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This paper examines the development of the Paris Métro system between 1900 and 1914. Henry Grabar Sage, a senior American Studies major, traces the development of the transit system that unified Paris and served as the unlikely symbol for the City of Light. Although the Métro brought different social classes together, it also created a city-banlieue divide that continues to define Parisian spatial relations to this day. The paper explores the paradoxical forces of unification and sprawl that shaped modern Paris more than a century ago.
INTRODUCTION

At retirement age, so the adage goes, the average Parisian has spent two years of his life underground. It is a bewildering statistic for any city, let alone one nicknamed the City of Light, but such is the importance of the Paris Métro. The gently arched ceilings of the stations, the stiff metal toggles on the doors, the blue-tiled signs with the white-tiled names of poets, politicians, and places: these are the most visceral symbols of the city. The tangled, multi-colored map is perhaps the most enduring icon we have of Paris as a whole. The Métro is a unifying experience as powerful and as common as the buying of the morning bread. It links every neighborhood and comes within four hundred meters of every point within the city. For the French novelist Alexandre Arnoux, a Parisian by choice, the Métro was “that ribbon that ties together scattered Parisians . . . the emblem and the organ of their communion.” By the mid-20th century, such appraisals—romantic, astounded, and superlative—were common. The Métro had become a de facto symbol of Paris.

This paper chronicles the rapid growth of the Paris Métro system between 1900 and 1914, and the way that growth changed Parisian concepts of space. On the one hand there emerged the trope of the Métro as a grand unifier, in the mold of Arnoux’s appraisal. Franz Kafka, visiting Paris for the first time in 1911, observed that the Métro “is what provides the best chance to imagine that one has understood, immediately, correctly, and quickly, the essence of Paris.” By uniting the city underground in a fast, efficient rail network, the Métro bridged social divides, brought people together, and enabled a comprehensive urban identity that the novelist Jules Romains called “unanimisme,” a common, collective consciousness. To the pleasure and wonder of artists and writers, physical distances shrank, and it was often posited that social differences would melt alongside them.

But even as it united the proletarian East and the bourgeois West underground, rich and poor in every car, the Métro reorganized spatial relations above ground with the opposite result. If we wish to see the Métro as part of the foundation of a citywide identity, we must also acknowledge its role in creating the city-banlieue divide that today governs Parisian spatial relations. As it righted the wrongs of the nineteenth century marginalization of the peripheral neighborhoods inside the city limits, it allowed a
twentieth century equivalent to emerge in the banlieue. The perception of the Métro as a unifying force belied the paradoxical, centrifugal forces of its expansion, which reduced urban density and sent the working classes sprawling into the suburbs, where the system never followed.

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE PARIS MÉTRO

With the exception of a short-lived carriage system proposed by the philosopher Blaise Pascal in 1658, there was no public transportation in Paris until 1828. That year, the city introduced the omnibus, which, along with its gradual replacement, the tramway, defined Parisian circulation during the nineteenth century. For thirty centimes, a passenger could travel anywhere on the line. Because the omnibus stopped whenever a passenger wanted to get on or off, this system was highly inefficient. Yet for Parisians who did not own a horse-drawn carriage, the city offered no other transportation options. Since the buses were open to everyone, the bourgeoisie usually shunned them. Exceptionally, the Duchess of Berry once crossed Paris incognito via omnibus as a part of a bet, but blew her cover when she accidentally handed the conductor the gold piece she had received from the wager.7

By 1854, eleven different companies operated bus services on the tangled streets of Paris. M. Piétri, the prefect of the Paris police, bemoaned the general disorganization of the system, which he considered far insufficient to the needs of the rapidly expanding city. “It serves certain neighborhoods and not others,” Piétri wrote. “The best thing to do it to create one company, with the least general costs, to provide transportation at the lowest possible price.8 The following year, at his behest, the eleven companies consolidated to form the Compagnie Générale des Omnibus (CGO). That year saw 40 million trips on 25 different lines named for the letters of the alphabet. In many ways, the monopoly was at odds with French laws regarding the freedom of industry established during the Second Republic, and the CGO was sometimes accused of treating its horses better than its workers, who toiled an average of seventeen hours a day. Conductors, for example, typically worked shifts from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. or 9 a.m. to midnight.9 However, the city counter-balanced the concession by forcing the CGO to continually expand its network and run new lines to the city’s poor, outer neighborhoods. These lines became a necessity after Baron Haussmann’s urban renewal projects of the 1860s created wide boulevards lined with expensive housing, gutting central Paris and pushing workers to the periphery.

The desire to link the city’s center with its expanding proletarian surroundings also inspired the first Métro plan, proposed in 1856 by two engineers named Brame and

8 Ibid., 38.
9 Ibid..
Flacha. They intended for their underground railway to extend from Les Halles to the Gare du Nord and to be used “for the transport of travelers and especially workers who, as a result of the transformations that have taken place in the quarters of the center, are going to be obliged to live at the margins of the city.” Léon Say, a councilor and eventually Haussmann’s successor as Prefect of the Seine, also emphasized urban connectivity as a goal in front of the Municipal Council in 1871: “Les Batignolles, Montmartre, La Chapelle, La Villette, Bercy, all these neighborhoods . . . have nothing between them but accidental relations; it’s central Paris that makes them live.” The city sent a delegation to London the next year to draw inspiration from the underground Metropolitan Railway, begun in 1863.

Thus began the 30 year saga of the Métro's construction. Frustration with the length of the project was expressed in this 1891 song by Jules Oudot:

It’s like the plays of Mr. Becques,
Finishing badly again and again.
We won’t strain our necks
To see the completion of the Métropolitain.

The debate between advocates for elevated and underground systems was endless, but enlivened by fantastic schemes. Supporters of an elevated line framed their proposals as Haussmannian interventions that would bring economic prosperity to the surrounding streets. Albin Dumas, who wrote the first book about the Métro system in 1901, said of one such project by an architect named Haag, “the enormous expense that would result from it would be compensated, at least in great measure, by the yields of the stores established under the viaducts and the capital gains acquired by the plots facing the new avenues.”

Supporters of an elevated line also denounced the underground as unreasonable and dangerous. Jules Garnier, who proposed a raised track running down the center of the Seine, wrote:

Indeed, what difference does it make to the inhabitant of London to be underground surrounded by vapor, smoke, and darkness; he is in the same condition aboveground. But take the Parisian who loves the day, the sun, gaiety and color around him, and propose that he alter his route to seek, in darkness, a means of transport which will be a foretaste of the tomb, and he will refuse,
preferring the *impériale* of an omnibus.\textsuperscript{14} Another entrant, Heuzé, coined the phrase *Nécropolitain* to describe an underground system as a veritable descent into the catacombs.

Opponents of an elevated line also described this option as a second Haussmanization, but they criticized it for its aesthetic rather than economic consequences: they did not want the face of Paris altered beyond recognition again. Haussmann's work now needed protection. The prospect of an elevated track ruining the vista of the Boulevard de l'Opéra aroused special outrage. Victor Hugo, a former critic of Haussmann, served as the honorary president of the *Société des monuments parisiens*, which opposed the construction of an elevated metro system.

The location of the lines soon became a more pressing issue, which would have serious consequences to the construction of the Métro. The French State repeatedly proposed a system that would coordinate the city's mainline train stations, so that a train could enter the city at Gare de Lyon and run underground to the Gare de l'Est. This plan had obvious benefits for travel outside and around Paris, especially for the transportation of soldiers, but the Municipal Council was not interested. Instead, they called for a system that traced popular omnibus and tramway routes, designed to facilitate circulation *intra muros*. In the aftermath of the Paris Commune, all grasps for municipal autonomy aroused great suspicion from the French government, and the state repeatedly rejected the Municipal Council's plans.

The specter of international decline hung over this thirty-year deadlock. The visit to London immediately followed the humiliation of 1870-71 in the Franco-Prussian War, a military loss that revealed that France could learn from its German neighbors. While debates concerning the construction of the Métro continued in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, New York, Chicago and even Glasgow built urban rail networks. Thus, in addition to the technological insecurities the French harbored after the catastrophic defeat of 1871, the fear of international embarrassment at the 1900 World Exposition finally pushed the project through. During the World Exposition of 1889, Parisians had become acutely aware of their city's transportation crisis, and neither the city nor the state wanted a repeat of that debacle.\textsuperscript{15} In 1895, fearing that the lack of urban transportation might ruin the coming spectacle, French Minister of Public Works Louis Barthou yielded to the city. In exchange for Paris's cooperation in running the Exposition, Barthou agreed that the metro system would be constructed “in purely local interest, reserved for the needs of urban traffic and independent from the main train lines.”\textsuperscript{16} The city, still wary that the


\textsuperscript{16} Dumas, *Le Chemin de fer métropolitain de Paris*, 10. Author’s translation.
main line trains would abuse its system, called for a narrow track that would guarantee the Métro’s independence.

In 1897, the Municipal Council approved the system “in purely local interest,” and in March of 1898, plans for the Métro also passed in the Senate. The following April, the city of Paris borrowed 165 million francs to finance the Métro system and granted the concession to a new company, the Compagnie du chemin de fer métropolitain de Paris. One financial writer noted, “Today, to acquire stocks in the Métro, it’s not necessary to have the heroism that those brave men had who, at the beginning of the railroads, underwrote the big companies and thereby assured the fortune of their families.”¹⁷ Most investors were not quite so confident—though Métro shares were selling for as much as 500 francs in Paris, it cost well below the 1,550 francs for a share of the Compagnie générale des Omnibus.

While the Métro did not open in time for the beginning of the Exposition, the first line, from Porte Dauphine to the Porte de Vincennes, opened on July 19, 1900. For the culmination of a project that had been in the works for thirty years, and under construction for two, the debut generated surprisingly little fanfare. The front pages of the country’s most popular newspapers contained no reports of the Métro’s opening, and some—Le Temps and Le Petit Journal—did not cover the event at all. In newspapers that sent a journalist to the Métro’s first run, reviews were generally positive. “Besides the extraordinary chill that struck the curious, upon their reaching the platform,” wrote Serge Basset in Le Figaro, “there was, for the passengers, a sense of true admiration for the colossal work.”¹⁸ While Basset’s fellow passengers eyed a pretty girl in the car, beginning a long and storied Métro tradition of people-watching, Basset was just as taken with the train itself. “I perceive, while waiting, that a number of passengers are paying more attention to my pretty neighbor than to the line itself,” he noted. “And yet, isn’t she just as interesting, with her audacious curves, her elliptical vaults...” After thirty years of waiting for the Métro’s construction, its arrival proved a discreet triumph in the popular press.

Although newspapers were uninterested in celebrating the new underground train, the people took notice, and the system’s success soon surpassed expectations. In just thirteen days during July 1900, over 500 thousand people took the Métro.¹⁹ Albin Dumas’s first article on the Métro was a sell-out sensation in La Génie Civil and in his follow-up book, he wrote that the Métro had “surpassed the most optimistic forecasts” and praised the “brilliant results already obtained.”²⁰ In 1903, Baedeker’s Guide wrote that the Métro “now takes precedence of all other modes of locomotion in the interior of the city.”²¹ Though the Métro remained small, measured in passengers per kilometer per year

¹⁹ Dumas, Le Chemin de fer métropolitain de Paris, 118
²⁰ Dumas, Le Chemin de fer métropolitain de Paris, 34; Dumas, 20. Author’s translation.
it became the busiest train system in the world after just five months, and traffic continued
to increase after the Exposition closed in November 1900.\textsuperscript{22} The system expanded rapidly
after this success, despite a horrible accident at Couronnes station in 1903, caused by an
electrical fire, in which 84 people were killed. By 1904, the Métro carried ten million
more passengers a year than the London Tube, then nearing its fortieth birthday.\textsuperscript{23} By
1914, the system comprised 80 kilometers of track and 400,000,000 annual passengers.\textsuperscript{24}

THE GROWTH OF MÉTROCULTURE

The popularity of the Métro soon translated into cultural presence. Before its
construction, the Métro had been a common topic of discussion not only at meetings of
the Municipal Council, but also at cafés and dinner parties. French writer Guy de
Maupassant described one such conversation:

All the men were speaking at the same time now, gesturing and sputtering; they
were discussing the great project of the metropolitan railroad. The subject was
only exhausted at the end of dessert, since each had a number of things to say on
the slow pace of communication in Paris, the inconvenience of the tramways, the
pains of the omnibus and the rudeness of the coachmen.\textsuperscript{25}

