American Women's Activism* (New York: Routledge) 2015.

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individuals.¹⁴ Due to scientific research during the early 20th century, scientists, doctors, and eugenicists believed that these socially undesirable traits were hereditary. Little thought was given to an individual's environment and how that might affect those characteristics. Sterilization could eradicate from society those people considered diseased, defective, or a social problem. By the beginning of the 20th century, the United States had assumed a population control policy which focused on encouraging "fit" people to reproduce and "unfit" people to be sterilized.¹⁵ These practices were legalized in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Buck v. Bell* in 1927. Carrie Buck, the plaintiff, was forcefully sterilized by J.H. Bell without her consent following the birth of her child. Because Buck was only eighteen years old and her child was illegitimate, the court determined that they were both "feeble-minded" and thus did not have the ability to give consent and should be sterilized. The court ruled that "her welfare and that of society will be promoted by her sterilization."¹⁶ By deciding that Bell had rightfully sterilized Buck, the court denied her equal protection guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment because she was considered "feeble-minded." All people defined as feeble-minded or criminals did not have the right to consent or the right to say "no" to being sterilized and their sterilization would leave less children to inherit their unacceptable qualities. By sterilizing them, there would be fewer children to inherit their unacceptable qualities. As of 1930, thirty of the then forty-eight states had enacted compulsory eugenic sterilization laws which targeted criminals and the "feeble-minded."¹⁷

In reality, sterilization tended to target women using government assistance programs, women of color, and any women considered to be in poverty.¹⁸ While these women were considered undesirable, they did not fit the definition of feeble-minded, criminals, mentally ill, or epileptic. For the most part, Native Americans did not fit the definition of "feeble-minded;" however, they did fit the category of "poor" due to economic conditions on reservations. As the century progressed, the eugenics movement started to embrace a wider definition of those authorities deemed "unfit." Physicians

¹⁴ Congressional Record Proceedings and Debates of the 95th Congress, First Session, Vol. 123- Part 30, Dec 6 to 15, 1977, 39384, Accessed November 9, 2017, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1977-pt30/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1977-pt30.pdf>.

¹⁵ Stephen Trombley, *The Right to Reproduce: A History of Coercive Sterilization* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholas Limited, 1988), 2.

¹⁶ *Buck v. Bell*, 274 U.S. 200 (1927), Accessed November 9, 2017, https://www.princeton.edu/~reading/Buck%20v.%20Bell_%20Supreme%20Court%20Opinion.pdf.

¹⁷ Congressional Record Proceedings and Debates of the 95th Congress, 39384.

¹⁸ Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement*, 133.

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judged women by their class and race, and women's access to reproductive health care and the ability to say no to sterilization rested on these identities.¹⁹ Physicians turned away middle-class white women who requested sterilization, but this was not true for women of color or women on welfare.²⁰ In fact, it was quite the opposite. Physicians often felt that a woman on welfare with multiple children would be better off being sterilized. They would also serve as training tools; Dr. Donald Sloan reported, "we practice on the poor, so we can operate on the rich."²¹

The ability to take away a women's reproductive rights and her ability to have children obviously meant little to physicians such as Sloan. Poor women and women of color were assumed to be bad mothers or a burden on society and thus eugenics had become a tool to address population control and the "welfare crisis." Physicians took it upon themselves to believe and implement eugenic thought into their practice. However, taking away women's rights and their ability to reproduce did nothing to help increase their income or change their socio-economic class. The health community believed that they had an "obligation" to society to fix the welfare crisis and that sole solution was "fertility control."²² It was this single mindedness about the heredity of traits that led to so many poor women and women on welfare being sterilized. Native American women and other women of color were deemed a problem.

Organizations such as the Population Control Council, founded by John D. Rockefeller III in 1952, and the Association for Voluntary Sterilization were created to solve this perceived problem. Due to legislation from groups like these the Family Planning Act of 1970 promised to reimburse up to 90% of the cost of sterilization. Prior to this time there were state implemented sterilization programs, but there was no *federally*-funded sterilization program. At the same time the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's (HEW) budget increased from \$51 million to \$250 million.²³ This increase of funds and federal support allowed for increased sterilization and a greater acceptance of the practice as a family planning option. Native American women increasingly became victims of this sterilization because of their accessibility. Although many of these women were not on welfare, those who lived on reservations

¹⁹ Schoen, *Choice & Coercion*, 5.

²⁰ Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement*, 5.

²¹ Congressional Record Proceedings and Debates of the 95th Congress, 39386.

²² Gena Cora, *The Hidden Malpractice: How American Medicine Mistreats Women* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1985), 199.

²³ O'Sullivan, "Informing Red Power and Transforming the Second Wave," 968; Schoen, *Choice & Coercion*, 61-63.

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received federal medical care through the IHS. This caused doctors to perceive these women as unintelligent and dependent, just like those on welfare. Furthering this perception, many Native tribes received War on Poverty benefits through federal funding due to high poverty rates on many reservations.²⁴ Physicians and health officials are often regarded as intelligent role models for the community. Native Americans originally had the same view of IHS officials. Dr. Pinkerton-Uri states Native American women “have great faith in their doctor – they do as they are told,” because they believed in them.²⁵ This faith and trust in the IHS made it easy for physicians to force sterilization upon Native women. For these reasons, Native American women were prime targets for sterilization abuse by the IHS and contracted physicians.

The Sterilization Abuse of Native American Women

The results of the eugenics movement and policies directed toward population control are blatantly obvious when it comes to Native Americans. The per capita sterilization rate for Native American Women between 1968 and 1982 was 42%, the highest of all ethnic groups, including African American women and Puerto Rican women. Furthermore, the birth rate for Native American women declined by 1.99 children, compared to .28 children for white women.²⁶ This demonstrates that the racist programs of population control were a direct assault on the Native American population. Not only were they a direct assault on Native Americans, but it is proof that these programs achieved their goal of controlling the reproductive rights of native women.

Through interviews and examination of health record, Pinkerton-Uri uncovered that women were often sterilized under duress and without sufficient information about the irreversibility of the operation. She began to accuse the government of genocide.²⁷ Through her investigations, Pinkerton-Uri surmised that twenty-five percent of all Native American women in the Oklahoma City area had been sterilized.²⁸ Not only this, but she found that “all the pureblood women of the Kaw tribe of Oklahoma have now been sterilized. [And] at the end of this generation the tribe will cease to exist.” Pinkerton-Uri believed that within fifteen years the IHS could wipe out all pureblood Native Americans.²⁹

²⁴ O’Sullivan, “Informing Red Power and Transforming the Second Wave,” 969.

²⁵ Congressional Record Proceedings and Debates of the 95th Congress, 39386.

²⁶ D. Marie Ralstin-Lewis, “The Continuing Struggle against Genocide: Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Rights,” *Wicazo Sa Review* (Spring 2005), 5-77.

²⁷ Gail Mark Jarvis, “The Theft of Life,” *Akwasasne Notes* (September 1977), 30.

²⁸ Smith, *Conquest*, 82.

²⁹ Congressional Record Proceedings and Debates of the 95th Congress, 39386.

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The reality of genocide for Native Americans was real. As a population that had already been decimated years ago, there were very few Native Americans left, especially full-blood Indians. With less than a million Indians in existence before sterilization abuse, genocide was looming near.³⁰

Under the persuasion of Pinkerton-Uri, Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota prompted the General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate IHS health records and the allegations of sterilization abuse. In 1976, the GAO finished their investigation. Even though the GAO only investigated four of the twelve IHS hospitals, it was found that between 1973 and 1976 there had been 3,406 permanent sterilizations of Native American women. Of those sterilized, 3,000 were child-bearing age (15-44).³¹ Considering only a third of IHS hospitals were looked into during this investigation it can be assumed that the number of Native American women who were sterilized at IHS facilities during those three years was much higher than 3,406. Overall, the investigation did not conclude that these sterilizations were forced. However, it was uncovered that the facilities were “generally not in compliance” with regulations requiring informed consent. Facilities failed to indicate basic elements of informed consent and inform the women of their right to decide not to be sterilized. The consent forms that IHS and IHS contracted physicians used were confusing and did not consider cultural and language differences. Furthermore, the report found that multiple facilities did not abide by the court ordered moratorium on the sterilization of women under 21; 36 Native American women under the age of 21 were sterilized.³² Physicians tried to excuse their actions by stating that they did not understand the regulations for sterilization and that they believed they could perform sterilization on minors or those who were mentally incompetent with proper informed consent.³³ Yet, the moratorium made it obvious that there was to be no sterilization of those under the age of 21 and who were deemed mentally incompetent.

While it is clear that this investigation did not uncover forced sterilization, it did expose deceit used by the health community. Although under the obligation to inform their patients of their rights and all critical information

³⁰ Jarvis, “The Theft of Life,” 30.

³¹ Elmer B Staats, Comptroller General, Report to Senator James Abourezk, Investigation of Allegations Concerning Indian Health Service. General Accounting Office, 1976, Accessed November 9, 2017, <https://100years.plannedparenthood.org/content/images/era-3/117355.pdf>, 3.

³² In 1973, the U.S. district court for the District of Columbia ordered a moratorium (freeze) on the sterilization of those under the age of 21 and those who were considered mentally incompetent; “Killing Our Future: Sterilization and Experiments,” *Akwesasne Notes* (Spring 1977), 4; Investigation of Allegations Concerning Indian Health Service, 4.

³³ Staats, “Investigation of Allegations Concerning Indian Health Service,” 22.

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about a medical procedure, physicians and medical personnel chose to leave out crucial information when sterilizing Native American women, such as how the operation was irreversible. Therefore, hundreds and possibly thousands of Native women had sterilization procedures that they did not understand or want. Women were often lied to and made to believe that being sterilized would solve all their health problems. One woman told Pinkerton-Uri that she went to the doctor because she was suffering from severe headaches. The doctor proceeded to tell her that she had headaches because she was worried about getting pregnant and advised sterilization. After being sterilized, the woman discovered she had a brain tumor.³⁴ Physicians thoughtlessly sterilized Native American women without considering other possible health conditions. Their main concern was to stop Native American women from reproducing, not their overall health and wellbeing. Mary Crow Dog, a member of the American Indian Movement, refused to have her baby in an IHS hospital for fear of being sterilized. Crow Dog stated that, “being poor, unwed, and a no-good rattle-rouser from the Knee made me an unfit mother.”³⁵ Physicians’ biased beliefs about Native American women led to unnecessary and unwanted sterilizations.

Even though the GAO investigation did not conclude coerced sterilization occurred at these facilities, it does not mean that it did not happen. This investigation purposely did not interview the patients who were sterilized thus making it extremely difficult to reveal if physicians coerced them into being sterilized. In 1975, Mary Crow Dog’s sister, Barbara Moore, visited the IHS facility on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota to have her baby. Upon waking the next day Moore was informed that her baby had died and she had been sterilized. Moore states she, “was sterilized during the operation without my knowledge and without my agreement.”³⁶ IHS doctors asserted their control over women’s reproductive rights by performing sterilizations without consent. Doctors like the one who sterilized Moore stripped women of their freedom and their bodily rights. Because of paternalistic and eugenic ideas, they believed they had the right to decide for these women whether or not they will be able to have children in the future. Native women gave their “consent,” but it was through physicians providing them with incomplete or incorrect information. Many Native women were pressured into signing consent forms after threats of their children being taken away or consent was given when women were still groggy from drugs after giving birth. In 1975 a young woman was asked by

³⁴Jarvis, “The Theft of Life,” 30.

³⁵Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman*, 166.

³⁶“An Interview with: Barbara Moore, on Sterilization,” *Akwesasne Notes*, (Spring 1979), 11.

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medical staff to sign a form for her caesarian section after both the C-section and her sterilization; little did she know, that form was a consent form for her sterilization. A woman in Minnesota believed she was signing a form for painkillers when the form *actually* authorized her sterilization. Another woman who had been sterilized the day before claimed that medical staff asked her to sign a document with the previous day's date.³⁷ In the late 1970s, the founders of WARN claimed that "80% of the Indian women" in Northern Cheyenne had been sterilized.³⁸ Through coerced sterilization these women were stripped of their sovereignty. They did not have the ability to choose whether they wanted to be sterilized or not. The choice was made for them.

Native American Women within the Feminist and Red Power Movement

The Civil Rights Movement in the second half of the twentieth century created an atmosphere that led to political activism by many different groups. This movement ignited agendas focused on both women through second wave feminism and Native Americans through the Red Power Movement. However, Native American women were systematically included and excluded from both movements. Starting in the 1960s, the Red Power movement focused on self-determination and sovereignty. Native American political activism revolved around regaining tribal ability to self-govern outside of the power of the United States. Native American tribes consider themselves sovereign and independent nations from the United States. Therefore, during the era of Red Power, Native activist groups such as AIM focused solely on what was best for Native peoples as a whole, which was self-determination.³⁹

Native American women participated in the Red Power movement. Women and men were involved in a variety of Native American activist groups throughout the 1960s and 1970s, especially AIM. Both men and women took part in the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee and acted as negotiators. In fact, the men at Wounded Knee "depended on women."⁴⁰ However, these women were not given recognition for their activism by either the media nor the men involved in the movement. Russell Means, one of the most outspoken AIM leaders, believed in a strict "female-male balance" where it was understood that

³⁷O'Sullivan, "Informing Red Power and Transforming the Second Wave," 972; and "Killing Our Future," 4.

³⁸Melrose, "On the Edge of Extinction," 8.

³⁹Alvin M. Josephy Jr., Joane Nagel, Troy Johnson, ed., *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 13.

⁴⁰Mihesuah, "Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash: An American Indian Activists," 208; and "Women of All Red Nations (W.A.R.N.)," *Akwesasne Notes*, (Winter 1979), 15.

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a “woman’s role is different than a man’s.”⁴¹ Although historically many Native American tribes were matrilineal and women held important positions in society, many Native activist groups were sexist.⁴² Instead of Native women being equal to men and being recognized for their activism and participation in AIM and other organizations, many Native men believed “all a woman is good for is to crawl into the sack [...] and mind the children.”⁴³ Colonization of Native American societies greatly affected their culture and gender norms. These new gender norms in Native society dictated what women were allowed to do. Moreover, women’s reproductive issues were not seen as the most salient issue and thus were not put on the political agenda by male-dominated groups.

Dr. Pinkerton-Uri requested that Means mention the sterilization abuse against Native American women during his campaign on the Longest Walk in 1978.⁴⁴ She hoped to create national exposure. Even though Means mentioned sterilization, little came from this deed and AIM did not take further action to focus on sterilization abuse. A white woman once confronted Mary Crow Dog during the occupation of Wounded Knee chiding that she was “betraying the cause of womankind” by letting the men take credit for their actions. She replied stating that “once our men had gotten their rights and their balls back,” Native American women “might start arguing with them about who should do the dishes.”⁴⁵ For many Native American women, there were larger issues than sexism and the lack of support for halting coerced sterilization and those issues needed to be tended to first.

Although Native women faced sexism and discrimination in the Red Power movement, many did not feel the need to embrace the feminist movement. In fact, many Native American women rejected white feminism.⁴⁶ Scholar Devon Mihesuah argues that in Native American culture, “tribal survival took precedence over individual rights,” which led to Native Americans, both men and women, being “primarily disempowered due to their race” and lack of sovereignty.⁴⁷ Native American men and women were not “free in the most basic sense of the word.”⁴⁸ Because the federal government considered Native Americans wards of the state, it also believed they could not

⁴¹ Russell Means, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 265.

⁴² Ralstin-Lewis, “The Continuing Struggle against Genocide”, 73.

⁴³ Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman*, 65.

⁴⁴ Means, *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, 374-375.

⁴⁵ Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman*, 131.

⁴⁶ Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement*, 4.

⁴⁷ Mihesuah, “Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash,” 209.

⁴⁸ Josephy, *Red Power*, 17.

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make decisions. Because Native Americans did not have political and social sovereignty, Native women did not have sovereignty over their bodies, thus they did not have the right to “choose” when it came to reproductive rights.

When it comes to the white feminist movement, reproductive rights revolved about an individual’s ability to choose. The second wave feminist movement focused on expanding women’s rights and giving them greater access to reproductive health care. One focus of this wave was voluntary sterilization. The mainstream feminist movement refused to endorse any regulation on sterilization because they believed it would restrict a woman’s reproductive rights.⁴⁹ Mary Crow Dog dismissed this type of feminism as “a white-middle class thing” and Native American women had “other priorities.”⁵⁰ The experiences white women had with sterilization were much different than those of women of color. White women could not choose to be sterilized because physicians often refused to sterilize healthy white women, assuming they would want children in the future. However, women of color did not have the ability to choose *not* to be sterilized. Native American women’s class and race shaped their reproductive agendas and their ability to choose. The mainstream reproductive movement:

[F]rames the issue around individual ‘choice’ – does the women have the choice to have or not to have an abortion. This analysis obscures all the social conditions that prevent women from having and making real choices – lack of health care, poverty, lack of social services etc. If a woman has an abortion because she cannot afford to have a child she would otherwise want, is that a real choice? In the Native context [...] reproductive ‘choice’ defined so narrowly is a meaningless concept. Instead Native women and men must fight for community self-determination and sovereignty over their health care. Fighting for reproductive rights under the framework of sovereignty allows both Indian and non-Indian communities to address all the factors that prevent women from determining their reproductive lives.⁵¹

The second wave feminist movement did not take into account the social, economic, and political forces that shape women of color’s experiences. Thus, the mainstream definition of feminism and their agenda were irrelevant to

⁴⁹ Orleck, *Rethinking American Women’s Activism*, 100.

⁵⁰ Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman*, 131.

⁵¹ Jael Silliman and Ynestra King, ed., *Dangerous Intersections: Feminist Perspectives on Population, Environment, and Development* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), 211.

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Native American women and other women of color. By not addressing the social context in which women of color lived, the fight for reproductive rights was meaningless.⁵² Barbara Moore admits, “our traditional people don’t trust women’s liberation, in the way that white women practice it. We Indian women have always been emancipated.”⁵³ For Native American women to fight for their reproductive rights, they first needed to regain sovereignty over their tribes and their bodies in order to create their own reproductive agenda.

Native American Women’s Activism and the Rise of WARN

Sterilization abuse affected not only Native American women’s reproductive rights and their bodies, but also their peace of mind, their families, and their communities. In Native American culture, “being a mother and rearing a healthy family” was the ultimate achievement for a woman.⁵⁴ Because of the deep traditionalism of some Native American women and the importance of family, sterilized women experienced extreme shame after the procedure and felt “castrated.” As such, many experienced “psychological problems” from their inability to carry children. Dr. Pinkerton-Uri asserts that many women had nervous breakdowns, tried to commit suicide, or became alcoholics as a result of being unwillingly sterilized.⁵⁵ Taking away a women’s ability to reproduce tore apart not only her family, but also her tribe. Many tribes lost the respect of other communities because they could not protect their women.⁵⁶ Coerced sterilization affected both women and men. However, Native women could not rely on neither the Red Power movement nor the Feminist movement to champion their cause because both failed to address their political concerns.

It was in this context that WARN began to address the sterilization abuse of Native American Women. WARN was founded in 1974 by Lorelei DeCora Means, a Minneconjou Lakota, and Madonna Thunderhawk and Phyllis Young, both Hunkpapa Lakota, and other Native women such as Pat Bellanger and Vicki Howard. These women were all part of the American Indian Movement, but they saw the need to create an organization focused on issues other than political sovereignty and self-determination. At the founding

⁵² Gurr, *Reproductive Justice*, 26,33.

⁵³ “An Interview with: Barbara Moore,” 12.

⁵⁴ Carolyn Neithammer, *Daughters of the Earth: The Lives and Legends of American Indian Women* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc, 1977), 2.

⁵⁵ Jarvis, “The Theft of Life,” 30.

⁵⁶ Lawrence, “The Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American Women,” 411.

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conference, there were more than “30 Native nations present.”⁵⁷ It was through this organization that Native women focused on concerns specifically affecting women and the family such as sterilization, education, and theft of Indian children. WARN was created as a “national organization in which women can organize [to] gain strength and power.”⁵⁸ WARN was not created to exclude men, but to empower women. By preventing Native women from reproducing, sterilization threatened the identity of Native women. Taking away their ability to reproduce dismantled their core traditions and beliefs. In an interview with *MS Magazine* in 1976, Native American activist Madonna Gilbert stated, “in your culture you have lots of problems with men. Maybe we do too, but we don’t have time to worry about sexism. We worry about survival.”⁵⁹

As the news of sterilization spread in the Native community and to the public, many Native American women conducted their own investigations into sterilization. Marie Sanchez, a Cheyenne tribal judge and Mary Ann Bear Comes Out, a tribal member, found that the IHS had sterilized 56 of only 165 women of childbearing age on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and Labre Mission grounds in Montana.⁶⁰ As a result of this investigation and the history of abuses against Native Americans, Sanchez argued that “Indian women of the Western Hemisphere are the target of the genocide that is still on-going [in] a modern form called sterilization.”⁶¹ Whether or not sterilization was part of a campaign by the government and the health community to wipe out the rest of the Native population, these policies did target Native American women and genocide was a real threat. Many Native American women truly believed that the sterilization of Native women was an extension of the genocide that Native Americans faced for hundreds of years at the hands of colonization. In an interview with the founders of WARN, Vicki Howard declared that the sterilization abuse was an “intent to destroy” the Native American people.⁶²

The political was personal for the women of WARN and they demanded that something be done about the rampant and horrifying sterilization abuse against Native American women. In a statement, WARN declared that

⁵⁷ Women of All Red Nations, “Women of All Red Nations: W.A.R.N.,” Porcupine, S.D, 1977, Northwestern University Archives, 22.

⁵⁸ “Women of All Red Nations (W.A.R.N.),” 15.

⁵⁹ Susan Braudy, “‘We Will Remember’ Survival School: A Visit with Women and Children of the American Indian Movement,” in *MS Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (July 1976): 77-80; Madonna Gilbert now identifies as Madonna Thunderhawk as I have previously referred to her in this paper, but at the time of the interview she went as Madonna Gilbert.

⁶⁰ Ralstin-Lewis, “The Continuing Struggle against Genocide,” 82.

⁶¹ “Marie Sanchez: For the Women,” *Akwasasne Notes*, (December 1977), 14.

⁶² Melrose, “On the Edge of Extinction,” 8-9.

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the issue of sterilization was, “much larger than just a political or medical one. The real issue behind sterilization is how we are losing our power, our personal sovereignty in every facet of our duties as mothers of the future generations.”⁶³ The women of WARN interpreted sterilization as an issue that impacted more than just a woman’s reproductive rights. It was an attack on their sovereignty and freedom as Native American people. Native American women’s activism wove class, race, and tradition into their agenda. They identified reproductive rights as civil rights.⁶⁴ Katsitsiakwa, an Indian Activist, stated in a WARN pamphlet that “the white man takes what is sacred.”⁶⁵ Sterilization took away Native women’s right to have children and it took away what it meant to be a Native American.