The excitement continued after the Métro opened. As early as 1901, it inspired a series of
children’s toy train sets, “to occupy the hours of our future engineers.”\textsuperscript{26} By 1905, the
Grands Magasins du Louvre were selling toy metro sets, the largest of which included an
engine, two cars, 22 track pieces, one switch, two platforms, a ticket kiosk and a Guimard-
style entrance. The toy train set cost 35 francs—a week’s salary for a Métro worker.\textsuperscript{27} In
March 1905, the review \textit{Fémina} published a two-page spread, proclaiming “Le Métro est à
la mode!”\textsuperscript{28}

It was the dawn of Métroculture; the 30-year debate, even the Couronnes
catastrophe, seemed ancient history. Emile Gérards, the author of the exhaustive
underground history \textit{Paris Souterrain}, wrote: “One is shocked that the execution of a work
as ardently desired and as necessary as this one could have run up against so many
difficulties.”\textsuperscript{29} For Gérards, writing in 1908, the construction of the Métro “already seems
long ago!”\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[22] Dumas, \textit{Le Chemin de fer métropolitain de Paris}, 122.
Press, 2005), 47.
\item[25] \textit{Metro-Cité: Le chemin de fer métropolitain à la conquête de Paris, 1871-1945}, 179.
\item[26] Guerrand, \textit{L’Aventure du Métropolitain}, 50. Author’s translation.
\item[27] Ibid.
\item[28] Henri Duvernois, “La Parisienne et le Métropolitain,” \textit{femina} 5.99 (March, 1905), 120.
\item[29] Gérards, \textit{Paris Souterrain}, 566. Author’s translation.
\item[30] Ibid. Author’s translation.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
A mythology of the Métro was emerging. Even as the underground commute became a daily routine, the Métro inspired artists well beyond the Folies-Bergères. Despite the tremendous success of the Métro system, early artistic representations often associated the Métro with death, hell, and darkness, a connection partially the result of the Couronnes catastrophe. *L’Assiette au beurre* devoted its August 1903 issue to the “Métro-Nécro,” resurrecting Heuzé’s old “Nécropolitain” gibe. Théophile Steinlen’s front cover showed a family waiting to buy a ticket from Death, his bony hand handing out the small slip of admission.31 An illustration by Guillaume from around 1905 showed Virgil and Dante waiting on the platform beside the frantic push into the open carriage doors. Dante waves his hand in disgust, as if to say, “Let’s wait for the next one.”32 Léon Bloy, writing in March 1904, had this to say of the rapidly expanding system:

My first trip in the Métro. Gigantic work, I consent, and not without a certain underground poetry; but infernal racket, certain danger, probable death—and what a death it would be!—every time that one descends into these catacombs. Impression of headwaters, quivering forests, dawns and dusks on the prairies of Paradise. Impression of the death of the human spirit.33

Despite the numerous analogies to death and hell, the cultural reception of the Métro was in fact much more complicated than this easy stereotype. While the daily commute made the Métro anything but exotic, the system offered rich ground for speculation, analysis, and artistic inspiration. Baudelaire’s concept of the *flâneur* was quickly and easily adapted to the Métro, despite initial doubts. How could a trip through the bowels of Paris provide the visual and social excitement of the *grands boulevards*? Even Albin Dumas, as vociferous a defender of the Métro as any, had to admit this fault: “It’s true to say that the underground voyage is a lot less pleasant than the one that takes place in the animated streets of the capital, and it seems that this is, for the Métropolitain, a veritable cause of inferiority.”34 But observers immediately found that the Métro offered an unparalleled concentrated experience of social observation. During his first trip, Serge Basset had noticed his compatriots eyeing an attractive young woman in the car. Similarly, Marcel Jouhandeau later noted: “Just as the astronomer has his observatory, the Métro is the place in the world where I most easily study the faces offered for my inspection. . . . If I lost my library, I would always have the Métro. . . . One ticket, and I read the faces.”35 Marcel Proust would take this idea a step further in *Le Temps retrouvé*, in which Jupien feigns anxiety during World War I aerial bombardment “so as to have a pretext, as soon as the sirens sounded, to rush into the shelters in the Métro, where he hoped for pleasure

31 *L’Assiette au beurre* 125 (August 22, 1903), 2114.
34 Dumas, *Le Chemin de fer métropolitain de Paris*, 177. Author’s translation.
from brief contact with unseen figures.”

These observational pleasures made up only one aspect of the new social possibilities of the Métro.

In fact, the Métro, with its packaged crowds flying together underground, quickly came to represent a common denominator of Parisian existence. The Métro was a unifying force where the individual ceased to exist. For Kafka, it permitted him to forget his foreignness for a moment, and find solidarity with his traveling companions: “You’re not far from men, you’re one element of an urban system, something like water in conduits.” André Siegfried, in Géographie humoristique de Paris, called it “a sort of mythic sensation, delivered for a few instants from my person, breathing and reacting with the mass, enjoying its force and its power.” Ezra Pound captured this impression at the Concorde station in 1913 with the two celebrated lines of “In a Station of the Métro”:

“The apparition of these faces in the crowd / Petals on a wet, black bough.” Jules Romains, a great proponent of this idea, wrote in 1910’s Manuel de déification that in the Métro, “you can leave your body and put yourself at the center of a deity.” As it had for Kafka, the Métro became for Romains “the intermediary being, the living, fluid cement that will figure out how to bring men together.” Romains created the term “unanimisme” to describe precisely this urban mass of human consciousness. In the cars of the Métro, differences melted away from passengers until all that remained was the essence of Paris.

These early impressions and appropriations played up the Métro’s power as a democratizing force. Robert Lamoureux’s “Métro,” written in 1948, is an ode to this concept:

The Métro is the image of life,
For the big and for the small.
From the worker to the boss,
Same car for one and all.

Though the poem dates from after the early years of the Métro, it is a neat summation of a train of thought that had existed since the beginnings of the network. While the Métro initially had first- and second-class cars, Dumas noted in 1901 that no passenger took the time to distinguish between them: “In their hurry to get on the train, lots of travelers

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40 “Poème du Métropolitain,” quoted in ibid., Author’s translation.
42 Guerrand, L’Aventure du Métropolitain, 112. Author’s translation: “L’métro c’est l’imag’ de la vie / Pour les grands comm’ pour les petits / De l’employé jusqu’au patron / C’est pour tous le même wagon.”
neglect to make sure of what class car they are choosing.” The common purpose of the system—to get quickly from place to place—was more important than maintaining class distinctions. At the same time, workers certainly used the Métro more often than the bourgeoisie, with six times more second-class tickets sold than first-class tickets.

Although the Métro did not cause class boundaries to disintegrate entirely, it was one of the few places in Paris where classes mixed freely. In his 1912 study *Etude Economique sur les moyens de transport en commun dans Paris*, Marcel Chassaigne stated that “the method of transport constitutes the meeting ground [terrain de rencontre] of social categories that are separated in everyday life by so many conventional and effective barriers.” By allowing people of different socioeconomic classes to occupy the same space, the Métro created the popular waterway metaphors of Romsains and Kafka and emerged as a *terrain de rencontre*. In the *Fémina* review in 1905, Henri Duvernois recounts one such rencontre, between a bourgeois dame and a working-class woman on today’s Line 2. The workingwoman speaks first:

—Do you live far? she asked when they had both praised the charms and conveniences of the Métro.
—I reside on avenue de Villiers, and you?
—I'm just a few minutes away from you, ma’am . . . Avenue Gambetta!

Villiers and Gambetta, of course, were miles apart geographically, and even more culturally distant. Villiers was located in the bourgeois 17th arrondissement, just north of the Parc Monceau, while Gambetta is in the city’s proletarian East. Duvernois’s apocryphal encounter not only situates the two classes together in the train, but it also hints at a social rapprochement outside of the train. If Villiers and Gambetta, two distinct spheres of Parisian identity, were now separated by only a few minutes, how different were they? This exchange reveals the extent to which the Métro transformed Parisian concepts of space and time. By redefining the social geography of Paris, the Métro broke down class boundaries not only within the train, but also above ground.

The effect of the Métro on Parisian space and time attracted the attention of the artistic avant-garde. Painters Louis Truchet, André Devambez, Louis Hista, Edouard Vuillard and Charles Lacoste all depicted the system in its early years. The most famous of these pre-World War I Métro paintings was the Italian futurist Gino Severini’s *Le Nord-Sud*, inspired by the eponymous line (today’s Line 12), which connected the city’s two artistic cores, Montparnasse and Montmartre. The canvas shows a jumbled collection of

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43 Dumas, *Le Chemin de fer métropolitain de Paris*, 120. Author’s translation.
44 Ibid.
46 Henri Duvernois, “La Parisienne et Le Métropolitain,” *Fémina* 5.99 (March 1905), 120.
signs and fragmented sections of tunnel thrust together with intimations of motion. The painting, Severini wrote, was designed to express “the idea of the speed at which an illuminated body traverses tunnels alternately dark and lit up.” The Cubist poet Pierre Reverdy later borrowed *Nord-Sud* for the name of his poetry review, which published work by Apollinaire, Louis Aragon, André Breton and others. Louis-Ferdinand Céline would later claim the Métro as a metaphor for his style: “I stuff it all in! . . . my métro with ‘three dot ties’ carries it all away! . . . my magic métro! . . . traitors, suspect beauties, foggy wharves, autos, puppies, brand-new buildings, romantic chalets, plagiarists, dissenters, everything!” The Métro transformed notions of time and space, and for the avant-garde, it encapsulated the idea of the modern.

This concept was not exclusively reserved for the grands artistes; many others also commented on the changed meaning of distance and speed. In addition to the chilly air and the pretty girl, Serge Basset and his companions on the first Métro trip marveled repeatedly at the speed with which they could cross Paris: “Palais-Royal! . . . Already? We thought we’d hardly left! . . . It’s really something!” The trip from the Bois de Boulogne to the Bois de Vincennes was cut from an hour in the tramway to only twenty-five minutes on the Métro. Had anyone ever crossed Paris so quickly? After the Couronnes catastrophe, *Le Gaulois*, in a scathing editorial, attacked the confidence the people had in the system. The paper treated the Métro’s ability to “almost suppress distances,” with tragic incredulity, as if to say, we knew it could not be so easy. Even ten years after the system opened, François Poncetton found the shortening of distances shocking and wondrous. In his 1910 tale “L’homme de Métropolitain,” Poncetton wrote: “To leave the swampy plains of the place Saint-Michel and find oneself an instant later in the alpine region of Clichy. It’s a perpetual miracle.” Paris looked the same, but its size, for all practical purposes, had shrunk immensely. The Métro had united the entire city underground.

The physical reality of the city was reduced to one ticket, and thus rendered subservient to the underground order. The significance of the one-ticket concept should not be underestimated. In London, for example, passengers had to pay by distance, reducing the rail system’s power to compress the city’s geography. Also crucial in reshaping Parisian concepts of space was Bienvenüe’s grand principal of the Métro—“no

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48 Ibid., Author’s translation.
50 Basset, “Sur le Métropolitain.” Author’s translation.
point more than four hundred meters from a Métro line; it must be possible to go from one point on the network to another without having to make more than two transfers”—which assured that the underground web would efficiently connect the entire city. Évelyne Cohen, in *Paris dans l’imaginaire national de l’entre-deux-guerres*, credits the Métro with softening the dichotomy between the Left Bank and the Right Bank. It also began to smooth the distinction between East and West, rich and poor. Parisian relations of labor, capital, and social life reorganized around the new system of transportation. Louis Dausset, who served on the budget committee of the Municipal Council, noted in 1909, “When we built the Métropolitain and encouraged the development of mechanical trams, we gave our citizens and visitors a taste for moving about (italics mine). . . . So underground transport does nothing to reduce surface movement in Paris; on the contrary, it multiplies it.” Since neighborhoods were now part of a complicated, interconnected web, “Paris” no longer referred just to the city center. Jules Romain, observing the complexity of the morning commute, noted that though Métro lines sometimes followed pre-existing patterns of travel, they also created new ones: “It’s no longer a question of a quasi-natural stream of a big city towards its central basin.” These new patterns of movement not only facilitated Parisians’ commutes, they also fulfilled the goals of Councilor Léon Say, who had first called for a transportation that fostered urban integration in 1871.

Many speculated about the effect of the Métro on commerce. A member of the Municipal Council, speaking on behalf of small businesses, had warned that the Métro would disastrously change the economic geography of the city:

> With your Métropolitain, all the life of the boulevards, the great arteries, would disappear. Merchants, manufacturers, workers, upon leaving their offices, their workshops, will have only one objective: run quickly to take the train. . . . To summarize, the face of Paris destroyed, the stores ruined, the little businessmen closing up shop, intellectual life no longer in existence. . . . Paris will exist no more!" 