Many of WARN’s goals were entrenched in this culture of returning to what it meant to be a Native American woman. A pamphlet published by WARN stated: “we have become more and more dependent on a way of life that does not belong to us.” WARN concluded that they, as Native American women, were not “paying attention to our power” and had “forgotten to practice sovereignty over our own bodies.”⁶⁶ WARN championed self-determination, but wove that idea into their fight for reproductive and bodily freedom. They believed that they, as women, had the ability and the power to change their circumstances by returning to their beliefs in the power of womanhood.⁶⁷ WARN focused their activism by reaching out to women in the Native American community through education. WARN published pamphlets and reports, held conferences, and met with many Native American women to educate them not only on sterilization, but also the theft of Native children, education, healthcare, and the environment. When it came to sterilization, the women of WARN explained the steps of “having your tubes tied” and expounded on the permanence of the procedure and the possible problems that could ensue.⁶⁸ Moreover, they clarified women’s rights when it came to sterilization. They affirmed that Native American women had the right and the ability to say no to being sterilized. They had the right to know the risks, to know that sterilization was permanent, and to ask for an explanation. WARN wanted Native women to realize that they did have sovereignty over their bodies

⁶³ Women of All Red Nations, “Women of All Red Nations: W.A.R.N.,” 23.

⁶⁴ Silliman, *Undivided Rights*, 4, 9.

⁶⁵ Women of All Red Nations, “Women of All Red Nations: W.A.R.N.,” 24.

⁶⁶ Women of All Red Nations, “Women of All Red Nations: W.A.R.N.,” 24.

⁶⁷ Women of All Red Nations, “W.A.R.N: Report II,” Porcupine, S.D, 1979, Northwestern University Archives, 35.

⁶⁸ Women of All Red Nations, “W.A.R.N: Report II,” 38-39.

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and their reproductive rights, but they had to be the ones to grasp and exert their sovereignty and power. People will often try to take their power from them, but it was their duty as women to change that, to resist the abuse and exploitation.⁶⁹

Despite the lack of action and support by the Red Power movement and second wave feminists, Native American women succeeded in creating their own organization and campaign to combat issues important to Native women. By using aspects of both the Red Power movement and the feminist movement, the women of WARN created a reproductive justice agenda that focused on both sovereignty, reproductive rights, and culture. The lack of support forced women to create their own organization. They were not trying to separate from Native men and the fight for sovereignty, but they were trying to propel issues such as coerced sterilization of Native women into the public eye and educate the masses on the horrifying abuse that threatened the very existence of Native Americans. The women of WARN and other Native women activists like Mary Crow Dog, Marie Sanchez, and Dr. Pinkerton-Uri expanded the definition of sovereignty beyond the confines created by the Red Power movement and second wave feminists. By claiming that sterilization was a political issue, Native women included women of color in the reproductive movement. Their activism challenged the IHS and the government. They confronted them for restricting and abusing the reproductive rights of Native women based on outdated and erroneous policies created because of the eugenics movement. These activists held the IHS and the government responsible for their actions and thus enacted change throughout both the healthcare and Native community.

From these women's actions and the GAO's investigation that admitted IHS irresponsibility, the IHS was forced to change their policies and practices of sterilization. Sterilization by the IHS is now neither promoted nor discouraged and is offered as "a method of family planning to any client requesting such service, but only within the constraints and mandate of the Department of Health and Human Services rules and regulation."⁷⁰ Native women regained their sovereignty and their ability to define reproductive rights and were able to choose what was done to their bodies. Groups such as the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center continue to promote the work done

⁶⁹ Women of All Red Nations, "W.A.R.N: Report II," 35, 38-39.

⁷⁰ Staats, "Investigation of Allegations Concerning Indian Health Service;" "1976: Government admits forced sterilization of Indian Women," *National Library of Medicine: Native Voices*, last modified December 2017, accessed November 1, 2017, <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/543.html>; "Indian Health Manual: Chapter 13: Maternal and Child Health," *Indian Health Services*, last modified December 2017, accessed December 3, 2017, https://www.ihs.gov/IHM/index.cfm?module=dsp_ihm_pc_p3c13.

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by WARN. None of this would have been possible without the brave Native American women activists of the 1970s who stood up against not only coerced sterilization, but to the government, and all those who would so easily strip them of their bodily sovereignty. Native activists devoted their lives to bettering the conditions of their people and Native women should not be left out of this recognition. Although sterilization once threatened the existence of the Native American community, the women's fight to regain their sovereignty and freedom from bodily harm saved Native Americans from genocide. The hearts of Native women are not on the ground: they are strong, and they will continue to fight for their rights and their freedom.

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Feminism Repurposed: Art as Activism in the Riot Grrrl Movement

By Tara Tracy

Directed by Dr. Kyle Ciani

“She was lying with her arms outstretched and her ankles crossed, her body positioned in a cross-shaped pose that left some speculating about some sort of religious meaning.”¹ Mia Zapata’s lifeless body was found this way on a tragic night in July 1993. The lead vocalist of a popular punk rock band that emerged out of Seattle, Zapata had been feeling good after finishing a west coast tour.² As part of the Do It Yourself (DIY) movement, where shows are held in private homes, basements, and barns, Zapata represented a woman who challenged the status quo. Because punk entered the music scene as a male genre, Zapata’s success allowed women to see the possibilities of being female and punk. Yet, Zapata’s rape and murder introduced the ugly side of the scene. The crime resonated with the many young women and girls who lived a similar life; her situation served as a reminder that *anyone* could become a victim. Young women realized that they “need[ed] a second skin, something to hold [them] tough, can’t do it on [their] own, sometimes [they] need[ed] just a little more help.”³ While Zapata’s murder remained a mystery for ten years, her experience inspired many women to pursue their dreams in the world of punk rock, including myself. We tend to ask ourselves why we enter potentially life-threatening situations to make music, but that is where the line of questioning must halt. Female musicians are just as talented, smart, and passionate about

¹ Tracy Johnson, “Police Make Arrest in 1993 Mia Zapata Slaying,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 13, 2003, accessed March 14, 2018, <https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Police-make-arrest-in-1993-Mia-Zapata-slaying-1105109.php>.

² Johnson, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 13, 2003.

³ The Gits. *Frenching the Bully*. “Second Skin,” 1993.

DIY, but a woman's efforts are constantly overshadowed by men. It is no secret that DIY is a male-dominated culture and women are just the patches on its self-righteous vest. Knowing that feminism is vital to most, if not all women in DIY, the self-proclaimed and self-involved male-feminist hides in the pockets of our rhetoric, only to use it for *his* advantage.

The existence of these caustic relationships sparked my interest in researching the Riot Grrrl Movement. This movement took the DIY scene in the United States by storm in the early 1990s and is acknowledged as part of third wave feminism. Historian Annelise Orleck explains that these musicians found themselves “less likely to express themselves through protests or zaps” like their 1970s counterparts, “than through writing and art.”⁴ The *Grrrl* in the movement came from wanting to take back the word “girl” with a growl—like the sound of their music. They wanted to reclaim the joy of being a girl to negate men’s use of the word to diminish a woman.⁵ They communicated their feminism through starting punk bands, creating zines (a homemade magazine that does not depend on commercial backing), and having festivals (often referred to as “fests”) to share their ideas, music, and art. The Movement reached national recognition by connecting young women (“girls”) with their feminist messages through their music being played on independent radio stations via college campuses and through DIY shows.

This article focuses on the artistic and personal activism found in the self-published zines these women created. A zine is short for magazine; the name also reflects its shorter form as well. They are typically hand-crafted and distributed, can focus on one topic or many, and can be written by one or more people. Not every woman can or feels like she can pick up an instrument, but many could relate to writing in a girlhood diary. Thus, the creation of zines included diverse groups of women and made the Movement far more inclusive than if it had just included musicians. But what inspired this movement? Why did these girls feel the need to take up space? Who were in these bands? Who were creating zines? Why? What issues did zines reflect on? Why is the art important? How is this activism? This paper seeks to answer these questions in order to assert that the zines produced and distributed as a result of the Riot Grrrl Movement were a unique and powerful form of women’s activism that utilized personal art as a tool to spread different feminist ideals.

Scholarship on the Riot Grrrl Movement is understandably limited considering its recent origins. Scholars who have assessed its impact argue that the movement is largely remembered in terms of the bands and the nature of

⁴ Annelise Orleck, *Rethinking American Women’s Activism* (London: Routledge, 2015), 208.

⁵ Orleck, *Rethinking American Women’s Activism*, 208.

their performances, when in reality there should be an emphasis on the DIY ethos of the community and self-publishing.⁶ Other literature asserts that zines are sites of feminist memory work where the personal and political meet to form an example of grassroots feminist activism.⁷ One article furthers this argument by including different sites besides the punk show and different identities of women to show how zines grappled with the larger discourse of the movement.⁸ Where scholars have been vocal about the activism in the publishing and distributing process, they have neglected the creative process that links art with feminist activism. This is particularly interesting when one considers that the "girls" in the bands will always be artistic activists.

This article includes three parts. It begins by explaining the culture of the early 1990s, DIY subculture, and the call for Riot Grrrl; second, it assesses zine publications and their importance to the movement; finally, it concludes with an evaluation of art as a meaningful form of feminist activism. Since this is a paper that reflects on the power of zines, I will let them speak for themselves.⁹ At times, I will simply quote content while at others I will describe the zine to prove a point about the style and art. Flyers, album art, and lyrics will be included to help provide a better understanding of the overall movement.¹⁰ I describe live videos of bands for the same reason. I reference the books and articles of scholars to help frame the zines in their larger context.

The Early 1990s, DIY Subculture, and the Call for Riot Grrrl

A *TIME* article titled "Women Face the 90s" written in 1989, featured a cover that grimly asked America, "Is there a future for feminism?" The article reported that "76 percent of American women paid not very much to no attention to the women's movement and that only 33 percent considered themselves feminists."¹¹ Many people felt that feminism had completed all of its goals or that women had been fooled or brainwashed into thinking they could

⁶ Kevin Dunn and May Summer Farnsworth, "We ARE the Revolution": Riot Grrrl Press, Girl Empowerment, and DIY Self-Publishing." *Women's Studies* 41, no. 2 (March 2012): 136-157.

⁷ Red Chidgey, "Reassess Your Weapons: the making of feminist memory in young women's zines." *Women's History Review* 22, no. 4 (August 2013): 658-672.

⁸ Janice Radway, "Girl Zine Networks, Underground Itineraries, and Riot Grrrl History: Making Sense of the Struggle for New Social Forms in the 1990s and Beyond," *Journal Of American Studies* 50, no. 1 (February 2016): 1-31.

⁹ Lisa Darms and Johanna Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection* (New York: Feminist Press, 2013).

¹⁰ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*.

¹¹ Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: the True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 33.

have it all and be like men.¹² The conservative backlash had spoken for almost two decades, having made clear that there was no place for feminism in America any longer.¹³

Yet, the first few years of the 1990s would prove to be quite alarming for women. In the fall of 1991, Anita Hill courageously shared her story with the world after she accused U.S. Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment.¹⁴ In the confirmation hearings, white male senators clearly demeaned and discredited her by dismissing her testimony and appointing Thomas anyway. Just a few months later, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* furiously challenged abortion and sparked a march of women on the national mall in Washington D.C.¹⁵ Discouraged by the government, which was matched with a fear of rights being taken away, was the perfect environment for punk to thrive.

There is a paradox with being punk. To claim and/or define “punk” is not punk. Ultimately, being punk means something different to anybody who finds a home within the community. Many of the young women who made zines associated punk with being a “dork” and emphasized that it was something to be proud of.¹⁶ However, it can be “characterized by its anti-status quo disposition, a pronounced do-it-yourself ethos, and a desire for disalienation (resistance to the multiple forms of alienation in modern society).”¹⁷ These three elements work together to make the mere existence of punk political. By rejecting and criticizing the conventions of normal society, punks commit to an outcast existence. Mainstream society recognizes this by adopting punk fashion and hairstyles into their culture, yet, to fully embrace the “punk” look is to announce one’s devolvement into the status quo. In the context of the early 1990s American social and political culture, the punks certainly had something to write about—especially the women.

¹² Marcus, *Girls to the Front*, 33.