This doomsday prophecy went unfulfilled, but even after the system was built, similar fears persisted. Romain, fascinated by the power of the Métro, believed that “the pedestrian who walks, reading his newspaper, with a glance from time to time at a clock is not yet a throwback. But he has already taken on a certain anachronistic and privileged quality.” Marcel Chassaigne, though a vociferous Métro apologist, believed that the system would indeed “exacerbate the rupture of equilibrium between big and small

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54 Métro-Cité: *Le chemin de fer métropolitain à la conquête de Paris, 1871-1945*, 41. Author’s translation.
business.” Now that it was possible to shop anywhere in Paris, would the city’s commercial diversity survive? How would it adjust? Did the big department stores reap tangible benefits from the web that joined them to tout Paris? There is ample room for research on this topic.

The Métro encouraged diversity both inside its cars and above ground. As The Paris Guide of 1925 noted:

Once, I mean, fifteen years ago, you found on the Champs-Elysées only elegant people whose sole concern was to please. You went on promenade. Today, the people are king. Thousands of sales clerks, employees, louts invading the sidewalks with their ugliness, with their tumult, with their vulgarity. And Sunday! Let’s not even talk about Sunday, the bourgeois families, who show up at the window displays to contemplate the automobiles that they will never possess, or who knows why? This democratization of public space reveals that the entire city had been integrated in a public transport grid. Marcel Chassaigne believed that the Métro would heal rifts between the rich and poor and improve the lives of the latter. “There will result from it, necessarily, a universal development of the instinct of sociability,” he wrote. To his mind, the Métro would allow workers to maintain contact with distant Parisian friends and relatives by making a trip from Ménilmontant to Vaugirard, an exhausting day-long expedition before 1900, a feasible and exciting voyage. Similarly, workers could now participate in typically bourgeois activities like Sunday trips to the park or to the theater that had once been inaccessible due to the time and cost of transportation.

Yet in reality, even as the Métro adjusted spatial organization and promoted daily contact between the rich and poor, it facilitated the process of horizontal socioeconomic segregation begun by Baron Haussmann. The gradual renovation of the city’s center in the 1860s had converted old, overpopulated slums like the Ile de la Cité into bourgeois enclaves and pushed workers towards the city’s North and East. After he created the CGO omnibus monopoly in 1855, Piétri had cited the need to provide the poorer neighborhoods with transport and granted a concession monopoly that gave the city more power to dictate such demands. Brame and Flachat had anticipated the same problem with their Métropolitan railway scheme in 1856. Unsurprisingly, the socialists had supported the Métro project from the start, in hopes that it would permit workers to live

62 Chassaigne, *Etude économique sur les moyens de transport en commun dans Paris*, 178. John McKay, in his book on European tramway systems, posits that the improved access to recreation for the working class began even earlier, with the expansion of tramlines.
further from Paris' center in cheaper, better conditions. One Mr. Duval-Arnould had the opposite opinion, but remarked the same process of segregation underway. He testified to the Society of Social Economy in 1909 that he had noticed this change in the composition of the city:

Those of us, like me, who have the honor of representing one of the oldest quarters of Paris, where we still have, in the same street, in the same house, rich and poor, bourgeois, workers, and employees living together, cannot help but regret this change. We used to see—we still see—friendly relations take shape, feelings of esteem grow, and reciprocal trust between neighbors who, one day or another, have the chance to do each other favors. They are the silent but sympathetic witnesses of virtues they can recognize on both sides.

On the one hand, the society of rich people, in those neighborhoods of the West where the houses are palaces, where the only workers that the millionaires see up close are their maids and their concierge. On the other hand, at the other end of Paris, neighborhoods where the worker, coming home at night, finds only other workers like him, leading the same dark, laborious life that he leads himself and forming a milieu quite favorable to the action of the agitators for revolution, who can better decry and slander the rich now that the poor have no personal contact with them.

But Duval-Arnould was observing a process that had been underway for nearly a half-century. The movement during the first decade of the twentieth century was much more complex.

The Métro perpetuated a trend begun by Haussmann of population decline in central Paris. From 1891 to 1911, Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois lost 27 percent of its population, while the population of La Chaussée-d’Antin declined by 30 percent and that of Gaillon by 28 percent. The decrease in population was more marked than ever before: Between 1901 and 1911, six of the first ten arrondissements declined in population. Of those that grew—the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th—none grew by more than four percent. Furthermore, the Métro did not promote growth in the outer arrondissements. From 1901 to 1911, the 11th, 18th, 19th, and 20th arrondissements all saw two-figure declines in growth rate from the previous ten years. The population of the city of Paris reached a plateau in 1911 at 2,888,110, a number that did not fluctuate by more than 20 thousand until 1936, when it began to decline.

In 1896, the city had worked to raise land values in the capital’s outer districts.

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63 Métro-Cité, 179.
64 Chassaigne, Étude économique sur les moyens de transport en commun dans Paris, 175. Author’s translation.
65 Ibid., 130.
67 Dumas, Le Chemin de fer métropolitain de Paris, 12
Over the next several decades, rents increased throughout Paris, and particularly along the new Métro lines. M. Mesureur said in an address to the Académie de médecine: “If the difficulty of lodging in Paris is not new for the modest class of clerks and workers, it has lately taken on a much more worrisome character.” Marcel Chassaigne also noted this phenomenon in 1912: “An apartment near the Métropolitain . . . has a much more expensive rent just because of this proximity. It is curious to note that, to a certain degree, the same element [the Métro] is thus at once the cause and the remedy of this wrong.”

Chassaigne had uncovered a paradox, in which mass transit allowed workers to live farther from the center, while also raising prices and thus pushing workers even farther away. In his memoir of growing up in the 19th arrondissement just before the First World War, Eugène Dabit remarked that the expanding Métro network aided the process of gentrification: “My uncle Louis, who lived on the rue Fessart, responded: ‘What can you do, Belleville’s got to develop with everything else. Ten years from now, we’ll be like the Centre . . .’ The long-term shortage of moderately priced housing in Paris was one of the factors that slowed growth in the Parisian East between 1901 and 1911.

By providing transport to the city’s packed, proletarian east, the Métro caused a decline in population density. Officials and statisticians, including Louis Dausset, Marcel Chassaigne, and Henri Sellier, praised the Métro for reducing density and its associated health problems. Workers in search of reasonably priced housing expanded to the banlieue, the farthest possible commuting distance, and typically rode the tramway to the Métro terminus and transferred. While the Métro solved the problem of mass transit within the city, it created and neglected the issue of mass transit on the periphery. Though the Métro expanded from 16 million annual passengers in 1900 to 312 million in 1909, the number of individual tramway journeys remained static. In fact, the number of tramway lines expanded from 25 in 1890 to 46 in 1910, in order to cover expanded territory. Although the Métro was the most important means of locomotion within Paris the tramway was quickly becoming the most important means of transportation outside the city. The Métro had created what Jules Romains called a feeling of “unanimisme” in

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69 Ibid., 161. Author’s translation.
70 Ibid., 168. Author’s translation.
71 Eugène Dabit, Faubourgs de Paris (Paris: Gallimard, 1933), 86.
72 Chassaigne, Etude économique sur les moyens de transport en commun dans Paris, 178.
73 Ibid., 179.
75 Chassaigne, Etude économique sur les moyens de transport en commun dans Paris, 142.
Paris, but that feeling—and the system itself—did not extend to the banlieue.

By the 1920s, the majority of Parisian workers lived outside Paris. In 1931, the year that France’s urban population surpassed its rural population, André Morizet, the mayor of Boulogne, wrote, “The Paris of César Birotteau, limited by the boulevards of Louis XIV, is dead. That of Baron Haussmann enclosed in the fortifications of Thiers likewise. Another, which we sometimes call ‘Greater Paris,’ sometimes ‘the Parisian agglomeration,’ has absorbed them both.” Where the Parisian East had been the enfant terrible and a hotbed of revolutions during the nineteenth, the banlieue filled that role in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Henri Sellier’s 1921 essay on health problems in and around Paris noted that tuberculosis (generally an indicator of poverty), high population density, and poor living conditions were endemic to four Paris arrondissements, but to ten of the city’s outlying districts. Another book from 1931 put it simply: “It’s the banlieue that commands the urban and demographic evolution of Paris.” While the city’s East remained a working-class area, it was becoming less crowded and more expensive and the East-West distinction was being eclipsed by the city-suburb divide.

THE LEGACY OF THE MÉTRO IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Throughout the twentieth century, the Métro continued to encapsulate the essence of Paris and to inspire literary accolades. The system fascinated visitors, artists, and urban scholars because it both enabled and limited the act of reimagining Parisian geography according to the capricious connections of the system, their original logic all but forgotten. We can also see the Métro as a factor in and a manifestation of a united Parisian identity, Romains’ concept of “unanimisme”: the crowded cars carried the implication of a common geographic destiny as well as a metaphorical solidarity.

But beyond a few small offshoots, the system and the sentiment would never extend to Paris’ rapidly expanding suburbs, whose growth owed something to the centrifugal forces the Métro helped nurture. Workers in the first decade of the twentieth century moved to the farthest edge of the feasible commute zone in search of cheap and salubrious housing, areas as marginal and as troubled as the exterior arrondissements had been in the late nineteenth century. From Zola’s Rue de la Goutte d’Or (L’Assommoir, 1877) to Céline’s Vigny-sur-Seine (Voyage au bout de la nuit, 1932), the quintessential Parisian slum of nineteenth-century French literature was inside the city’s boundaries. Its twentieth century counterpart was beyond the walls. The Métro never expanded to integrate these areas extra muros.

77 Stovall, 438
To be sure, in the twentieth century some called for the integration of outlying districts so that they functioned in relation to each other as well as to the central city. Yet the goals of the Métro were limited, and such a movement was unsuccessful. As Norbert Loriot explained in an essay in Métro-Cité:

From a policy of interconnection designed to distribute the services of the Métropolitain in a relatively homogenous fashion across the entire territory of the Parisian municipality, we shifted to a policy of centralization, for the sole benefit of the capital... more apt to ‘subjugate’ the populations of peripheral areas than to offer to them better conditions of circulation.”

In Portrait de Paris, a 1959 book that collected various essays about Paris, Sorbonne professor Pierre Lavedan reframed the city-state construction debate of the 1880s and 1890s as a conspiracy to exclude the banlieue: “Only one preoccupation still more fatal was affirmed above all: that of serving only municipal Paris, not its banlieue.” Yet at that time, the population of the banlieue was still dwarfed by that of Paris; even the most prescient official could not have predicted the magnitude of the suburban explosion to come.

While the suburbs had separate rail lines, they were primarily commuter trains, and they did not inspire the same adulation as the Métro. In 1933’s The Radiant City, Le Corbusier quoted his secretary as saying: “I’ve spent the best years of my life in the train. Ten years! Since I was seventeen. My youth and all of life’s dangers have passed me by in the train. I often feel pretty low, and that can lead to the kind of adventure that only brings danger and bitterness and the rest. I keep telling myself that one day... something will happen, a miracle, a meeting. I haven’t given up hope, don’t worry!” The suburban commute, with its dim hope of rencontre, was far from the Parisian spirit of unanimisme. The Métro stopped at the borders of Paris, and Paris stopped where the Métro lines ended.

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By Chelsea Janes, PC ’12
Written for “The First World War,” Professor Jay Winter, Fall 2010
Edited by Elinor Monahan and Brendan Ross

During their junior years, history majors complete at least two seminars covering history from two different geographical regions. Majors can choose from a plethora of topics and often find inspiration for their senior theses in junior seminars where students can hone in on particular areas of interest. Chelsea Janes, a current senior history major in Pierson College, wrote this paper last year for Professor Jay Winter’s seminar “The First World War.” Here, Chelsea analyzes the complex relationship between Newfoundland and Great Britain in the context of the Great War, a relationship that Newfoundland hoped would be strengthened through their immense sacrifice on the Western Front. Ultimately, the respect the “Newfies” sought was never recognized by the British and “the loyal and most ancient colony” would never rejoin their mother country.
Newfoundlanders are storytellers. Theirs is a unique and difficult history; their stories both unrelentingly human and necessarily optimistic. My grandmother, a “Newfie” born and bred, once told a “funny” story about her Aunt Lou who “got all burnt up in a fire at the old folks’ home in St. John’s.” It was not until her story shifted to that of her father’s death from the effects of gassing in the First World War that we realized no punch line was coming. The mix of good and bad, humor and horror, joy and loss is what defines the history of Newfoundland, one framed in the rhetoric of a people whose resilience and loyalty requires it. Yet nothing tested this rhetoric, resilience, and optimism like the First World War; its devastating impact on the civilized world made the telling of its stories something even Newfoundlanders struggled with. The “ancient and most loyal colony,” as the island was known throughout its history, was tested to as great a degree as any nation in the war.