¹³ This conservative backlash became prominent when the Moral Majority became a popular political organization in the late 70s. The Moral Majority brought conservative Christians to the Republican party, utilizing them as a strong political force. At the national and local level, these politicians were elected in the years to follow, making it difficult for those in disagreement and/or “immoral” to navigate in the political climate. For more, see <http://www.wiu.edu/cas/history/wihr/pdfs/Banwart-MoralMajorityVol5.pdf>

¹⁴ Orleck, *Rethinking American Women’s Activism*.

¹⁵ Marcus, *Girls to the Front*, 31.

¹⁶ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*. This idea appears in multiple zines throughout as sampled in the book.

¹⁷ Dunn and Farnsworth, “We ARE the Revolution”: Riot Grrrl Press, Girl Empowerment, and DIY Self-Publishing,” *Women’s Studies* 41, no. 2 (March 2012): 136.

Punk as a genre and lifestyle hit the scene in the 1970s as a way to reject mainstream rock and roll music as well as mainstream society. The punk scene of bands like Blondie and the Ramones was “extremely diverse, drawing in males, females, transgendered individuals, straights, and homosexuals” and it also “seemed that it was often the women who dominated and controlled the punk scene.”¹⁸ It was almost vital to include a woman in your band—most likely as the bass player. Women’s importance can also be seen through the exciting and unique punk fashion that emerged alongside the music. Punk supported a sort of anti-fashion where they bought clothes from thrift shops, tore them up, and recreated/repurposed them. Not too long after the original punks defined their fashion, popular designers began to incorporate what they saw into their designs.¹⁹ This further supports the DIY state of mind.

But that did not last very long at all. Bands began to emerge that were all men and emphasized overt displays of masculinity. This can be best described through the band Black Flag, who formed in the latter half of the 1970s in Hermosa Beach, California. They can be described as a “muscle-punk” band and reflected the shift to more hyper-masculine bands paving the punk pathway.²⁰ Not only were bands like black Flag an image of toxic masculinity, but the nature of shows began to take a violent turn. On the West Coast, punks in the crowd began to express their appreciation for the music through a form of movement called moshing, which can be characterized through pushing, hitting, and hardcore dancing. Meanwhile, on the East Coast in places like Washington D.C, show goers could be found dancing and bopping along to the music. It was when these jockier bands got popular and toured to the East Coast that they brought their violent and masculine style with them.²¹

In a video of a 1984 performance in Ontario, Canada of the song “My War,” Black Flag lead vocalist Henry Rollins can be seen shirtless, hitting himself, and giving threatening looks to the crowd forming a mosh pit before him.²² In physical appearance alone, Rollins’ defined jawline, dimpled chin, and buff body ooze stereotypical masculine attractiveness; and the lyrics from the band’s songs are examples of toxic masculinity that emphasize rape culture. The 1984 song “Slip It In” is a victim-blaming, slut-shaming anthem with lyrics like

¹⁸ Dunn and Farnsworth, “We ARE the Revolution,” 137.

¹⁹ Pauline Thomas, “1970s Punk Fashion History Development,” 1970s Punks Fashion History Vivienne Westwood, body piercing, http://www.fashion-era.com/punks_fashion_history1.htm (accessed 29 November 2017).

²⁰ Dunn and Farnsworth, “We ARE the Revolution,” 138.

²¹ Anonymous (former record shop employee) in discussion with author, October 2017.

²² “Black Flag – My War Live,” video, 3:47, June 22, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3EW954g9r4>.

“You’re loose, (slip it in), put your brain in a noose, (slip it in), the next day you regret it, (slip it in), but you’re still loose,” “you feel like a whore, but what you did the night before you decided to be all loose, and go all crazy” and “you say you didn’t think, you said you had too much to drink, is it in the chemical, or is it just some part of you?”²³ The artwork for their releases highlighted their toxic masculinity and were visually damaging to women. An EP released in 1980 properly titled “Jealous Again” featured two women getting into a fight on its cover.²⁴ The album cover for their 1985 release “Loose Nut” shows a fully-dressed man with two women fawning over him.²⁵ The popularity of Black Flag became an example and a symbol for numerous little black flags that popped up in scenes all across America, resulting in an era of hate-moshing women to the way back of the venue.²⁶

Women found themselves in the punk community as permanent members of the crowd, watching the men pick up instruments and scream — using their platforms as woman-hating soap boxes to project themselves as superior. Once off the stage, the man would then seek validation and compliments from *his* woman who found herself *and* her girlfriends outlining the perimeter of the venue. Encouragement was a one-way street where the woman functioned as the road these men got a free ride on, with no plan for reciprocation. Should a woman want to start a band or make music, the support rarely came from a man.

The Riot Grrrl Movement was born in both the corners of venues where women were forced to congregate and in the corners of their lives. The name *Riot Grrrl* came from the desire to “reclaim the vitality and power of youth with and added growl to replace the perceived passivity of ‘girl’.”²⁷ Movements are typically defined through the lens of a leader, but Riot Grrrl begs to not be remembered by certain individuals or bands, but rather as a shared movement and collective. It is through the strong relationships these women formed with one another that sparked a change in scene dynamics, not a generalized demand

²³ Black Flag. Slip It In. “Slip It In,” 1984.

²⁴ Black Flag. Jealous Again. SST Records m28670, 1980, compact disk.

²⁵ Black Flag. Loose Nut. SST Records m28673, 1985, compact disk.

²⁶ Hate-Moshing can be described as moshing without taking into consideration those around you. Essentially moshing for the sake of moshing, violent movement for the sake of violent movement, and purposely moshing too hard to take up space. It is a ritual that never ceases to baffle. It is important to note that this is primarily a male thing to do. You will typically see more men in any given mosh pit.

²⁷ Jessica Rosenburg and Gitana Garofalo, “Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from within,” *Signs: Journal of Women In Culture & Society* 23, no. 3: 809.

for inclusivity. Essentially, the sharing of the common plight in the male-dominated scene led women to search for support in one another and to push each other to learn instruments, create zines, and start bands.

The DIY subculture of the time worked very seamlessly with its supposed nemesis of the status-quo. It became increasingly hard for women to differentiate between mainstream, misogynistic society and their underground patriarchy. Their space was getting smaller and smaller. Challenging societal norms would mean to include women and their voices, not further perpetuate conservative feelings at more personal level. This aggression at both the micro and macro levels created a space for women to connect over their disenfranchised feelings from *the* world and *their* world. A zine called *CHAINSAW* (c. 1990) reflected the feeling and stated that “maybe CHAINSAW is about Frustration. Frustration in music. Frustration in being a girl, in being a homo, in being a misfit of any sort.”²⁸ The answer to the call of representation was “Revolution Girl Style Now, [...]a cool, accessible feminist movement” that incorporated the theories of prominent feminist writers like Angela Davis, Bell Hooks, and Judith Butler matched with art theory.²⁹

The bands who stood at the forefront of this *Grrrl* revolution were Olympia, Washington’s Bikini Kill, Heavens to Betsy, and Bratmobile. The *grrrls* in these bands all established personal relationships with one another that helped perpetuate their movement. Varying members of all three bands also had zines that either corresponded with the band itself or of their own personal lives. In performance and in lyrics, they sought to take back and take up space in the DIY scene. Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill stopped shows to yell, “girls to the front!” in order to allow women to express themselves the way they wanted to at their shows instead of being pushed to the margins by circle-pitting men.³⁰ Their lyrics incorporated the everyday experience of women. Corin Tucker in the song “Terrorist” by Heavens to Betsy emotionally screams out, “you follow me on the fucking street, you make me feel like a piece of meat, you think I don’t know what war means, now I’m the terrorist, see how it feels...I’m gonna knock you if I can, everything I say is wrong, you laugh at me and knock me down, now your turn is comin’ round.”³¹ Not all songs were about living in a man’s world,

²⁸ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, 23.

²⁹ Marcus, *Girls to the Front*, 57-58. These three women have a rock star status when it comes to feminist theory and their ideas are constantly taught and reiterated today. Become a rock star: *Women, Race, and Class* by Angela Davis, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* by Bell Hooks, and *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler

³⁰ “The Punk Singer – Bikini Kill, Girls to the Front”, video, 4:01, March 19, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU1bEeKsHs8>. : A circle pit is another form of moshing where those involved run around pushing each other in a circle.

³¹ Heavens to Betsy. Calculated. “Terrorist”, 1994.

others like “Rebel Girl” by Bikini Kill supported strong relationships between women. In performance, they were not afraid to show off how feminine they were or were not. They sought to create a space where women musicians, like any man, could strip clothing because it was hot, temperature wise. In this, they worked toward destigmatizing the female frame. By taking up space in this way, they rejected the societal and gender norms that allowed for a woman’s body to be a site for shame.

This movement was primarily white and middle-class. If not in a large city, DIY scenes tend to thrive in college towns and are representative of the college’s demographic. College is also one of the only places where feminism is easily accessible, accepted, and taught. Although the movement challenged the structures of race, its surface level of understanding forced women of color in the movement to “bear the burden of representation (“you are here as an example”) and the weight of pedagogy (“teach us about your people”).”³² In the zine *Mamasita*, author Bianca Ortiz wrote about this issue when she “cited her time and emotional labor [as] wasted [by] writing personal letters to ‘one million white girls’” making her play the role as “educator.”³³ The same movement that invited *all* women neglected to notice the ways they treated women of color like men treated them: forcing them based on their identities to take on the unreasonable responsibility of educating the masses. This uncomfortable dichotomy finds itself at the heart of third wave feminism in that it both celebrates and dismisses women of color at the same time.

Thus, all types of women were drawn to creating and publishing their own zines. Finally, a safe space was created where a girl could talk about all of these issues and more in the confines of her personal zine. There, no one could tell her what to say and how to say it — she was free with her thoughts, her hands, and her soul.

Zine Publications and Their Importance to the Movement

The content of zines varied. They included domestic violence, body image, date rape, incest, the music scene, queer identity, POC identity, storytelling, and even one dedicated to First Daughter Amy Carter.³⁴ The zine was a site for a new form of feminist thought and activism. Not only did they tie the personal to the political with their words and images, but even the artistic choices made by zinesters reflected a political undertone. Here, art became vital

³² Mimi Thi Nguyen, 2012. "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival." *Women & Performance* 22, no. 2/3: 173. *Complementary Index*, EBSCOhost, 180.

³³ Thi Nguyen, 2012. "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival," 180.

³⁴ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*.

to the activism. Zinesters also made a self-created network to distribute each other's work. Whether it was through a small, local label like Kill Rock Stars who supported Riot Grrrl bands and their endeavors; being mentioned at the end of other girls zines; or leaving the zine at a record shop or library, anyone from anywhere could read any zine they wanted to. Girls also supported other girls to make their own zines, further asserting Grrrl power. This exchange was financially supported by one another either by asking the to-be reader to send a stamp or a few dollars with their inquiry to get the zine.³⁵ Thus, the network was a completely DIY effort.

In the first *Riot Grrrl* zine in large, Courier font, the authors explained why they were making a zine, commenting that "there has been a proliferation of angry grrrl zines in recent months, mainly due to the queezy feeling we girls get in our sto machs when we contemplate the general lack of girlpower in society as a whole, and in the punk underground specifically." They also go on to tell girls "theres also a sale at kinko's now, so if you know anyone who would want one of these, it would only cost ¢6 to copy it for them." At the end of the note, they sign it in handwriting with a "XXOO, The riot girl gang."³⁶ This excerpt shows that there was an influx of zines being produced and gives one reason why. It also clues in the process of zine making and distributing. Not only were the authors telling them that it would be cheap to copy their zines for them, but they also let readers know that there was a sale going on if they, too wanted to get in on it. The excerpt also displayed the reliance on word of mouth between girls to tell each other about zines. Stylistically, they chose to write it as a letter with signature at the end, making the zine more personable. Thus, the movement's core values start to take on this comfortable and familiar aesthetic.