The story of the thirty minutes from 9:15 to 9:45 on the morning of July 1, 1916, was the ultimate test of Newfoundland’s loyalty to its mother country and its ability to inject light into the darkest parts of history. This story would come to define the nation as the exception in World War I, as a colony whose service did not inspire a quest for independence, but rather for a respect it would never receive. While other peoples incorporated their losses into a basis for separation from the countries for whom they fought, the efforts of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment at the tragic Battle of Beaumont-Hamel were instead a part of the colony’s efforts to live up to its moniker and prove its loyalty. The story that emerged defined Newfoundland’s attitude as it tried to reconcile its tremendous loss with British indifference to its sacrifices.

That tale, which began as early as 1001 A.D with the arrival of Norse fishermen, is tied inextricably with the sea. The sea not only tied Newfoundland to its British overseers, but also defined its value to them. Giovanni Caboto, Italian by birth but sponsored by England, landed on Newfoundland in 1497 as part of an expedition whose assigned purpose was to “sail to all parts . . . and set up our banner on any new-found land.” Perhaps in foreshadowing of the emphasis on convenience that would come to define Terra Nova for its colonizers, the name “New-found land” stuck, and its massive quantities of fish so blinded the British that they never learned enough about the island to change its name. Despite attempts to capitalize on the lucrative fish market, British colonizers did not officially claim the colony until the summer of 1583 when Sir Humphrey Gilbert declared it Britain’s first American colony. Again, it is telling that even this was not solidified until 130 years later, when the Treaty of Utrecht officially established its settlement. Even more revealing, colonization was not begun until 1610, when Sir Francis Bacon sent John Guy to try to settle a region hotly contested by the Western European powers. When England’s colonial policy shifted to mercantilism, it viewed Newfoundland as a purely economic holding; settlement was legally banned
except by those few sent to oversee the fisheries. The Star Chamber even went so far as to pass regulations in 1633 to remove all property rights for those who settled. Tensions with pirates and natives made voyages to the island so difficult that England considered trips there to be training for naval service. Despite these challenges, settlement persisted in the tiny coves that peppered the coast. Early British Newfoundlanders were, by definition, outlaws, but their defiance emerged from a desire to be a part of the island as it realized its immense potential, one those in the mother country failed to see.

It was not until 1832 that Newfoundland was granted the favor of any kind of consideration from Great Britain, receiving the right to representative government in the First Reform Bill. Almost immediately, this proved more effort than the British had hoped: sectarianism prevailed and election riots forced Britain to suspend the constitution until 1848. Seven years later, England instituted responsible government, and though there was a small measure of local agitation sparked by comparisons with the rights of other British colonies in North America, the primary reason was, again, apathy on the part of the British government. In a newly laissez-faire global economy, ties between colonies and their mother countries were no longer quite so economically necessary nor, in fact, prudent. As such, the English government wanted no part of the defense of a nation that gave them little more than fish – at a time when the fish market, no longer what it had been in the 16th and 17th centuries, was struggling. Besides, the British navy was the most powerful in the world and, if necessary, could step in to protect their decreasingly crucial asset.¹

Yet the British disregard for Newfoundland was in no way echoed in the island’s feelings towards the mother country. When offered confederation with Canada in 1869, a move that would involve Canadian assumption of Newfoundland’s growing debts, Newfoundland soundly rejected it. Some believed Newfoundland had potential outside fishery, and when Colonial Secretary Robert Bond used his own funds to sponsor a loan to save the country, it was clear that Newfoundland sought to bail itself out in the hopes of proving its independence from Canada and, conversely, asserting its import and loyalty to Britain. Yet the emergence of the Canadian dollar as the island’s currency and the completion of the railroad in 1896 meant that Newfoundland was, albeit reluctantly, moving towards Canada.² This trend accompanied a quarter century of economic growth: British newspaper mogul Lord Northcliffe decided on Grand Falls, an inland city, as the home of the paper mills that would drive his massive newspaper empire.³ Similarly, iron-ore exports grew 200 percent, making clear that Newfoundland had finally

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² Ibid., 23-41.
developed a value away from its coasts. Despite England’s reluctance to assist, the island had grown into an economic and relentlessly loyal asset by 1914, a year whose events would finally force England to take notice.

The *St. John’s Daily News* headline on August 4, 1914, read “The British Empire is at War and All Europe is Ablaze.”⁴ Newfoundland’s governor Walter Davidson received a call that evening informing him that his nation, in accordance with British foreign policy, was at war; he offered without hesitation 500 men for land service and 1,000 for naval service, a natural calling for the island’s fishermen. In typical British fashion, the government deferred judgment on the generous naval offer until a later date, while accepting the offer of land service. Newfoundland’s citizenry approved the actions of the governor just a week later, and went above and beyond, creating the Newfoundland Patriotic Committee (shortly to become the Patriotic Association of Newfoundland) not only to train Newfoundlanders to serve England, but also to pay for outfitting its regiment. Newfoundland, which just 25 years before had required a personal check from one of its own to save it from the depths of poverty, was to pay for its own contributions to its dismissive but massive mother country’s war effort – a commitment that would add over ten million dollars to its public debt.⁵

It didn’t take long for the promised 500 forces to be raised, and on October 3, 1914, over 500 Newfoundlanders shipped out while the newly created Reserve Force Committee sought to raise another 250 should England call again. By 1915, 1,418 Newfies had enlisted, though it should be noted that they did so in response to a call that asked for them to sign up for “the duration of the war – or no more than a year.”⁶ Also present in the initial call for war, coming from Governor Davidson in the *Daily News*, was the phrase “God Save the King,” leaving no room for interpretation as to whom these men were fighting for.⁷ A sense of British identity was more than obvious in the rhetoric that surrounded the call to arms, if not fully acknowledged by the English themselves.

A telling installment in the island’s journalism in 1914 was a story of previous heroics of Newfoundlanders on behalf of the mother country. In the first ever edition of *The Cadet*, published by the Catholic Cadet Corps, a group formed before the outbreak of hostilities and before anyone knew just how “great” the Great War would become, Reverend M.J. Ryan wrote to his island’s people about the heroism he came to learn

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during his time in Quebec, in his article titled “The Royal Newfoundland Regiment.” He described how the Newfoundlanders defended against the American secessionists in 1775 in such a fashion that “if they had been ancient Greeks [they] would be known to every British schoolboy,” but, as things stood, were not known even to their countrymen. He expressed the belief that the nation’s “loyalty and imperial patriotism have grown with the growth of our freedom and strengthened with its strength,” and that the Newfoundland Regiment would return to prominence.8 He also argued against conscription: Newfoundlanders, great patriots that they were, should want to serve the British Empire and embody the freedom that the empire had granted the nation.

Such attitudes prevailed when war officially arrived; even the opposition parties, remnants of the sectarianism that had caused England to suspend elections fifty years before, took up the British cause over their own. The leader of Newfoundland’s opposition party, John Kent, stated in the special session of the legislature called to approve the war effort on September 2, 1914: “This is not a time when we should think of party differences. This is a time when our nation calls for united action.” “Our nation,” was not the Newfoundland for which Kent fought so fervently in matters of politics, but rather the Britain to which Newfoundland had shown devotion from the beginning.

There was certainly opposition to this enthusiastic support, however. As William Ford Coaker, founder of the Fisherman’s Protection Union contended:

> Let England’s hour of necessity come, and she will find in Newfoundland 20,000 of the primest warriors ever born, ready to do or die. That day is yet far off and the Colony’s chief duty now is to put her house in order and arrange things so that in event of the hour of necessity arising Terra Nova’s sons will be strong and healthy and prepared to meet the foe . . . [but] Thousands through the failure of the fishery will have to fight starvation, an enemy fifty times more dreaded than the Germans on the field of battle or the seas.9

In other words, even those opposed to the seemingly unquestioned response to Britain’s declaration of war felt so out of concern for Newfoundland’s economic survival – not a questioning of duty or the actions of the British.

The Twillingate Sun, a paper published in a town originally founded by the French as they sought to establish themselves as a competitor in Newfoundland, praised the British navy for getting “(their) boys” safely across the Atlantic, a revealing statement when one considers that Newfoundland paid for the trip and should expect nothing less.10

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Newfoundlanders backed their words up with action. The efforts they paid for were no token displays of patriotism. Beyond recruitment, the Newfoundland Patriotic Association ran fundraising fairly: “whether urban or rural, Catholic or Protestant, rich or poor, old or young, they did not stint in their efforts.” Various funds raised money for different aspects of the war effort and groups like the Patriotic Fund (for families of soldiers), Belgian Relief Fund, the Khaki Prisoners Fund, St. Dunstan’s Fund for Blind Soldiers and Sailors, the Mayo Lind Tobacco Fund, the Fish and Brewis Fund, the Aeroplane Fund, the Cot Fund, and the Jensen Red Cross Fund combined to contribute approximately one million dollars.

The women of Newfoundland responded similarly to the declaration of war. When Walter Davidson’s wife, Lady Margaret Davidson, asked the women of the island to help in the war effort and join her Women’s Patriotic Association of Newfoundland, she did so on behalf of Britain, forming an organization whose professed purpose was “to help our men in the defense of the British Empire.” In addition to raising money – an estimated $500,000 by the end of the war – this group sewed clothes for soldiers and gathered supplies for the Red Cross. It aimed to make the Newfoundland Regiment entirely self-sufficient, allowing it to serve the British Empire as best it could with as little inconvenience to the British as possible.

The enthusiasm of Newfoundlanders did not wane after the initial call-to-arms. The April 1915 Newfoundland Quarterly described the Germans as “barbarous, quarrelsome,” and “unable to be civilized.” At this point, it had already begun to tell the story of the heroic willingness of Newfoundlanders to join the war effort. Newfoundlanders’ version of the story emerged just months after it began, as Arthur Selwyn-Brown explained, “Newfoundlanders at once felt a desire to assist the Motherland in what was clearly foreseen would be a gigantic war.” Excitement not only to serve, but also to write their own version of their story of service and dedication, showed almost immediately after the island committed to the war effort.

The more tragic side of that effort was not ignored, though it was similarly written into the story: even before losses began to mount, the island’s “Cadet” prefaced each issue’s list of the war-dead with a telling couplet: “Not once or twice in our rough Island’s story, the path of duty was the way to glory.”

12 Lady Margaret Davidson, Proclamation of Founding of Women’s Patriotic Association, 31 August 1914. 
At first, the paths of duty proved somewhat glorious and relatively safe. The regiment made its first appearance on September 18, 1915, in Mudros, Greece on the Gallipoli peninsula, sailing from there to Suvla Bay, Turkey. On September 22, 1915, the regiment suffered its first casualty. After a month and a half of difficult but low-casualty life in the trenches, the Newfoundlanders proved their mettle with the November 4 capture of what would come to be known as “Caribou Hill,” named in their honor. Throughout the Gallipoli offensive, the Newfoundlanders were usually the last to evacuate in Allied retreats, a fact symbolic of their place in the back of British minds. On December 9, 1915, the islanders found themselves in the back yet again, but through cunning use of trick rifles and other deceptive tactics that distracted the Ottoman forces, they somehow escaped unscathed from a position the Allies believed was to yield heavy casualties. Another such escape occurred at Cape Helles, Turkey, in late December 1915, when the Newfoundlanders were, yet again, left behind in a dangerous retreat, but fled to the safety of Mudros. From there, they would first head to Egypt and then, in the spring of 1916, to the Western Front.\(^{15}\)

Until that point in the war, the Newfie story was a light-hearted one: after Gallipoli, the \textit{Newfoundland Quarterly}’s first page showed a picture of members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment sitting in front of the Sphinx as they waited for deployment. Newly appointed Lieutenants’ pictures were featured and a full-page article granted to each of the war dead. Reports of the war effort were of a civilized, safe, and impressive service.\(^{16}\) Stories in the \textit{Twillingate Sun} in December 1915 included more advertisements for Christmas products than war updates and even when such updates were present, they were less journalism than prose; one told a story of a “young, innocent” Newfoundlander captured by “mad” Turks who managed to escape and return to his own lines. Optimism, the honor of the duty, and the civilized, easy manner in which Newfoundlanders performed was the Royal Regiment’s tale early in the war.\(^{17}\)

The rhetoric of commitment to duty on behalf of the Empire continued even as those involved realized the war would last much longer than they had imagined. The W.P.A. spoke of work done for the “common good” in its publication, the \textit{Distaff}, as late as 1916. Lady Davidson noted in its pages the “good standing” of the “Colony,” saying that “What was, but a small community, isolated and little known . . . is now a full member of the greatest ‘Combine’ ever dreamt of in the history of the world: the British


Commonwealth . . . this little Island colony will be worth one hundredfold more than in the olden days.” Here, Lady Davidson states clearly the aspirations of Newfoundlanders, if not the realities of British attitudes towards them. In their work, both on the battlefield and at home early in the war, the Newfoundlanders’ primary goal was to impress the British, to prove a worth the mother country had yet to recognize, and make theirs the story of a more prominent nation, not just a simple, little fishing colony.

As the Royal Newfoundland Regiment moved towards the Western Front, the powers were, for all intents and purposes, locked in a stalemate. While the Allies planned a significant offensive to relieve the deadlock, the Germans attacked their positions at Verdun. While the French responded, reducing forces on other parts of the front to counter the Central Powers’ attack, the British planned to focus on forty fateful kilometers in the Somme Valley. Their first effort was to be the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, and it was here that the Newfoundlanders’ story changed forever.

The meticulous, but ultimately futile, plan was to weaken the German positions and then send troops (the Royal Newfoundland Regiment among them) over the top to take them. Bombardment with shells began on June 24, a week before the run to take the German positions was to begin. The nearly two million shells were intended to destroy what was perhaps the biggest obstacle to an Allied takeover of German lines: the barbed wire. Yet, while German access to supplies and healthy living conditions were certainly affected by the offensive, their deep trenches and the inaccuracy of the British shells prevented significant damage to the barbed wire. The Allied troops had no way of knowing this. When the troops headed for enemy lines near the town of Beaumont-Hamel, they were doomed from the start.

The shelling intensified around 7 a.m. on the morning of July 1, and a crater created by this artillery was the goal for troops going over the top. But their moves were matched by those of the Germans and the Newfoundland Regiment, one of the last to move yet again, watched from the safety of the trenches as wounded men began to fall helplessly back into their positions. Confusion among the Allied leaders did not stop the Newfoundlanders from receiving the fateful command to charge, despite having just watched their comrades fall in large numbers at the hands of German machine guns.

Because of the number of casualties filling the trenches, moving through them was deemed too difficult and time-intensive for the Newfoundlanders to achieve their goals, so an additional 250 kilometers was added to their land travel. The regiment supposed to be flanking them, the men from Essex, was commanded by its fearful leading officer to remain in the trenches and minimize exposure to deadly German fire. The
Newfoundlanders were, both in their commitment to the commands of the British leaders and their position on the battlefield, alone.\textsuperscript{18}

So furious was German fire that some of their machine guns overheated, but they did their job – by the time the islanders reached the end of what would have been their trip through the British trenches, casualties had already reached a horrifically high number. As the war diary reported, it was the choice to advance on land, not through the trenches, that proved so costly, as British wire slowed the troops enough to allow German fire to mow them down. Nevertheless, the Newfoundlanders continued to advance:

The enemy's fire was effective from the outset, but the heaviest casualties occurred on passing through the gaps in our front wire where the men were mown down in heaps. Many more gaps in the wire were required than had been cut. In spite of losses, the survivors steadily advanced until close to the enemy's wire, by which time very few remained.

The regiment's war diary told a story of complete devastation, free of any silver lining, but full of duty.

Those “very few” numbered 110 by the time the offensive was declared a failure at 9:45 a.m. Over two hundred were dead, nearly four hundred wounded, and another hundred declared missing, later assumed dead. The Regiment had sustained 85 percent casualties – a number only West York’s Regiment bested during the war. Nearly twenty thousand across British lines had died, with over 35 thousand seriously wounded. The staggering numbers were made even more devastating since most of the battalions involved in those horrific hours at the Somme were “pal’s battalions,” groups of men from the same region brought together to increase recruiting early in the war.\textsuperscript{19} The Newfoundlanders, perhaps more than any of these regiments, had followed orders with no regard for their wisdom. While costly, this embodied the attitude and actions of the “Loyal and Most Ancient Colony” throughout the war.

That attitude would meet no greater challenge than the arrival of the news of the devastation at Beaumont-Hamel back in Newfoundland. Getting news home took time, and while people in Newfoundland’s capital of St. John’s may have caught wind of the terrors just days after, full understanding of the casualties sustained was not attained until much later, particularly in the tiny fishing villages that were, due to their size and the number of men lost, most devastated.

The town of Twillingate embodies the plight of many small Newfoundland outcrops in the wake of Beaumont-Hamel. Of the 19 men the town sent to war, 15 died.


Yet on July 8, a week after the tragedy that would mark their town forever, the *Twillingate Sun* published the following passage filled with horrifying irony: “Judging by our own regiment, and the small number wounded so far, it looks as if German resistance is very weak.” Constant assertions of German weakness were certainly the rhetorical norm, but as 15 of the 19 men that town sent were now not only wounded, but dead, the delay in disseminating information throughout the colony emerged as even more tragic.

When information did reach the colony, it was incomplete. Though word of the tragedy reached St. John’s in days, full understanding of – and true completion of – the casualty lists happened more slowly. That same July 8, the *Twillingate Paper* indicated a clear understanding of the heroism and magnitude of the happenings at the Somme, but no awareness of the massive casualties sustained. The official report of the events at Beaumont-Hamel did not reach Twillingate and other towns like it until August 5. The story was already told as one of obedience and fearlessness: “The fate which had overtaken their comrades daunted them not one bit. . . . Officers fell left and right, but as they fell they waved their men on.” General Hunter Weston reported that the Newfoundlanders "proved themselves worthy of the highest traditions of the British race and that no battalion among all those bands of heroes did better than they.” Rather than question this general who continued to send men over the top, the *Sun* praised him for his strength. Even with the initial shock of the tragedy still looming, towns like Twillingate were already placing their losses in the context of heroic loyalty and devotion instead of blaming the British Empire and its leadership.20

Full understanding of the island's losses was felt by all by August 12, when Governor Davidson tried to place the horrific losses in a digestible form. Blaming the Kaiser for his abominations and the United States for failing to enter (and thereby end) the war, rather than blaming the British for sending the island's soldiers to near certain death, the Governor said that his men and their legend had been raised to a level he had not imagined. He described the troops as "slow to anger" and "lovers of peace" – a clear indication that while this war should not have been theirs, the troops were also known for their unyielding resolve and dedication to the British cause. He sought nothing from the British, only consolation for the Newfoundlanders who had given everything to the Empire.21

At this point, Field Marshall Earl Haig, Commander in-Chief of the British Forces, did indicate some awareness of Newfoundland’s sacrifice, saying “Newfoundland


may well feel proud of her sons. The heroism and devotion to duty they displayed on 1st July has never been surpassed.”  

The depth of the Newfoundlanders’ firm belief that they were fighting to live up to its "most loyal" name was revealed in the breadth of publications that framed Newfoundland’s sacrifices in terms of eternal glory and heroism. Even religious publications, such as the *Diocesan Magazine*, reconciled the pain of a people with the glory they gained, without one mention of tangible recompense or apologies from those responsible: "The gloom of these dark days, however, will be lightened up by the glorious heroism which the Regiment displayed, and the glory it has achieved both for itself and the old Colony which it proudly represents." 

Yet assurances of eternal glory could not mollify the sorrow that accompanied the death of 700 men in just a half hour of horror. Following the tragedy, the Women's Patriotic Association's *Distaff* featured a poem about resurrection on its first page. This was followed by a poem about the importance of the fall to the emergence of spring. Both poems, though never explicitly said to reference the island’s devastation, were clearly symbolic of the purifying power of suffering and aimed to give hope to a people who had lost a generation of husbands, fathers, and brothers. Religious symbolism was also crucial to these women's attempts at dispersing the post-July 1 gloom. With the inclusion of another poem, this one about the promise of heaven, and the exclusion of any mention of the war itself, the women of the *Distaff* echoed the silence that pervaded Newfoundland as it dealt with the tragedy. Only the glory of the Regiment's efforts, not acknowledgement of the horrors and futility of them, was present as the island coped with its immense loss. 

This aspect of Newfoundland’s response to the horrors of the battle was not unique among British Colonies. In his book *Our Glory and Our Grief*, Miller argues that, after major Canadian losses at battles like the Somme, Torontonians may never have lost faith that the war had an ultimate purpose, but nevertheless had to inject their stories with glory and redemption in loss to reconcile themselves with the realities of a lost generation. Stories of crusades, moral glory, and salvation of the Western world were prevalent here and in other areas of Canada such as Calgary, Alberta, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and other large cities where the Canadian people came together to not only rally behind the British

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22 Field Marshal Douglas Haig, Speech to the Newfoundland People, August 12, 1914.  
23 “A Message From the Bishop of Newfoundland to the Members of the First Newfoundland Regiment now in Scotland, and of the Royal Naval Reserve Engaged in Active Service,” *Diocesan Magazine*, January 1, 1915, 3.  
war effort, but also to deal with the collective tragedy of it. Yet in terms of percentage lost, nowhere in Canada ever experienced the sheer devastation that Newfoundland did.\textsuperscript{25}

With this in mind, the effect of Beaumont-Hamel on recruitment is stunningly revealing of Newfoundland’s true loyalty to the British cause. While disillusionment may have been prevalent in the wake of the tragedy and while Canada and other British territories began to establish conscription, the island rallied to replenish their now famed Regiment. When the governor made his report to Field Marshal Haig after the offensive, he explained, “Losses in the field have stimulated recruiting.” Governor Davidson was not exaggerating. The regiment regenerated and a year later in response to a last-ditch call to postpone conscription, Newfoundland saw its most prolific recruiting month in three years, as 725 young men enlisted in April 1918.\textsuperscript{26}

Even after the strong turnout of April 1918, the regiment was in need of men, thanks to engagements such as Ypres and Cambrai (where the regiment’s heroics earned the title of “Royal” from the British government in 1917). Accordingly, the Newfoundland government passed the Military Services Act on May 11, 1918, to provide for conscription. Obligatory service had been a point of contention not because Newfoundlanders wanted to give their men the choice to opt out, but rather because they wanted their men to choose to opt in, but at this point it was thought necessary. Yet crucial to the island’s story of pure dedication to the Empire’s cause, these draftees never reached the Western Front, and therefore the Royal Newfoundland Regiment remained entirely volunteer-based throughout the entire war.

Fittingly, this regenerated Royal Regiment was one of the last to be relieved of duty after the armistice was signed in November 1918. The men of Newfoundland remained in reserve as part of the occupation force in Germany until February 1919, returning home having lost 1,305 men and seen another 2,314 wounded. This represented a 20 percent fatality rate, and an over 60 percent casualty rate for an island whose population was around just 250 thousand at the time. St. John’s was devastated, but the effects on the little fishing villages that litter the Newfoundland coast have never been fully erased. Greenspond lost 15 of 19 men, while Wesleyville, a fishing village on the north coast where men were already in peril thanks to the dangers of the sealing industry that provided their only jobs, lost 7 of 10 men. These contributions, though small numerically, were massive to towns that relied on their men to sustain the industries that barely kept them afloat. That such villages lost those men in just minutes at Beaumont-Hamel and somehow still found the strength and loyalty to send those men who had not yet been casualties of the war is hard to fathom. Even Grand Falls, a new and shining

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glimmer of hope on the interior that represented modernization and hope for a more multi-faceted Newfoundland export economy, lost over 50 percent of the men it sent to war, not including those debilitating by injuries sustained in service. The effect on the economy of those thirty minutes at Beaumont-Hamel, responsible for nearly a fifth of the island’s total wartime casualties, would last for decades, but it was, perhaps, the British response to these efforts that was most painful for islanders to swallow.²⁷

Following the war, not only could the nation itself not sustain its fish markets, but the world economy could barely sustain itself, dooming a Newfoundland that had struggled when the economy was strong. For a nation who enjoyed its status as a British dominion, garnering respect within the empire and being as British as possible was the goal; the fact that the mother country not only failed to bail the island out in the wake of the war, but also revoked its dominion status, left one of the only areas of its empire not to experience a post-war boom in the 1920s hanging in deep poverty, despite its unparalleled contributions to Britain’s war effort and its unyielding dedication.

For a nation that gained so little, Newfoundland continued to exhibit tremendous pride in the achievements of its soldiers, even after the war’s end. Tellingly, the Véteran, Newfoundland's war magazine that began publication in 1920, listed nowhere the island's losses in its first issue. Instead, it gave only the casualties of the entire British Empire. While nations like Canada made the war effort a nationalistic one to prove themselves worthy of an independence from Britain they would seek in the coming years, Newfoundland, which had added over 10 million dollars to its public debt as it covered its own war costs to minimize the costs to the British Empire, spoke very little about its own individual part in the war. In this sense it was truly the "most loyal" British colony, hoping for nothing but respect amongst the English in exchange for making a sacrifice unlike that of any other British dominion.²⁸

Australians, who also claim to have made the greatest sacrifice of any part of the British Empire – though percentages suggest this is not true – characterized their efforts as those of a colony of such undeniably strong, noble fighters that it could not help but be considered the equal of its colonizing country. They hoped to prove they were not inferior to the British and used the war as a means to display the character of citizens that were not only not British, but differed in ways worthy of British respect.