In another Zine named after the band Bikini Kill, one of the member's writes about the collective feeling of being a girl musician trying to make music in a male-dominated scene. "If you have ever gone with anyone in a band then you have been most likely been made to feel unimportant or excluded at least once or twice. I know when I was in highschool I spent way too much time trying to figure out how to fit into the guy scene instead of realizing that my band and my songs and my whole thing was just as cool, just as interesting, just as valid, just as important as theirs... and I think most girls know what it feels like to sit in your boyfriend's bedroom, talking about records with all of his friends and having a lot of what you say (that is if you even bother to say anything) either dismissed or misunderstood." The excerpt then introduces the

³⁵ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*.

³⁶ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, 32.

idea of Yoko Ono and how as John Lennon's girlfriend, she "broke up" the band and became this figure of "diversion," of which the author challenges by calling her "ahead of her time" and recognizes her as an artist, not a band ruiner.³⁷

This zine provides more insight into the disenfranchised feelings of girl rockers. The author strategically relates to the reader to invoke a response of "yeah! I do feel that way!" By providing an example of a famous artist like Yoko Ono, the point becomes clearer that even if a woman is talented, she is still considered a threat to the men. In fact, it is *because* she is talented or artistically different that *makes* her a threat to the man. After all, being in a band and making music is reserved as a male hobby. The personal experience matched with the celebrity example brings more power to the words being written. This excerpt is only in type on a white page, yet a story is being told. The author may have stylistically chosen to keep it looking simple for her words were the star on the page. Zines like this started to articulate feelings that helped the movement become a collective thought.

In the same zine, there is a page right after the previous excerpt that states "STOP the J Word jealousy from killing girl LOVE. Encourage in the face OF INSECURITY." It is decorated with grapes in the top corners and features a picture of two heroic looking women, one placing a flower crown on the other.³⁸ It almost reads as if it is an ad due to its placement after a thought piece. Especially since a zine is modeled after a magazine. The ad tackles the idea of jealousy between girls because of men that end up pitting them against one another. Although a quick message, it is a large one. There is a shared experience between women when it comes to hating another woman for no other reason besides something to do with some guy. By stopping jealousy and promoting girl love, women can encourage one another rather than cut each other off. The ad is also cool to look at with its uneven lettering and imagery. It further supports the message with its bold letters and images of strong, loving women.

Girl Germs, another very popular zine, in its third issue tells a story of rape in a couple of pages titled "Chapter II: THE TRIBULATION." The author, Julie, shares with the reader a story about her abusive ex, almost like a diary entry. She was called a "bitch," a "fucking slut," and would have her "head knocked in." She shares an explicit moment where she is forced to touch him in front of others and is responsible for getting herself and her drunk boyfriend home. She ends the chapter with her talking about how afraid she feels because of her ex, even now that he is gone. "HE left ME finally. but HE still exists, in

³⁷ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, 42.

³⁸ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, 44.

reality and in my mind and i'm terrified. HE is out of proportion and above the law." Underneath the black border surrounding her words, a collage is seen. The collage however is actually promoting a compilation album put out by the Kill Rock Stars label featuring Riot Grrrl bands. It tells the reader how much and where to send the money to.³⁹

This excerpt tackles an issue central to their community. Julie felt comfortable enough to share her story within the confines of a zine, knowing that other girls would relate and either a) feel better that they are not alone or b) learn that they will soon get out of their situation too. Julie makes herself an example to warn and educate other women about abusive relationships. The black border surrounding her words makes the piece look like a chapter out of a book and looks like it is more important to read. The small collage at the end is not only aesthetically pleasing, but it once again displays the ways in which the Riot Grrrl movement conducted its business. Collaging was a very popular style in zines for it was taking something that has already been made, tearing it up, and creating something new. This matches the overall DIY ethos of punk.

The same Girl Germs issue also features a piece called "WHEN YOU MEET A LESBIAN: HINTS TO THE HETEROSEXUAL WOMAN." Here, the author provides a series of "hints" like, "Do not run screaming from the room – this is rude. Do not assume she is attracted to you. Do not assume she is not attracted to you. Do not assume you are attracted to her. DO not ask her how she got this way – instead, ask yourself how you got that way. Do not trivialize her experience by assuming it is a bedroom issue only – she is a lesbian twenty-four hours a day." The page also features a picture of two women holding hands in the right corner and a cartoon with the words "QUEER NATION" at the bottom.⁴⁰

The author used just the right amount of humor to get her point across in her list of dos and don'ts. Humor allows for the issue to become more accessible to the reader, but too much humor would make the issue not be taken seriously. This piece also reminds the reader that because she may be a woman does not mean she understands the experiences of *all* women, which is an important facet of third wave feminism. The pictures add a personal touch and leaves the reader wondering what they mean to the author and why were they placed there.

In the fourth issue of a zine called *Gunk*, the author shares her experience has being one of the only people of color in her all white scene. Her words are pasted on a larger picture, with another picture pasted on top of that.

³⁹ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, 57.

⁴⁰ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, 78.

The excerpt is titled “I’m laughing so hard it doesn’t look like I’m laughing anymore...” and she writes: “I used to laugh at this whole white bread punk rock scene, but now I’m not laughing as much as I’m getting more annoyed. I swear every punk show I go to I’m usually the only person of color in the joint and nobody seems to even question this or even mind.” She also told a story where she was hanging out with a white boy and “as soon as [his mother] found out he wanted to be more than friends she immediately said: ‘I don’t want you hanging out with that BLACK* girl.’” His mother did not care that she had green hair, a shaved head and a bunch of holes in her ears, “she drew the line at [her] blackness.” The second page of the piece shows the image that the rest of it was written on: a cop with black men behind him. The author also features the definitions of black and white, underlining the stark contrast between the two.⁴¹

It is fair to assume that the majority of the readers of *Gunk* were white, considering she talks about her all white punk community. Thus, white people were subject to a very personal account of how racism is experienced by a woman of color and more specifically in their community. White punks tend to forget that even though they are conscious of racism in the U.S, that does not mean they are exempt from being a part of the problem. The author speaks of the covert ways in which the scene is racist, such as by thinking that one woman of color attending shows is enough to call it a diverse community. She also shares an experience that other young girls of color may have experienced when pursuing a boy they like, making those readers relate to her. The artistry in *Gunk* is layered thoughtfully. She places her piece on the picture of the cop and includes floating definitions as an artistic choice that furthers her point. It also invokes a feeling from the author, giving readers a glimpse of what it may feel like to be her.

Finally, in the second issue of a zine called “I’M SO FUCKING BEAUTIFUL,” the author, Nomy, takes the issue of body image head on. In her own handwriting she wrote, “Remember: Fat oppression is a form of institutionalized oppression” and provided a quick set of rules in type before moving on: “fat is not ugly. fat people do not lack control. fat people do not need to lose weight. fat is punk rock. i am not ashamed of my body.” She also includes a page where she talks about how she had been feeling “sexy lately” and shares her reasons why. Another page outlines how fat girls should be able to look each other in the eye without feeling shame for each others bodies. Then she shares her experiences with being fat since she was young and being a fat performer and the feelings associated with it.⁴²

⁴¹ Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, 153-154.

⁴² Darms and Fateman, *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, 246-260.

The entire zine is a beautiful homage to being comfortable with having an unconventional body. This narrative is particularly important because many of the women in the most popular Riot Grrrl bands were thin. There was a lack of representation of fat bodies. Nomy created a highly artistic zine and it reads like a diary. She included a photobooth picture of herself, switched between handwriting and typewriting, varied the font size, type, and bold, used absent space, included floral borders, and other artistic embellishments. The aesthetically pleasing and unique style of her zine is warm and invites the reader to listen to what she is saying. The fact that it reads almost as if it is a diary not only takes back the diary of girlhood and transforms it into adulthood, but provides that sense of familiarity (especially for girl readers!) that makes the reader feel how personal this is for her.

All six examples are just a glimpse into the variety of content included in zines and how their artistic nature is important to the topics talked about inside. These zines distributed a multitude of ideas and feelings to a large population of girls and young women who wanted to spread awareness about certain topics as well as create a collective feeling. It made issues of feminism accessible to those who did not have the privilege of going to college, and allowed for more marginalized women to share their experiences. But take away the words and ideas, there you have women creating with their hands, making artistic choices, and working together to distribute these little pieces of feminist memory and ephemera. Without zines, the movement could only be remembered in terms of those who were in bands and making music, which would render the movement as a simple phase in music like nuwave or grunge.⁴³

Art as a Meaningful Form of Feminist Activism

The zines of the Riot Grrrl Movement exist as pieces of ephemera and feminist memory. But many moments of female activism include some form of art that helps make the movement more accessible. Whether they be the buttons, ribbons, and flags of the Suffrage Movement, the brochures, books, and “womyns music” of Women’s Liberation of the 1970s, or the work of the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union (CWLU), all use a form of art in some way.⁴⁴ Art is also typically one of the first areas to be censored when an oppressive regime comes into power. Including the use of art ensures that

⁴³ Two genres of music that were only popular for a short amount of time.

⁴⁴ Orleck, *Rethinking American Women’s Activism*.

something long-lasting is being created. Thus, years after the fact historians and everybody else now have a piece of art that they can associate with a certain movement.

Linda Gordon in *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements*, touched on this idea in her essay on the Women's Liberation Movement. Throughout her chapter, she included leaflets, cartoons, comics, poetry, and flyers to *effectively* outline the history of the movement.⁴⁵ To enrich the story of different organizations and of the events that happened, Gordon intertwined the art into the narrative because it played an important role in the movement at large. Although she did not directly say, "art is a meaningful form of activism," its inclusion in her essay shows how it is important. It is there, it is powerful, and it outlasts the test of time. She does attribute the art of the time as being transformative of the culture, however, even though it happens "particularly slowly...so we may not notice it or what created it."⁴⁶

Therefore, zines exist as a tangible form of a movement long gone, but provide a better and more rich understanding of it. Yet, in the popular recollection of the Riot Grrrl Movement, the only artistic activists that are championed are those women who were in bands and that encompasses a small population of women involved. Zines and zinesters are always included in the narrative, but more as a footnote or as support for the bands, their lyrics, and nature of their performances. Hardly is the zine analyzed as being both artistic and activist. The reality of this activism is displayed through the analysis of the zines.

Art is an accessible form of activism. A girl was more likely to have a pencil, paper, and typewriter than she was to have a guitar, bass, or drum kit. Zines opened the Riot Grrrl Movement up to a broader audience, allowing for more participants to personally and creatively interact with the ideas of feminism. By interacting with feminism in this way, the topics can become easier to understand and assert itself as something meaningful to pursue and incorporate in daily life. Any girl could be an activist if they had a thought and the utensils, and did not even have to leave the house.

The DIY ethic of punk intersects itself with the creation of zines. Cutting, pasting, writing, typing, and drawing were all apart of this artistic process. Not to mention a network of distribution that was run entirely by the women themselves. But one of the biggest things punks do in their DIY scenes

⁴⁵Linda Gordon, Dorothy Sue Cobble, and Astrid Henry, *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements* (London: W.W. Norton, 2014), 69-145.

⁴⁶Gordon, *Feminism Unfinished*, 134.

is take something that already exists and make it new again. That could be their clothes, the collages and images used in their zines and the packaging for their music. The Riot Grrrl Movement asks feminist activism to be used in the same way.

Feminism to the Riot Grrrls was something that already existed, but they needed to make it new again. In this sense, feminism was repurposed. They knew that the 90s called for a different way to approach feminism—but how? Through art; and why? Because the Riot Grrrl Movement *depends* on art to be in existence. Without zines or music, then there would be no Riot Grrrl Movement nor would there have been this vital part of third wave feminism. This movement did not make art as a small product of revolution, art *was* the revolution and feminism, the instrument. There, the personal and political met and created something meaningful and powerful in material form so the world has no choice but to remember. Thank goodness these women knew not to throw anything away.