Canadians initially sought more autonomy within the British Empire. Bercuson, a Canadian historian, identified the attitude of Canadians towards their sacrifice as “giving Prime Minister Borden leverage to win constitutional equality for Canada within the Empire.” If Canadians initially hoped to achieve constitutional equality through their war


²⁸ The Véteran, Vol. 1, 1920, Memorial University Centre for Newfoundland Studies: Periodicals, http://collections.mun.ca/u?/cns_veteran,3287
service, nationalistic ties soon led them to seek more. Frustrated with rules that limited dominions to one member of the press on the front lines, Canada’s press challenged these, hoping to gain more attention for its nation’s efforts. Much of the rhetoric that the press relayed was of the place Canada had carved out for itself on the world stage, not just in Britain, as “worthy of being esteemed as catalysts for the appearance of freedom-loving and truly independent countries” around the world. The Calgary Herald claimed that the nation’s heroism in the war had “placed the country on the map as never before.” These papers told the story of Canada in the war, not just of the British Empire, in keeping with the post-war trend toward Canadian independence. While some areas of Canada rivaled Newfoundland in their dedication to the war effort – Toronto, for example, saw 45,000 of its 87,300 eligible men serve in the war and another 22,500 rejected on medical grounds – they saw themselves as part of a bigger Canadian contribution, a contribution that would eventually lead them to become a part of an independent nation. It was in this that Newfoundland’s contributions and the stories they told about them differed so starkly from those of other nations. Their contributions were comparable, if not greater, than those of other areas, but that they sought nothing more than for the British to accept them as their own, or at least to help their floundering colony financially, demonstrated an almost inconceivable loyalty.

This story of glory and sacrifice in the name of Empire, not of earnings, blame, recognition, or even a greater crusade against evil, endured in the way Newfoundlanders remembered the war. Official rhetoric, like that of Field Marshal Earl Haig, spoke to the fulfillment of the island’s duty to its empire. Still, that Newfoundland’s contribution was on a scale, at least in terms of its size, unrivaled in the empire and therefore significantly beyond that which its duty might require, was lost on men like Haig. "Those armies from Great Britain and the other Dominions who fought with you the Empire’s battles and today are proud to join with you in honoring brave sons of Newfoundland who died in the same great cause to which they too gave so many of their dearest and their best." Newfoundland’s was one contribution among many -- one story among many similar stories. Newfoundlanders told it with no sense of entitlement, but paid their way to relieve the Empire of a burden it almost certainly should have assumed. They also did not publicly question the wisdom of those British officers who sent their men over the top in a hopeless effort and these make theirs a story unlike any of the other "dominions" that played a part. Haig acknowledges this in part, saying that even the best plans of a leader

29 Briton Cooper Busch, Canada and the Great War (Toronto, Ontario: Western Front Papers Association, 2003), Conclusion.
30 Miller, 193-200.
cannot work if people simply carry out order, and that Newfoundlanders were so heroic because they "applied with zeal" to their orders and the "lessons of modern war." But losing 95 percent of a volunteer regiment in thirty minutes, a regiment for which the colony's government nearly doubled its public debt over the course of four years to a crippling level that would affect it for decades to come – this is the story that Newfoundlanders had to tell of their experience in the Great War.

The story they chose became a huge part of the nation's history and one memorialized by the people who were trying to reconcile their losses with a story that would allow them to honor the contributions of those no longer with them. Memorial University was founded in 1925 in memory of the soldiers in the First World War, and a war memorial was unveiled in St. John's by Earl Haig in 1924, as a permanent monument to the contributions of the fallen soldiers.

The devastating irony of the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel was that even as it was the moment of most tremendous loyalty on the part of Newfoundland, it was also the beginning of the end of the relationship with Britain that it hoped to preserve. The debt with which Britain would not assist them was so crippling to the economy that, decades later in a post-World War II world that was still unfriendly to Newfoundland commerce, the island would be forced to join Canada just to stay afloat. While nations like India, Egypt and Canada were granted higher status and, eventually, independence in the wake of the Great War, the one nation that had never sought more than the respect of its mother country was abandoned by it.32

Beaumont-Hamel was the climax of a relationship of both loyalty and neglect that had developed from the moment Europeans set foot on the “Terra Nova.” On July 1, 1916, Newfoundlanders confronted the devastation of war on behalf of their mother country, never thinking that they would gain anything in return but the respect of the British that they had never yet achieved. Instead they saw the beginning of the end of their ties to Britain. Despite the tremendous monetary loss and the atrocious rate of casualties, Newfoundlanders still tell their story as one of glory, duty, and heroism, making their narrative a truly unique story of the Great War. For other nations, the tale of Beaumont-Hamel would be one of blame, tragedy and neglect, providing cause for separation from an unconcerned mother country. But for Newfoundland and its storytellers, it remains one injected with a joy and triumph even in the face of terrible disappointment. The way that Newfoundlanders continue to tell this story, not just the heroic and devastating content of the tale, makes the experience of the “loyal and most ancient colony” at Beaumont-Hamel fit into Newfoundland’s greater narrative; this is its true tragedy.

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Each semester, students in Directed Studies—Yale’s selective humanities program for freshmen—are required to submit three essays for each of the program’s three classes: Literature, Philosophy, and History and Politics. Claire Horrell wrote this essay for Gwenda-Lin Grewal’s History and Politics seminar, in which students discussed authors from Thucydides to Saint Augustine. This essay examines the style of the ancient Greek historian Herodotus (c. 484 BC–c. 425 BC), considered “the Father of History”—the first historian known to collect his materials systematically and arrange them in a vivid narrative. Today, Herodotus’s *The History* stands among the finest works of the Western Canon. *The History* records the rise of the Persian Empire and the events and causes of the Greco-Persian Wars (502–449 BC) in a distinctly personal voice. Claire’s essay traces Herodotus’s use of the first-person as a vehicle for historical narration and how authorial voice often plays a role in our reading of history.
Herodotus, the so-called “Father of History,” begins his account of the Greco-Persian Wars with élan: “I, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, am here setting forth my history.” (1.1) With these very first words, the author boldly defines the tone and content of his account, simultaneously establishing himself as the arbiter of the text’s authenticity, and placing The History in stark contrast with its precursors. By analyzing The History’s opening line, one can determine not only the true meaning of the work, but also what Herodotus has set forth as the role of the reader and therefore what he intends as the underlying purpose of his work.

While the opening sentence of The History may not in itself seem an all-encompassing summary of the account’s key themes, it is undeniably definitive in the context of Book One as a whole. In Chapter Five, Herodotus states that, though he will not declare whether the events of the conflict “happened thus or thus,” he will indeed “set [his] mark against that man” who he believes began the injustices perpetrated against the Greeks (1.5).

In many other works, one could simply dismiss such a condemnatory statement as a brief insertion of the author’s opinion into what otherwise appears to be an objective narration of events. But Herodotus has already made clear in the introduction that this is his history. In this vein, by announcing that he has determined the identity of the key wrongdoer—Croesus, the king of Persia—he places the original blame for the Greco-Persian conflict almost entirely on a single man’s shoulders. This quickly establishes a primary theme of The History: retribution.

Herodotus declares that Croesus’s offenses against the Greeks earned him his later misfortunes. In evenhanded and deserved retaliation for his and his ancestors’ attacks on Greece, Croesus was ruined by the fates, his empire destroyed through his own foolish misinterpretation of the Delphic oracle. When the king later asks the oracle about his misfortune, it replies, “no one can escape [fate]. . . . Croesus has paid for the offense of his ancestor” (1.91). This account, and the manner in which Herodotus presents it, exemplifies The History’s bias. From this point onward, whenever the reader encounters any sort of injustice, he or she can expect the meting out of deserved punishment to follow. In the most telling example of this theme, Herodotus portrays Xerxes as the cruel oppressor of nature itself in his whipping of the Hellespont. Xerxes’s invasion of Greece is then crushed against all odds in a harsh demonstration the inevitability of retribution.

By immediately embracing his own partiality and establishing the reason for the events in his account, Herodotus makes clear that he requires his readers not to draw independent conclusions, but rather to anticipate the reprisals they have been set up for. Thus, when viewed within the framework of the first book, the opening lines of The History conclusively define what Herodotus intends as the role of the reader. Herodotus explicitly states that he is not presenting a purely factual account; rather, he is offering his
audience his own explanations as to “the reason why [the Greeks and Persians] fought
one another” (1.1). Herodotus is not looking to inform, but to convince. He intends to
carry the cultural and personal motivations of the two sides, as well as the facts of the
conflict.

At the beginning of The History, Herodotus uses his own acknowledgement of
personal bias as a tool to enhance his credibility as a historian. Herodotus appears to
inform his readers of his biases and thereby surrender control over their interpretations of
his work. The subjective character of the opening lines is further developed in Chapter
Five. By following his introduction with the announcement that he will not “say about
these matters that they happened thus or thus,” Herodotus successfully leads his audience
to an understanding of his intended, or at least declared, lack of personal influence.

Ironically, there are few better ways in which Herodotus could have demonstrated
his trustworthiness than this backhanded denial of it. Rather than serving as a heartfelt
and completely open admission of his aims, Herodotus’s comments about his partiality
manipulate the reader to be more sympathetic to his position. By presenting a dichotomy
between his personal opinion and the facts of history, Herodotus moves strategically to
gain credibility and authority. Throughout the text, Herodotus continues to follow
remarks on the factual accuracy of his account, or of his purported lack of bias, with
disclaimers such as, “If one may speak frankly, [the Peloponnesians’] remaining neutral
was taking the Persian side” (8.73). Juxtaposed with such obviously opinion-based
assertions, the remainder of Herodotus’s History seems, by contrast, impartially factual.
Once trusted, he can more easily convince his audience of the underlying themes of The
History: not only retribution, but also the validity of the account itself.

Until The History, Homer’s Iliad was the pivotal historical work of ancient Greece.
By beginning with the words, “I, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, am here setting forth my
history,” Herodotus deliberately shows his work to be divergent from The Iliad in a crucial
respect. Whereas Homer starts his account of the Trojan War with the command, “sing,
Muses,” Herodotus opens his record of the Greco-Persian Wars with a phrase far closer
to “sing, self.” In this way, while Homer shirks the responsibility of his history’s
verisimilitude—placing it comfortably in the purview of the gods—Herodotus embraces
the aspects of The History’s content for which he can be held personally accountable. With
a single sentence, Herodotus announces that he is about to deviate from Greek tradition
towards a new sort of historical narrative. This new narrative does not speak only of great
men and great deeds, like The Iliad, but delves deeper into the reasons behind those deeds,
and into the overarching themes and logic of the past. While Homer records and
entertains, Herodotus recounts and analyzes.

Given this break from tradition, the responsibility of the reader becomes even
more extensive. Herodotus’ attempts to gain his readers’ approval extend past the
question of simple cause and effect; they reach as far as the concept of The History’s validity as an account. Herodotus is not only searching for his readers’ sanction in terms of The History’s content, but also its form as a subjective narrative; and in that way Herodotus is simultaneously searching for approval of himself as a historian.

Herodotus states that he has chosen to write his history in order that “time may not draw the color from men’s deeds,” (1.1) and nothing is more a part of that color than Herodotus himself. By making clear that he is the final arbiter of which men and actions deserve reportage—that is, kleos—Herodotus irrevocably includes himself in the account he sets forth. The reality of his own importance as reporter and interpreter is the final conclusion that can be drawn from Herodotus’s opening sentence. This is made clear by his explicit self-reference, and subsequently reinforced by instance after instance of opinionated personal assertion in the following chapters: “I believe,” he states “that Leonidas . . . wanted to store up glory for the Spartiates alone” (7.220) and additionally, “it is a wonder to me—indeed, I do not accept the story—that the Alcmaeonidae ever . . . were willing to subject the Athenians to the barbarians” (6.121). With his intimate tone and first-person asides, Herodotus has successfully immortalized himself in The History, and consequently puts his audience into the role of accepting students. The reader has become the vehicle for Herodotus’ own kleos, validating not only his achievements and beliefs, but also his life.