Conclusion: Eyes on the Future

The chugs of his awful guitar crashed through the amp as I clasped the mic tighter in my hand and made harsh eye contact with him. I screamed: *how could you love someone so much that you tug at their collar? Yank it hard, yank it good if it makes you feel much better!* I picked up my beer, took a long swig and continued with the song, yelling it at the crowd but more so yelling it at him as he ignorantly played it. Finally, after throwing my scared body into the welcome arms of strangers, I would shout in response to the alienated feedback of his instrument: *I still feel angry hands around my neck when I'm alone!* And then the song would end with one last scream as I let my body fall to the floor. The seconds between songs were filled with sips and drunken banter that would cradle me and push me into another song about my abusive ex who played guitar in the band, but nobody knew *who* I was screaming about, not even him. Yet, I always tucked those feelings away and ended the set with “Thanks so much for coming out tonight! We’re Reverend Green and we really enjoyed that you could come watch us. It means more to me than you’ll know and these guys right here, I love them *all!*” Nobody knew. Nobody asked.

So, have things become much different in DIY since the Riot Grrrl Movement? I’m not too certain. If anything, male-privilege in punk has become more covert. “Female-fronted” has become the sole reason to book a band with women in it—not because of talent. But, without these girls and women, there would not be an instrument in *my* hand. As musicians, we now have a time to

look back to and draw inspiration from. The Riot Grrrl Movement and the zines it created and distributed were a unique and powerful form of women's activism that utilized personal art as a tool to spread different feminist ideals. And now I ask: How are WE going to repurpose THEIR work?

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A Shot of Capitalism: The NEP in the Soviet Union 1921-1929

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Of any nation, the Soviet Union came the closest to realizing true communism. Led by the ideals of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, the Soviet state prided itself on its ideological purity and its devotion to spreading the gospel everywhere. Soviet officials crafted all policies—economic, social, and political—with the intention of moving towards a truly classless society, free from capitalist influence. However, in the 1920s, early Soviet planners, Lenin included, were much more flexible than later officials on exactly what path would be taken to reach communism; they took what could be considered a much more “liberal” approach. Influenced, ironically, by the former Tsarist government, Soviet philosophers and apparatchiks, all members of the Communist Party, would enter into an eight-year period of unprecedented experimentation with the economy and in social policy. This experiment was called the New Economic Policy, or the NEP for short. The NEP was a plan to rebuild the Soviet Union ravaged by years of war. The NEP did this by unveiling a system of state capitalism, where the Soviet government controlled the commanding heights of the economy, but small businesses and farmers in particular were allowed to form a small marketplace for their goods and services. This plan, however, was sharply criticized by artists and citizens, who argued that the plan smacked of capitalism and went against the orthodox Marxist position.

Joyce Appleby noted the curious nature of capitalism in her 2010 book, *The Relentless Revolution*. In addition to being a system of economics, it was a hybrid system that integrated economics and cultural factors that supported the

ultimate goal of capitalism, which was the acquisition of wealth.¹ The traits that capitalism promoted, such as private property rights, individualism, and naked greed may sound natural enough to a western audience. However, these traits, implicitly promoted by the NEP's shot of capitalism, were directly at odds at the state's attempt to create a "New Soviet Man." The "New Soviet Man" was an individual who organized collectively, renounced the profit motive, and above all, diligently worked for the State.² Curiously, the NEP's promotion of capitalist motives and the efforts by the State to change society were official policy at the same time.

Studies of the NEP have long been neglected by historians both inside and outside of the Soviet Union. While there was some scholarly interest among western academics as early as 1930, the NEP was not seriously studied until the early 1980s, and especially after 1985.³ The renewed interest in studying the NEP can be traced to Party Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which promoted political and economic reform. Scholars were quick to draw parallels between Gorbachev's economic ideas and the ideas of men like Nikolai Bukharin, who greatly influenced the Soviet economic model before his untimely removal by Stalin. Mikhail Gorbachev's social liberalization also allowed Soviet citizens to begin interpreting the periods of Soviet history that were previously taboo, and allowed Western scholars access to more Soviet materials. This resulted in a flood of secondary histories in the West in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Works such as *Russia's Last Capitalists: The Nepmen* (1987), *Russia in the Era of the NEP* (1991), and *From Tsarism to the NEP* (1991) all compared the NEP to the Gorbachev's reform efforts. While this motive did not diminish the quality of these works, it was obvious that the intent of these histories was to draw parallels to an earlier, more benign period of Soviet history and subtly implant the hope for a similar reform in the late 1980s. The NEP was not studied as a worthy topic in and of itself, but rather to prove a point. The intricacies and conflict of the period were largely ignored.

Further examination of the NEP illustrates the tension contained within the program of economic reform. Grigory Zinoviev, a member of the Communist Party, made clear the tension created by the NEP and its extension to the top of the Soviet State. "I feel that the thing here is really the attempt of certain comrades to declare that the NEP is socialism. (Laughter, noise) Such a

¹ Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 23.

² Richard Overy, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia* (New York; W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 301.

³ "Front Matter," *The Economic Journal* 40, no. 158 (1930). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2223929>.

point of view, such a position represents the idealization of the NEP, the idealization of capitalism. It is indisputable that the NEP is the road to socialism, but the assertion that the NEP is not socialism also seems to me indisputable.”⁴ How could capitalist culture and collective culture coexist, especially in a state regarded as authoritarian? This is a question that historians have not examined at length, and will be the focus of this article.

Tsarist Inspirations

The NEP’s plan of state capitalism was not the creation of Bolshevik planners like Bukharin, Lenin, or even Stalin. Rather, the creators of this plan looked to Russia’s own history for inspiration, and they did not have to look very far. Russia was not an industrialized nation when the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917. The Marxist rebels took control of a nation where the industrial working class was miniscule compared to the vast number of peasants. This small proletarian class, however, was created by a series of economic policies under Tsarist officials that would strongly resemble the NEP to come.

From the beginning of industrial development in Tsarist Russia, a process that began much later and with less energy than Western European nations, the state was at the center of activity. They had to be, as Russia lacked a middle class of capitalists and investors to fund independent enterprises. In 1897, over 85% of the Russian population did not live in cities, and made a meagre existence from farming.⁵ Their lot had improved since the emancipation of serfs in 1861, which wiped out the peasantry’s obligations to landowners. However, the process did little more than that. Agriculture methods remained crude and backwards, and as a result, industry only began to develop in earnest after 1861, as there was an insufficient workforce and food to fuel mass industrialization on the western European model.⁶

The Tsarist government began its dance with capitalism in simple ways: it subsidized the small class of people who could afford to build factories, and instituted protectionist tariffs to protect these industries. In the 1840s and 1850s, the state erected tariff walls to protect these infant operations, including a 600% tax on iron and iron products, designed to protect the iron mines in the Urals.⁷ Although this was a domestic source of iron, the mine’s prices were much higher than iron imported from abroad due to excessive transportation

⁴ Robert V. Daniels, ed., *A Documentary History of Communism* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1984), 185.

⁵ Peter Gatrell, *The Tsarist Economy 1850-1917* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), 55.

⁶ Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution*, 7.

⁷ Gatrell, *The Tsarist Economy*, 149.

costs. These tariffs were reduced in the 1850s in order to stimulate railroad building, which was deemed more vital. By 1870, the state had eliminated the tariff on railroad track altogether.

The state then turned to fund the building of railroads, which they deemed vital to any capitalist economy. It invested heavily in both the rolling stock industry (building of locomotives, train cars) and the metallurgical plants required for their construction. Between 1868 and 1873, the Russian government invested over 120 million rubles into these industries.⁸ In the 1890s, under Minister of Finance Sergei Witte, the government's role expanded further. With this expanding role, however, came expanding debt. In order to finance a massive rearmament program, which included the purchase of modern rifles, artillery, and the creation of a fleet of steel warships, the state deficit ballooned from 7.8 billion rubles to 11.1 billion rubles. On the eve of WWI, the debt had increased to 12.7 billion.⁹ Although Witte intervened in the economy and racked up these debts, he also worried about Russia's economic health. In a secret memorandum to Tsar Nicholas II, Witte stressed the need to attract foreign capital to offset these damages, lest they produce a "sharp break" in the Tsarist economy and undo the advances made to that point.¹⁰ Later NEP planners would not stress foreign investment as heavily, but the Soviet Union did not completely isolate itself from the world economy.

Such massive state involvement in the economy was not lost on the early Bolshevik planners, who had grown up with what Vladimir Lenin later called "state capitalism."¹¹ Lenin even championed it, stating that while it was certainly unequal and exploitative, this system of development was "a step forward" compared with the disorganization and unrest of 1918.¹² This is quite interesting, as it shows that the Old Bolsheviks who took power in the 1920s were not fervent radicals and ideologues, but were open and willing to try a program that would yield the best results for the nation. In other words, they were pragmatic.

⁸ Gattrell, *The Tsarist Economy*, 151.

⁹ R.W. Davies, ed., *From Tsarism to New Economic Policy: Continuity and Change in the Economy of the USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 150.

¹⁰ Von Laue, T. H. "A Secret Memorandum of Sergei Witte on the Industrialization of Imperial Russia," *The Journal of Modern History* 26, no. 1 (1954): 60-74.

¹¹ V.I. Lenin, Yuri Sdobnikov, trans., *The Tax in Kind: The Significance Of The New Policy And Its Conditions* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/apr/21.htm>.

¹² Lenin, *The Tax in Kind*.

Agriculture

Russian agriculture was in need to state intervention. For centuries, Russian farming was backwards and crude, with many peasants relying on ancient methods to extract produce from the earth. Any increase in yields was only accomplished by increasing the amount of land under cultivation, and not through any modern methods or tools.¹³ Moreover, Russian peasants, although freed from serfdom in 1861, continued to exist in a system not unlike the position of freed African Americans after the U.S. Civil War. Peasant farmers were in constant debt to a landowner who took a portion of their crop as payment for the use of the land, supplies, or any other expense dreamt up by the landowner. This reality, combined with massive population growth, meant that there was much less land per person, so rents skyrocketed. To alleviate this, the Tsarist government began to offer free land in Siberia to any willing settler.¹⁴ While the offer of lands in Siberia could have offered the Tsarist state a safety valve to alleviate the crisis, too few took up the offer for land so far from their homes in Southern Russian and the Ukraine.

The second item impeding the growth of Russian agriculture was the peasantry itself. The average peasant in Russia typically did not own the land he worked on, but instead toiled on land held in common by the village commune, called the *Mir*.¹⁵ This word also means “world” in Russian, which underscored the importance of the commune to millions of farmers. The *Mir* functioned as a sort of local government by redistributing land to its members, but often this land was in the form of separate strips and was not consolidated into one plot. The *Mir* also limited the freedom of movement of its members because allowing families to leave weakened the village. Serious government attempts to break the influence of the *Mir* only came in 1906, with the reforms of Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin. His agricultural law of November 9, 1906 allowed the heads of families to convert their small, privately owned strips of land into either a larger parcel. They could also exchange their strips for a farm away from the authority of the commune, as the law also removed the legal ability of the commune to restrict movement.¹⁶ The goal of this law was not to enrich the entire peasant class. Instead, Stolypin hoped to create a gentry class resembling those of Western European nations. He hoped that enough peasants would flee and

¹³ Gatrell, *The Tsarist Economy*, 118.

¹⁴ Dominic Lieven, *The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I & Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 59.

¹⁵ Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891-1991: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014), 44.

¹⁶ Tony Brenton, ed., *Was Revolution Inevitable? Turning Points of the Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34-35.

become prosperous, and these peasants would then use their newfound influence to improve the economy. More important, they would serve as loyal subjects of the Tsar, bolstering the stability of the government.

The influence of this plan on Bolshevik thinkers is evident. Although the NEP was ostensibly designed to increase grain output and rebuild the economy, the Bolsheviks were suspicious of the peasantry, especially “left” Bolsheviks like Leon Trotsky and Yevgeni Preobrazhensky. In their eyes, the peasants were a bastion of reaction, and any law that strengthened the position of the peasant was a roadblock on the path to socialism. Preobrazhensky wrote in his 1926 book, *The New Economics*, what role the peasant would play in developing socialism.