The interdependence between the reader and the narrator renders the opening sentence of The History a truly definitive presentation of the text. When interpreted in the context of work as a whole, the words “I, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, am here setting forth my history” (1.1), not only announce the authorship of the text, but also outline the thematic purpose of the account, delineate what Herodotus has set forth as the role of his audience, and artfully present a façade of credibility. Herodotus uses the first few lines of his account to express and solidify his identity, and to differentiate himself from his predecessors. The most telling reason for the self-reference at the start of The History is the same as the reason behind the work: to preserve for all eternity the deeds of great and worthy men, including the writing and writer of The History itself. In this, Herodotus succeeds more brilliantly than he could ever have anticipated: with his personal and analytic history he sets a precedent for all those that follow and immortalizes himself as the father of modern historiography.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Christopher Rogers is Editorial Director and Editor for History and Current Events at Yale University Press. I was an intern in his department from September 2010 to May 2011, and during that time I mailed rejections and filed things. The following interview took place at 2 p.m. on a Friday, on March 23, 2012. We spoke in Chris’ office, which is airy and sunny, with windows facing Temple Street. Chris sat on a swivel chair and wore a sweater. His walls were lined with books.
To begin with, could you talk about your academic and professional background, and how you ended up as an editor here?

I have an advanced degree, a Ph.D. in English literature. I went into publishing through a writing program I coordinated at Midwestern University. I was responsible for a fairly large adoption of textbooks, and that got me involved with a lot of sales reps from publishing companies. This is in the seventies. That got me into publishing. I started as a sales rep, up in Amherst, Massachusetts, calling on colleges to adopt our textbooks, for Random House. About three years after that I was promoted to my first editorial job, which was history editor at Alfred A. Knopf, and that really began my interest in history, and my editorial career in publishing. So I’ve been through a number of different publishers, over the past thirty years, mostly in New York City, and my last job before coming to Yale was publisher of higher education at Oxford University Press. I’ve been at Yale University Press as their executive editor of history since 2005. And I’ve been the editorial director of the press for about three years.

You have a Ph.D. in literature; how did you get involved with history in particular?

Well, really, just serendipitously. The history list at Knopf is the golden egg; at that publisher, it’s their best list, it always has been. And I don’t really know. It was more luck than anything else, I think. [Laughs.] I was doing very well as a sales person, I was a regional sales manager in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and this job opened up, and the head of the company called me and asked me to apply for it. And that’s really how I got into it. I liked history quite a lot because the discipline trains its people to write well. There’s a lot of narrative, and structure, and argumentation, and analysis. So there are a lot of ingredients that fit a lit major, a lit major’s strengths.

What is the editorial process here at YUP? And what’s your role in the process?

The process is mostly commissioning books, which means that the acquisitions editors go out into the world with a list of things they want to sign, which usually has names next to it. So, let’s say I’m looking for a new history of slavery in the Americas. My first stop might be David Brion Davis, or David Blight, or Bob Harms here at Yale. . . . I’d approach those people with an idea, and meet with them, and discuss what’s out there, what needs to be done. Obviously, I’d have some notion that there’s need for this before even contacting someone. . . . The process from there is that the author would propose something to me. I would look for a certain amount of sample writing material, a coherent argument for the book, something that answers the question of why this book. You know, that presents a strong rationale for the book, talks about its audience and market, and the books that are like it in the market, and how this would be different. I
would send that out to peer reviewers, who would assess it and give me feedback. . . . And then [the editors] meet. Every two weeks I chair what’s called the acquisitions panel here at the Press, and all the directors at the Press, as well as all of the editors, attend that meeting. And each editor proposes whatever books are on that agenda. . . . Once we all agree on the fundamentals of the project, we authorize the editor to offer a contract. Once that happens, the author writes the book.

_Hopefully on deadline._

Yep.

_And within word count._

That’s right. [Laughs.] We set up prescriptively on the contract what we expect, and then the author delivers, and we review the whole thing, usually with two readers. And then present it again for acceptance for our publications committee, which is comprised of ten Yale faculty members from different departments on campus. And for that we have to do the same thing. We present everything—except financials, because their interest is strictly intellectual.

_You mentioned the financials. How does the press fund its projects?_

We pay our own way, for the most part. We have a very small endowment for certain fields, which were left for the Press, you know, at the beginning of the twentieth century. So for eighteenth century, for example, we have something called the Annie Burr Lewis Fund. . . . Any book that I do in eighteenth century studies, like Steven Pincus’ book _1688_, gets a hit from that fund. So it helps on an individual title basis.

A lot of the University’s operational expanses—salaries and things like that—are paid through endowments. But none of that is paid for by an endowment at the Press. We depend on ourselves, on revenue from the books. We’re one of the few university presses that doesn’t have an endowment that pays salaries and operating expanses. We can pretty much function without any endowment money, because we have enough trade books in our business and enough textbooks in our business to support us, so we go through not relying on the university or anyone else to pay our way.

_How do you balance trade books and textbooks with books that might not sell as well but are still important to be published?_

Well, that’s the big question that a university press faces. You have to make some money, but you don’t want that to be your main goal. Our main mission is academic publishing and the dissemination of scholarly work. The large percentage of what we do
as a publisher is just that. . . . I would say seventy-five to eighty percent of our business is academic, scholarly work, which is not going to make us a lot of money. We’re talking about books that are going to sell under five thousand copies. And that other twenty percent would be trade and textbooks.

You mentioned a little bit of what you look for in an academic book. What would you look for in a trade book, a book that you’re expecting to sell?

The opposite of what a trade publisher would look for. [Laughs.] A trade publisher wants to know how many copies will sell, for the most part. The first thing we look at when we get a trade proposal from a literary agent is, “What is the scholarly contribution?” So we sort of do it backwards. There are plenty of trade proposals that come in that would make us money, but don’t fulfill the mission of the press on the academic side. So any trade proposal that we get, any trade book that we sign, one of the main ingredients—the first ingredient that has to be there—is whether it’s original. Is it doing something that nobody else has done?

A good trade book—if you take, I don’t know, The Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Now there’s a book, it’s a trade book, it’s priced right, it’s a huge contribution to the field; it’s close to three hundred original maps. It’s all of this quantitative information that allows you to see what happened to six-and-a-half million people who were kidnapped in Africa and brought to the Americas. . . . Yet it’s discounted and priced to bookstores as a trade book, because we felt that everyone would be interested in seeing this. . . . It sold seven thousand copies, which is quite good for us. It won the Hawkins Prize, which the American Association of Publishers awards. It’s like the Best Picture Oscar for scholarly publishing. It won the most prestigious award at the American Historical Association, and half a dozen others. So that’s the ideal combination. . . . That’s really what we strive for, over and over again. To get that mix just right.

How do you view your position, and YUP’s position, within the industry of history? Because it seems that history isn’t really history unless it’s published. And in that sense, YUP and yourself play a very important role. Is that a fair evaluation?

Yes, I think it is. It’s especially important for us in the sub-fields where we sort of lead the way. Slavery studies, for example, is a big deal. You have the Gilder Lehrman Center, you have a tradition that goes back quite a ways in terms of the University’s interest and the department’s interest in slavery. . . . There’s an opportunity, really, to exploit that as a publisher, by working with the people, the faculty, the librarians, the museum curators, to extract the rich ore out of the minds at the various spots on campus.

And to turn that equation around, the university gets a place where they can

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disseminate that information and knowledge to the rest of the world through us, through our books and programs. The second, I’d say, most important part of that is that graduate students get preferential treatment in terms of publishing their dissertations and launching their careers.

“There’s a lot of talk today of the publishing revolution with e-book readers like Kindle and Nook. Do you think that ‘revolution’ is an accurate term, or maybe it’s hyperbolic or not strong enough? And what’s the impact of digital publishing on academic publishing and on YUP in particular?

Every publisher struggles with this. I think the e-book revolution, if you want to call it that, is definitely something that has been talked about for the past twenty years. It really only hit home, in the market, in terms of money going out the door to retailers in a significant amount, about a year and a half ago. Now, we have all—“we” being not just Yale University Press, but every publisher in the business—we have all scrambled to meet that market. . . . But it doesn’t really impact us, as a publisher. We’re still selling something, and it’s content. And it’s just in a different form, and it’s coming through a different channel to the customer.

The major impact that the e-book revolution is going to have on publishing is going to happen in the retail level. . . . For us, we’re kind of agnostic. It doesn’t really matter. We have to be sensitive to it. We can’t give preferential treatment to an Amazon. In fact, we try very hard make special accommodations for the independent bookstore. Because we see them as critical to disseminating Yale books in particular. At Amazon, we’re just another—we’re nothing. We’re just a publisher. But if you go to R.J. Julia, the independent bookstore in Madison, Connecticut—I was just there last night for a book reading by [YUP Director] John Donatich, whose new novel just came out. It’s one of the great independent bookstores in the country. Any time you go in there, it’s crowded. Beautiful display of books. Beautiful mix of titles. Great coffee shop. All the right ingredients of what we have come to know as that sort of wonderful place to linger. And much to my surprise, I learned last night that they can’t sustain their business, and they’re selling out. . . . So I think the e-book revolution is going to have an amazingly negative impact on stores. I don’t think it’s going to affect us.

There are opportunities in the digital space for us that can enhance our sales. I’ll give you an example. This book, *A Single Roll of the Dice*, by Trita Parsi, has caught on. He was on Jon Stewart last week, and Jon Stewart held up the book and said, “This is the most amazing book I’ve ever read,” just went on, and on, and on. We had thousands of copies at Amazon, thousands of copies at Barnes & Noble, thousands of copies everywhere else. They’re all gone. One show, and seven thousand units are out of the door. What do you do in a case like that? Well, you can’t just re-print overnight; it takes...
weeks. So the very first day this happened, we sold six hundred e-books. From that point of view it’s a wonderful backup, and an enhancement to our business.

In terms of our trade list—that’s another distinction we should make. Academic and scholarly books, that have heavy footnotes and are dense in arguments, never sell on Kindles. First of all, the reflowable text on a Kindle: you know how you can change the font and all that? Well, that changes all the pagination, which totally screws up your footnotes. The footnotes just break apart, and its chaos. . . . The other reason is the audience: the buyers of the books have no interest in having the book in an e-reader. They want the book. The serious scholar wants a book, which is great.

That [book], in particular: how did you decide to publish A Single Roll of the Dice? Because it’s extremely relevant as of three weeks ago. It’s relevant in general, but particularly so now. What was the timing for the book?

My job is to do history and current events. History is much easier to do, in that you don’t have to worry about the timing, in a way. Unless you know of another book that’s coming at a certain point in time and you want to beat it. But current events, overall, can be a total disaster if you miss the event.

It’s not current anymore.

Right. It’s dead. . . . I published Trita Parsi’s dissertation, called Treacherous Alliance. This was the history of the secret dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States. Did very well, won the Grawemeyer Award, which is this very big award for books on world war and peace. And yet it was just a dissertation. Sold fifteen thousand copies. It was an amazing book. So I commissioned [A Single Roll of the Dice]. He was on NPR—he’s on all these shows—and he had this very succinct moment about two years ago, on NPR, where he said, “here’s what we need to do to achieve peace with Iran.” And it was only five minutes on the radio, maybe. But it was—bingo, he hit it. So I emailed him, immediately, and I said, “You should do a book on this.” And he said, “I will, but now’s not the right time.” He circled back to me a few months later, and we worked it out. It was a nail biting experience in terms of timing, but it is perfect time. It is working out really well for us.