In any case the idea that socialist economy can develop on its own, without touching the resources of petty-bourgeois (including peasant) economy is undoubtedly a reactionary petty-bourgeois utopia. The task of the socialist state consists here not in taking from the petty-bourgeois producers less than capitalism took, but in taking more from the still larger incomes which will be secured to the petty producer by the rationalization of the whole economy, including petty production, on the basis of industrializing the country and intensifying agriculture.¹⁷

The “Left” opposition that formed during the years of the NEP were brought together on the basis that any economic activity must be undertaken in order to strengthen the Soviet Union’s industry first, with the peasantry producing as much food and resources as possible to fuel it. Their cries were made much more urgent by Preobrazhensky’s interpretation of Marx’s theory of “primitive accumulation,” or the way by which a society changes its form of economy. Preobrazhensky was deeply concerned, for other nations had accumulated the capital to transition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which placed Russia almost two hundred years behind.¹⁸ The Left opposition, led by the former Commissar for War, Leon Trotsky, wanted to close this gap as soon as possible. Their views and those of the “Right” Bolsheviks would be crystallized by the horror of World War I and the Civil War.

¹⁷ Yevgeni Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*, trans. Brian Pearce (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 89.

¹⁸ Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*, 80.

The Russian Economy, WWI and the Civil War

For Russia, WWI began in August 1914, when Tsarist Russia rushed to help its ally, Serbia, in a war against Austria Hungary and Germany. Initially Russian industry seemed up to the task; the stinging defeats of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 had created a massive rearmament program that saw the Russian army fairly well equipped.¹⁹ However, defeats and setbacks in 1914 would sent them on the retreat, and even after twenty-five years of industrial progress factories struggled to supply the conflict. By 1917, the Central Powers occupied lands that included one-fifth of Russia's factories. This collapse in manufacturing capability, combined with an ever-present need for arms, meant that soon the entire economy would be mobilized to fight. To do this, the Tsarist and Provincial governments took out over 8 billion rubles in loans between 1914 and 1917.²⁰ The sum later proved too large for the Soviet Union, so they simply refused to pay it in the 1920s.

Russia's troubles would not end with peace in 1918, however. For the next two years, Bolshevik forces, led by Lenin and Trotsky, battled for the nation in a terrible civil war against the so-called Whites, a loose faction of anti-Bolshevik forces. To compound the internal civil war, many foreign powers, including Japan, Britain, the United States, Greece, and France, also intervened in the conflict, either directly, like Japan and the US, or indirectly by providing arms and support for the White forces. The Reds would triumph in late 1922.

The end result of these conflicts for Russia was economic collapse. Russia would suffer approximately ten to twenty million deaths as a result of these conflicts, the overwhelming majority of them coming from famine and disease during the Civil War.²¹ Industrial output was also heavily damaged; in 1920 Soviet industry was producing less than 20% of what it had been in 1913, and production of consumer items had basically stopped.²² This incredible fall illustrates the level of disruption that was caused by the war, and how unprepared the state was for total war. This too would be a lesson that would not be lost on future Soviet leaders, including Trotsky and Stalin.

¹⁹ Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison, ed., *The Economics of WWI* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 236.

²⁰ Broadberry and Harrison, *The Economics of WWI*, 249.

²¹ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Penguin Group, 1997), 772.

²² Alan Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists: The NEPmen 1921-1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 8.

The Emergence of the NEP

After almost eight years of unimaginable horror, the Soviet Union was finally at peace. Enemies both internal and external had been destroyed, and the Bolsheviks could now give serious thought to how to rebuild the nation. However, conflict emerged here as well. The Bolshevik party needed to reconcile multiple ideas about how to move forward. As early as 1921, before the Civil War was even won, the Party began to splinter over this issue. Before the industrial-agrarian split made itself known, the issue of the day was the role of trade unions in industry, and the level of control they would exert. On the far left of this issue was prominent Russian feminist Aleksandra Kollontai. She argued that the Union, and by extension the working classes, must exert their commanding role in the economy. She especially decried the use of “specialists” (former business men and technicians) as counter to communism, as they had been previously recruited by the State to ensure the continuation of industry.²³

Kollontai went even further by assaulting the policies of the senior Bolsheviks, including left minded Leon Trotsky. She argued that “the building of communism belongs to the workers.”²⁴ By decreeing this, Kollontai betrayed her stringently orthodox Marxist leanings, and devoted no time in her pamphlet to the question of the peasantry. Kollontai’s ideas contrasted with men such as Nikolai Bukharin, who placed the peasant question front and center. In the book he co-wrote with his soon to be rival Preobrazhensky, *The ABCs of Communism*, Bukharin described an almost utopian vision of Russian agriculture. This was unsurprising, as the book was written in 1919, at the height of the Civil War. In it, however, his concern for the peasants was visible.

Thus the task of the Communist Party is to do its utmost to establish a more perfect system of agriculture, which will be competent to deliver our rural population from the barbaric waste of energy which occurs in the existent system of dwarf agriculture, to save Russia from the barbaric exhaustion of the soil...²⁵

²³ Ronald Suny, ed., *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 106.

²⁴ Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, 111.

²⁵ Nikolai Bukharin and Yevgeni Preobrazhensky, *ABC of Communism: A Popular Explanation of the Program of the Communist Party of Russia*, trans. by Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1922), 301.

From this excerpt, it is clear that Bukharin wanted to promote efficiency in agriculture. This would be done by methods that should have been in place at that time, such as machines, tractors, consolidating farms to destroy “dwarf” agriculture, and breeding crops for their best properties. More ominously, he warned about the dangers of bureaucracy in the same breath, stating that farms and the farmers that work them must not be concerned only with themselves, but with the entire working class.²⁶ Beginning in 1919, Bukharin was already attempting to blend the workers and peasants into one, which would create a universal class that would cooperate and advance the Soviet state.

By the spring of 1921, Soviet Russia was in dire straits. While the Civil War was more or less wrapped up, the economy was in tatters. In 1920, a brave peasant from Sumy wrote a letter to Lenin, lamenting the hunger that had descended upon his city, and criticizing the state for doing little to help. He wrote: “the poor proletarian toiler walks through the bazaar hungry, stands, looks, and then goes to the state store on the off chance there will be something to get there. But alas, there is nothing there.”²⁷ His letter reflects the rampant illegal trading that the wartime policy of grain confiscation created and how it reduced the food supply for the average proletarian. His solution was to allow unregulated trade as “the state stores will have to be improved, they should be ordered to work better...”²⁸ This allowance of competition between the state services and the private market, seemingly anathema to communism, was exactly what Lenin decreed as policy.

March of 1921 was almost as important of a month to the development of the Soviet state as October of 1917. Events in the twin capitals of Petrograd and Moscow established state economic policy for the rest of the decade, and domestic policy for the rest of the existence of the Soviet Union. On March 8th, Lenin presided over the 10th Party Congress, which was significant in two ways. The first is that during this Congress, the Party choose to end the schism between the Worker’s Opposition (those who supported Kollontai) and the trade unions (who supported Lenin’s views).

Second, Lenin needed to deal with the revolt of the sailors at Kronstadt Naval base, just off the shore from Petrograd.²⁹ The rebellious sailors demanded a more liberalized Soviet state, and in general, aligned themselves with the views of Kollontai. The revolt was crushed, and the liberal reforms demanded

²⁶ Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, *ABC of Communism*, 303.

²⁷ C.J. Storella and A.K. Sokolov, *Voice of the People: Letters from the Soviet Village 1918-1932* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 46.

²⁸ Storella and Sokolov, *Voice of the People*, 46.

²⁹ James von Geldern, “Kronstadt Uprising,” Michigan State University, accessed November 9, 2017, <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1921-2/kronstadt-uprising/>.

by the sailors were ignored. The Party Congress then went a step further, passing a resolution called “On Party Unity.” This resolution banned the Worker’s Opposition of Kollontai, and censored the views of other elements of the party, such as Mensheviks, syndicalists, and democratic reformers. The penalty for not falling into line was “absolute and immediate expulsion from the party.”³⁰ This resolution was binding, as shown in a letter from Lenin addressed to Stalin. In the letter from July 17th, 1922, Lenin criticized him for being slack in his mission to deport these “deviationists” from the Soviet Union: “As far as I am concerned, deport them all!”³¹

Ironically, while Lenin was tightening the reins of state control over political expression, he simultaneously loosened control in the economic sphere. Also in the 1921, the Party Congress formally adopted Bukharin’s policies in the form of the NEP, or New Economic Policy. This policy was designed to revitalize the battered Soviet economy, especially the agricultural sector, which was hit particularly hard: yields were at 54% of 1913 levels.³² This was further exacerbated by a collapse of the transportation network due to a lack of fuel. Lenin made his case for the substitution of grain confiscation with a simple tax on surplus production by peasants with two major arguments, seen below in his speech to the Congress titled “Summing-Up Speech On The Tax In Kind” given on 15 March.

We must not be afraid of the growth of the petty bourgeoisie and small capital. What we must fear is protracted starvation, want and food shortage, which create the danger that the proletariat will be utterly exhausted and will give way to petty-bourgeois vacillation and despair. This is a much more terrible prospect. If output is increased the development of the petty bourgeoisie will not cause great harm, for the increased output will stimulate the development of large-scale industry. Hence, we must encourage small farming. It is our duty to do all we can to encourage small farming. The tax is one of the modest measures to be taken in this direction, but it is a measure that will undoubtedly provide such encouragement, and we certainly ought to adopt it.³³

³⁰ Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, 114.

³¹ Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, 117.

³² R.W. Davies, *From Tsarism to New Economic Policy*, 94.

³³ V.I Lenin, “Summing-Up Speech On The Tax In Kind” (speech, Moscow, RSFSR, 15 March 1922) Marxists Internet Archive,

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/10thcong/ch03.htm>

Lenin's first argument was a pragmatic one. Every member of the Congress was fully aware of the alarming food situation, which threatened their own positions. The Civil War was still underway, and any weakness could have been exploited by either the Whites or the foreign powers. By ending rampant hunger, Soviet Russia could strengthen its own position, and recover from the crisis.

Lenin's second argument was ideological. He stated the orthodox Marxist position that communism could not be built from a large population of peasants, and that improving the food supply was vital to that building process. To those in the Party who feared the growth of a commercial class, Lenin allayed their fears by reinforcing the inevitability of communism and the speed at which it would arrive with this plan. Finally, he called the plan "modest" and that was true; he did not deviate significantly from dogma, and the "modest" plan could be simply repealed later.

Implementation of the NEP

By force of personality and a show of force during the Russian Civil War and the Kronstadt rebellion, Lenin ushered in the era of the NEP. He fortified his position with the publication and very wide circulation of a pamphlet called *The Tax in Kind*, in which he finalized the plan for the NEP. "[T]he first thing to do is to improve the condition of the peasants. The means are the tax in kind, the development of exchange between agriculture and industry, and the development of small industry."³⁴ To do this, a dizzying amount of laws and decrees were promulgated in 1921 and 1922, all with the overall goal of restoring the *smychka* (union) between the alliance of workers and peasants, whose class symbols were now represented on the flag of the Soviet Union. Access to a market structure was allowed, and small enterprises were also allowed to exist beyond state control, a move supported by Bukharin in the *ABC of Communism*. "It would be absurd for the Soviet Power to prohibit petty trade when it is not itself in a position to replace the functions of this trade by activity of its own organs."³⁵ By allowing sales of surplus grain by farmers and middlemen, the Soviet state willingly traded some of its power and authority for economic recovery.

By January 1, 1923, the NEP's provisions had been solidly established. The Civil Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (the largest and most populated Republic of the new Soviet Union) that went into effect on

³⁴ V.I. Lenin, *The Tax in Kind* (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1965), Conclusion, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/apr/21.htm>

³⁵ Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, *ABC of Communism*, 323.

that date was a clear break with the policy of War Communism, and convinced businessmen and Bolsheviks that the state was serious about the NEP.³⁶ The code legalized trade and manufacturing operations of a certain size, although this limit was often never formalized by law. Ball points out that there was no upper limit on the size of the operation, despite the 1923 code stating that these regulations were to follow later. They were never updated.³⁷ Legal protections were guaranteed to the new commercial class, so long as they traded only in officially sanctioned goods. This list was constantly changing, often with no notice to those who traded in them. For example, in August 1923, private film production was eliminated, and state control over this form of media was proclaimed.³⁸ This move was interesting because it shows the State's attempts to increase its own level of influence in the media more so than attempt to control trade.

In the cities, the NEP quickly created a class of businessmen and traders who were derogatively called "NEPmen" by the Soviet press. There were those who quickly took to the legal market (or adapted from the black market) and struck it rich. Their sudden rise to prominence should not be considered surprising, though, as with the complete collapse of state infrastructure, as mentioned by Bukharin, the NEPmen quickly became the only suppliers for many goods, from grain to caviar. They also benefited from lax state controls. Despite the appearance of taxes up to 50% of income, the state struggled to even collect these rubles, as there was a severe shortage of officials to go out and do so.³⁹ The result was increased economic activity, to be sure, and increased trade, but also the NEPmen earned the scorn of both the state and the common people for flaunting their wealth. The state did not remain silent on this issue.

Throughout the 1920s, the Soviet state used culture as a means of both education and propagandizing. In 1918, Lenin set the process of education in motion with his decree "On the Mobilization of Literate People." He argued that the young Soviet state needed to recruit thousands of literate persons and use them as a teaching force across the nation.⁴⁰ In addition to reading to illiterate people and teaching them basic literacy, they were also responsible for "agitation," or exposing these people to Soviet propaganda, in order to convince them to support the Bolsheviks. The program was expanded in 1924, with the

³⁶ Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists*, 23.

³⁷ Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists*, 176.

³⁸ Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists*, 29.

³⁹ Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists*, 31.

⁴⁰ Charles Clark, *Uprooting Otherness: The Literacy Campaign in NEP-Era Russia* (London: Associated University Press, 2000), 22.

creation of the “Down With Illiteracy Society,” a government program that gave the literacy campaign a militaristic zeal as it spread across the country.⁴¹ The program toed the party line, as it promoted the state, and demonized the NEPmen.

To better service the rural population where most of the illiteracy was concentrated, the society established “Reading Rooms” in the villages. These corners were “cozily outfitted” and served as reading centers for the local populace. They were stocked with books detailing the triumph of Soviet power.⁴² Their intent was the reformation of society with these rooms, with the goal in the countryside to improve the *symchka* between the cities and the countryside. To an illiterate population, the ideas found fertile soil. For example, A. Kechuneev wrote *Krestianskaia Gazeta* (Peasant’s Gazette), praising the reading room for opening his eyes to the issue of the *symchka*: “a great event occurred, the declaration of the *symchka* of the worker and the peasant. A *symchka* not of words but of deed.”⁴³ Comrade Kechuneev’s letter was filled with official language and themes which reflected the profound effect the literacy campaign had on rural culture.

In the countryside, the NEP’s effects were much more mixed than in the cities. The state’s allowance of the sale of excess grain had quickly created an object of scorn, the *kulak*. In Russian, this word means “fist,” as in “tight fisted,” illustrating the scorn the new class had earned. This position was seemingly arbitrary, with no set definition of what a *kulak* required to enter that class, although in letters the theme seems to be that to be a *kulak* a peasant family only had to have more than their neighbors. V. Arkhipov, a self-described “poor” peasant, reflected on this divide in his own village in a letter to *Krestianskaia Gazeta* dated January 9, 1924. He began his letter comparing the “kulak-bloodsuckers” to the old Tsarist oppressors, and lamented their influence over his village. “It is not possible to speak against our rich neighbors and godfathers... they would not lend us the implements necessary for agriculture.”⁴⁴ In the country, resentment that the NEP created toward richer neighbors was visible. This feeling was likely exacerbated by the clash of ideals that the NEP created. This view, however, was not universal. Other peasants of the time adapted well to the capitalistic mindset that the NEP created, such as A. Kalinin, a peasant in Siberia. In May 1924 Kalinin wrote to the *Krestianskaia Gazeta* defending the *kulaks* for their work ethic and stating that they had earned

⁴¹ Clark, *Uprooting Otherness*, 47.

⁴² Clark, *Uprooting Otherness*, 77.

⁴³ Storella and Sokolov, *Voice of the People*, 122.

⁴⁴ Storella and Sokolov, *Voice of the People*, 97.

their successes. “In fact, these kulaks work like crazy. In the summer, because of the work, they don’t sleep at night...just look at it: which of these is a kulak, he who honestly labours with his family or he that considers fieldwork a dirty business?”⁴⁵ Kalinin made an interesting point, very similar to the “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” mentality encountered in western capitalist societies. This reflected the infiltration of the “capitalistic mindset” that Appleby stated is part and parcel of the adoption of capitalism.⁴⁶

Soviet Culture and the NEP

The cognitive dissonance generated by the policy became ripe ground for the writers of the early Soviet period, and the views expressed in their works found wide acceptance in the population. Most of the coverage at the time was negative, which was understandable considering the commanding heights controlled by the state in the arts. In 1922, Leon Trotsky demanded that the state “keep a serious and carefully drawn up register of poets, writers, artists, and others. The register should be concentrated under the Main Censorship Administration in Moscow and Petrograd.”⁴⁷ However, he explained that this registry was not to censor artists, but to nurture them, and eventually use them as state mouthpieces. From the beginning of the NEP, it was clear that the state had a clear agenda and culture to promote.

Author and playwright Mikhail Bulgakov secretly published a critical view of the state’s attempt to promote its views with his novel, *Heart of a Dog*. In it, a mad scientist, Phillip Philipovich, creates a man from a dog by implanting human organs in it, except for the heart. The result is “a lewd fellow and a swine,” self-named Poligraf Poligrafivich Sharik.⁴⁸ Bulgakov used the science fiction themes popular at the time to lampoon the efforts by the Soviet state to create a New Soviet Man, casting their efforts as artificial as the pseudo-science employed by Philip Philipovich. Bulgakov also published and produced several plays that drew the ire of the artistic community and the state, but he had an unlikely protector in the form of I. V. Stalin, who defended Bulgakov. In 1929, Stalin wrote to a theater producer asking, “Why are Bulgakov’s plays produced so often? Probably because we don’t have enough plays of our own

⁴⁵ Storella and Sokolov, *Voice of the People*, 99.

⁴⁶ Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution*, 115.

⁴⁷ Katerina Clark et al, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents 1917-1953* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 34.

⁴⁸ Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog*, trans. Avril Pyman (Moscow, Raduga Publishers, 1990), Chapter 8, https://archive.org/stream/MikhailBulgakovTheHeartOfADog/Mikhail-Bulgakov-The-Heart-Of-A-Dog_djvu.txt

good enough for staging. In a land without fish, even *Days of the Turbin* is a fish.”⁴⁹ *Days of the Turbin* was a stage adaptation of Bulgakov’s story *The White Guard*, a story about a White family and their counter revolutionary activity during the Civil War. Despite its choice of protagonists, the play was extremely popular; Stalin even saw it twenty times himself.⁵⁰ Stalin’s approach was representative of the culture policy of the 1920s, where there was much more freedom of expression, but artists still struggled with state control.

By 1925, the culture battle had shifted and the State fully embraced a cultural revolution. In June of that year, the Politburo, the policymakers of the Communist party, announced a new policy on culture; it directly targeted the influence of the “New Bourgeoisie” created by the NEP. The writers of the resolution “On Party Policy in the sphere of literature,” went to great lengths to ensure the “hegemony of proletarian writers.”⁵¹ This was done by the state increasing its role in regulating the arts: “The Party must take every measure to eradicate attempts at improvised and incompetent administrative interference into literary affairs.”⁵² This meant that only in very rare cases, like Bulgakov’s, the state would step in to control artistic output. It wanted to make sure that art conformed to the message of the state, that is, the promotion of proletarian culture, and works that actively countered the capitalistic mindsets that the NEP has created. This ultimately led to the total state control over the arts in the 1930s.

The End of the NEP

By 1927, however, the system began to buckle. In addition to the State’s move to exercise more influence over all aspects of society, the people themselves were becoming disillusioned with the NEP. In agriculture, while many *kulaks* did strike it rich, their success always made them an object of jealousy among their peers. Instead of simply resenting them, many peasants began to demand more state control in their lives. They saw the gap between the provisions of the NEP and grew anxious about their position. F. Romanovskii wrote to the *Krestianskia Gazeta*, demanding something be done to “help me in my life and intervene in my situation, as I am a person in poor health, an invalid of the Civil War.”⁵³ He wanted an expansion of Soviet Power into his village to

⁴⁹ Clark, *Soviet Culture and Power*, 56.

⁵⁰ Evgeny Dobrenko, *Introduction to Mikhail Bulgakov, White Guard*. trans. Marian Schwartz (London: Yale University Press, 2008), xix.

⁵¹ Clark, *Soviet Culture and Power*, 42.

⁵² Clark, *Soviet Culture and Power*, 44.

⁵³ Storella and Sokolov, *Voice of the People*, 87.

save him from poverty. The demands of Romanovskii and countless others like him were answered by the collectivization process of the 1930s, which brought agriculture under firm state control.

In the cities, the state also stepped up its efforts to bring the hated NEPmen to heel. By the late 1920s, the NEPmen's primary market--the urbanites who could not get goods in the state run stores--was shrinking at the advancement of the state's ability to provide for its citizens.⁵⁴ The *smychka* was finally being fulfilled by the state, without the help of the "New Bourgeoisie." The NEPmen had outlived their usefulness. Unlike the collectivized *muzhik* (peasant), however, many NEPmen avoided a deadly end. Many simply stopped acting as traders and producers when the NEP was terminated in 1929. Many were not even arrested; in Kiev, only 4.5% of the registered traders were arrested.⁵⁵ Some of these entrepreneurs later entered the lucrative black market trades in the 1930s, but the majority of these formerly empowered citizens were cowed by state action, and integrated at last into the state's new society.

These actions were the final steps in an almost decade-long political debate over the future of the Soviet State. Envisioned by Lenin as a temporary solution to the issue of Russia's backwardness, the Policy dominated Soviet policymakers for the entirety of the 1920s. Internal politics at the highest level decided the fate of the nation, and Iosif Stalin, the Party Secretary from Georgia, emerged as the destroyer of the NEP. This was not obvious though, as Stalin was a chameleon in his political views. He would ally with Bukharin and Alexi Rykov, champions of the NEP, in order to destroy his enemy, Trotsky. He accomplished this on November 1, 1926, when Stalin had him and his allies expelled from the Politburo.⁵⁶ Once Trotsky, the biggest threat to both Stalin and the NEP, was gone, Stalin was free to expand his own powers. By 1928, Stalin had packed the Politburo with enough of his men to end his relationship with the fathers of the NEP, branding them in the prophetic words of Bukharin, "renegades from Leninism."⁵⁷ The men would be sidelined and murdered in 1938, as Stalin cleaned house during the Great Terror.

Indeed, the New Economic Policy itself died a death of terror as well. Through massive repression, the promise of a gentler, softer path to true communism died as well. The dichotomy of the early Soviet State was resolved,

⁵⁴ Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists*, 163.

⁵⁵ Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists*, 162.

⁵⁶ Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Volume 1: Paradoxes of Power 1879-1928* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 615.

⁵⁷ Kotkin, *Stalin*, 723.

and the limited form of capitalism proved to be insufficient to weather the full wrath of the State. The pragmatic policies of the 1920s were over. The Soviet Union soon entered the unchecked ideological horror of Stalinism.

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