I mean, the big thing isn’t commercial success. We’re very happy that we’re selling books. But the big thing is, “Can we get this book into President Obama’s hands?” [Laughs.] Can he and his cabinet read this and stop this war rhetoric? Because it’s such a strong argument for diplomacy. It’s a very insightful argument for diplomacy. And as happy as all these email exchanges are between me and all the other interested parties—the author, the agent, several scholars I’m in contact with all the time—the one thing we all end our emails with is, “Let’s hope somebody important reads this.”
In “Rock ‘n’ Revolution,” Julia Bumke, a student at Princeton University, presents a clear, compelling argument about the significance of underground music in Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring. The author draws on memoirs, newspapers, and government documents to reveal the link between the Czech musical underground and human rights. By focusing on the story of the Plastic People of the Universe, a band whose 1976 public trial galvanized dissidents, the author argues that music played a crucial role in Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring, pulling everyday citizens into the struggle against the Soviet regime.
INTRODUCTION

When hundreds of Soviet tanks rolled into Prague on August 21, 1968, they interrupted a period of cultural progressivism led by Alexander Dubček, then First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. The Prague Spring, a period of political and cultural reform rooted in Dubček’s idea of “socialism with a human face,” had helped to cement a growing Czech interest in Western pop culture. The Soviet invasion threatened to annihilate this cultural openness outright. By October 1968, Czechoslovakia and the USSR had signed an agreement allowing Soviet troops to remain in Prague “temporarily.” Within the year, Dubček, considered too liberal by the USSR, was ousted. His successor was Gustav Husák, who cracked down on Czech reformers, journalists, and cultural innovators.¹ After four years of Soviet occupation, nearly 40% of registered reporters had been dismissed for not following the government line. Meanwhile, the Státní bezpečnost (STB), Czechoslovakia’s secret police, was closely monitoring citizens deemed “socialist threats” and taking political prisoners apacre.²

Husák’s new regime tried to minimize Western influences by jamming Radio Free Europe and Voice of America broadcasts, enforcing tighter emigration and importation laws, and only allowing artists to perform publicly if they had difficult-to-obtain “professional licenses.” Although it was pushed underground, the countercultural revolution begun during the Prague Spring did not die. Young people continued listening to smuggled Western music, and rock musicians held concerts in secret after public performances were banned. One Czech band in particular, the Plastic People of the Universe, gained a huge underground following and performed in increasingly creative contexts—to “illustrate” an art history lecture on Andy Warhol, for example—after losing its professional license.³ Czech writers like Václav Havel, a playwright and dissident who became Czechoslovakia’s first democratically-elected president in 1989, wrote uncensored samizdat, or self-published, literature about Soviet repression, which they distributed clandestinely in Western Europe.⁴

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1975, thirty-five countries, including Czechoslovakia, the United States, and the USSR, agreed to international human rights provisions during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Their

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deliberations produced the Helsinki Accords, which stated that, “the participating states will respect the equal rights of peoples and their rights of self-determination.” The Accords also stressed that, “all people always have the right to pursue their political, economic, social, and cultural development.” Before long, however, Helsinki’s human rights mandates proved difficult to implement on a nation-to-nation basis, and many Eastern Bloc nation-states essentially ignored them.

In 1976, Czech authorities arrested nineteen band members and followers of the Plastic People of the Universe under the pretense of “hooliganism.” Their subsequent trial exposed how the STB had been circumventing the international human rights provisions agreed to at Helsinki and became a rallying point for anti-Communists nationwide. By creating solidarity between Western-influenced counterculturalists and samizdat writers, the Plastics’ trial led directly to the formation of Charter 77, a civic initiative that criticized the Czech government for failing to implement Helsinki’s human rights provisions.

In a high-security world of police surveillance and government propaganda, the Plastics’ music and message became what Václav Havel called “a profoundly authentic expression of the sense of life among these people, battered as they were by the misery of the world . . . something serious and genuine, an internally free articulation of an existential experience that everyone who had not become completely obtuse must understand.” Propelled by their fans and embraced by Havel’s intellectual dissident elite, the Plastics evolved into a symbol of freedom from oppression. Their persecution became a prime example of how ordinary, seemingly apolitical Czech citizens were being unjustly subjected to interrogation and imprisonment. The universality of support for the Plastics also helped unite the Czech citizenry, connecting the Prague Spring’s impetus for social reform with Charter 77’s daring challenge of the Czech justice system.

Despite the Czech rock culture’s central role in bringing together dissident elites and everyday citizens, academic research has rarely linked the musical underground to Charter 77’s important push towards human rights reform. H. Gordon Skilling’s Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia (1981), the definitive modern analysis of the nation’s human rights and political reform movements, includes prominent mentions of the musical underground, but it never explicitly connects the two concepts. Likewise, Timothy Ryback’s Rock Around the Bloc (1990) delves into the Czech underground’s evolution and the government’s persecution of its members, but does not discuss them in the political context of the Prague Spring and normalization. Too frequently, scholars

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have focused on one side of Communist Czechoslovakia’s story but not the other, rarely considering how politics and culture fueled one another during this period.

This paper argues that the Czech musical underground became inextricably connected to the Charter 77 human rights movement after the Prague Spring and the August 1968 Soviet invasion, and that music gave voice to everyday citizens who were otherwise separate from Václav Havel’s dissident elite. First, it will outline events that led to this cultural and political synergy, juxtaposing the Czech underground’s growth—from the Prague Spring through Husak’s cultural crackdown—with communist Czechoslovakia’s political evolution. Next, it will explore the synergy between music and human rights, when Václav Havel’s dissident friends rallied around the Plastics’ public trial in 1976 and convinced many otherwise apolitical counterculturalists to become Charter 77 signatories. Finally, it will analyze how Charter 77 itself, and the international attention that it received, brought to light the human rights abuses perpetrated against the Czech underground members. It will also delve into how artistic endeavors, like the Plastics’ revived post-Communist touring career and new literary works by Tom Stoppard and Peter Sís, have helped pass the story of Soviet-occupied Czechoslovakia onto a new generation of viewers and listeners.

BEFORE SPRING: ORIGINS OF THE CZECH MUSICAL UNDERGROUND

Though the Prague Spring was the first time in the Communist era that Czech policy officially endorsed cultural openness, Western influences had started permeating Prague’s cultural scene years earlier. Canadian Paul Wilson, who sang backup with the Plastics and later translated Václav Havel’s texts into English, explained at the time, “In 1967 and 1968 there were ‘beat’ [the Czech term for ‘rock’] groups, beat clubs and beat festivals everywhere. In Prague alone there were hundreds of groups, ranging from neighborhood garage bands to professional groups.”8 “Beatlemania” took the Eastern bloc by storm: the group’s simple aesthetic was easy to imitate, and cover bands formed all over Czechoslovakia. In May 1964, a Czech reporter wrote in the Prague newspaper Svobodné slovo that “fans of the long-haired Beatles . . . mobbed the streets.”9

By 1965, there were over one thousand big-beat groups in Czechoslovakia, with the government doing little to stop what it saw as a fairly benign youth movement. As Ivan Jirous, the Plastics’ general manager, described it, “many different people had the opportunity to make music, people who had formerly been prevented from doing so

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9 Ryback, Rock Around the Bloc, 59.
either due to the restrictions imposed by class, origin, or lack of formal education.” In December 1967, Czechoslovakia’s first national beat music festival was held at Lucerna Hall, the largest concert space in central Prague, and over 12,000 people attended its three days of performances. Míla Langer, the festival manager, called the event a chance to “show that beat is not just peripheral, as some people think. . . . It has a right to be introduced on a broader platform, equivalent to the accepted forms of expression in our cultural life.” Prague’s burgeoning rock scene also lent itself to what Jirous called a “natural weeding-out process”: as rock’s popularity grew, competition made Czech bands take significantly more risks to help distinguish themselves.

While Czech fans received most of their Western music after a significant time lag thanks to strict Soviet customs regulations, several prominent Western countercultural figures brought their music and messages to Czechoslovakia in person during the pre-Prague Spring period, most notably Allen Ginsberg in the winter of 1965. Ginsberg, an American free-love poet from the beat generation, was invited by students at Prague’s Charles University to give readings throughout Czechoslovakia, and he loved the rock culture that he witnessed there. In his poem “Big Beat,” written during his time in Prague, he described the Czech concert scene: “Because the body moves again, the / body dances again, the body/ sings again . . . long long hair over skeleton boys/ thin black ties, pale handsome/ cheeks—and screams and screams.” Ginsberg’s visit did not go unnoticed by the government, which arrested him three times during his two-month stay and forced him to leave Czechoslovakia permanently in May 1965. “The Marxists have beat me upon the street, kept me up all night in Police Station, followed me through Springtime Prague, detained me in secret and deported me from our kingdom by plane,” Ginsberg wrote, testifying to the reality that the STB always lay in wait.

Ostensibly, the Czech government supported its citizens’ creative rights and favored cultural innovations. The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, written in 1948, stated that the government would “give all possible support to creative activity in science and art,” and that it would help steer working-class people to “active participation in scientific and artistic work, so that the results of this work serve all the people.” But arrests like Ginsberg’s were becoming increasingly frequent. The government’s cultural rhetoric had been based largely on the nation’s pre-Communist

11 Ryback, Rock Around the Bloc, 76.
13 Ibid., 60.
history of classical orchestral composers like Bedrich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák, whose music CCP leader Antonín Novotný felt reinforced Czech nationalism.\textsuperscript{16} Novotný feared that the influx of Western countercultural influences had grown dangerous, and he came down hard on all hints of reform, ridding his cabinet of liberal party members and tightening censorship laws. His actions were out of step with the increasingly reform-minded, Western-looking Czech population, however, and he was forced to resign by the end of 1967. On January 5, 1968, Prague officials replaced Novotný with Alexander Dubček as the Party Secretary, who they felt could bring Czechoslovakia through sociopolitical reforms without going too far and upsetting the Kremlin.\textsuperscript{17} The Prague Spring had begun.

**PRAGUE SPRING: CULTURAL FREEDOM AMIDST POLITICAL REFORM**

In many ways, the cultural reforms that forty-six-year-old Alexander Dubček implemented during his first months in office in 1968 were more a validation of on-the-ground Czech realities than an outright shift in policy. Dubček sought to develop closer economic ties with the West and to enact more lenient foreign policies, which made the preexisting influx of Western music and hippie culture seem far less threatening.\textsuperscript{18} “[The Czechoslovak Communist Party] has paid dearly for the practice of the past years,” explained Dubček in a speech that was broadcast nationwide on Czech television and radio. “And this is why we now put such emphasis on the possibility of citizens to apply their creativity, to satisfy their wishes and needs, so that our country may not lag behind economically and culturally.”\textsuperscript{19}

Under the mantra, “socialism need not lose its human aspect,” Dubček lifted all media censorship and freed all political prisoners arrested during Novotný’s regime, including artists who had been jailed for free expression.\textsuperscript{20} As long-haired hippies crowded the streets, an underground drug culture grew, and Western-style rock music flourished. Prague began to resemble San Francisco during the 1967 “Summer of Love.”\textsuperscript{21} No band better epitomized the Prague Spring’s increased cultural leniency and Western influence than The Primitives Group, one of the first Czech bands to actively shun governmental

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 172.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Yanosik, “The Plastic People of the Universe.”
\end{itemize}
approval in favor of a “rough,” “savage,” and “psychedelic” sound “far removed from any kind of nicety.”

Unlike the pre-Prague Spring bands, The Primitives covered cutting-edge Anglo-American artists like Jimi Hendrix, The Mothers of Invention, and The Fugs, and used pyrotechnics and dramatic strobe lighting in concerts. The Primitives were notably scruffier than the Beatles knockoff bands that preceded them. With their shoulder-length hair, ripped clothing, and anti-establishment attitudes, they epitomized what the Soviet Union feared Czechs were devolving into under Dubček’s liberal Communist leadership.

This countercultural revolution gave many reformers a sense of infinite possibility for change. “With the rest of the population, [I] imbibed the strange, marvelous, intoxicating atmosphere of solidarity and resistance to brute force and ignorance,” reflected Czech dissident Ivan Kyncl, only fifteen years old in 1968. “I felt to be a tiny particle of an organism, functioning in harmony with all the other particles, atoms and molecules . . . ready to accomplish the seemingly impossible.” Increased journalistic freedom also motivated people to speak out about reform as never before. In June 1968, author Ludvík Vaculík published “Two Thousand Words to Workers, Scientists, Artists, and Everyone,” in Literární listy, Prague’s prestigious literary magazine. The essay called for those involved in countercultural movements to use their newfound artistic freedom to push through economic and political reforms that would complement their cultural rhetoric. “All the defects hidden in the foundations and ideology of the system have clearly reached their peak,” wrote Vaculík, “So let us not overestimate the effects of the writers' and students' criticisms. The source of social change is the economy. A true word makes its mark only when it is spoken under conditions that have been properly prepared.”

Meanwhile, Soviet officials were still monitoring Czechoslovakia closely, and discussion of large-scale communist reform spurred them to take drastic action. On August 21, 1968, under cover of early morning darkness, 200,000 troops and 2,000 tanks from the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Bulgaria invaded Czechoslovakia over four frontiers, sending the country into disarray. The attack took Czech communist officials completely by surprise. As the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party explained in their first public announcement after the
invasion, which was broadcast nationally at 1:50 a.m. on August 21: “This happened
without the knowledge of the President of the Republic, the President of the National
Assembly, the Premier, or the First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party
Central Committee. . . . The CCP appeals to all citizens to maintain calm and not to offer
resistance to the troops on the march.”26 By October, the Czech government had allowed
the Soviet troops to stay “temporarily,” and within the year, the newly Soviet-appointed
Czech administration had begun to clamp down on artistic freedom in earnest.

**POST-INVASION: HUSÁK’S CULTURAL “NORMALIZATION”**

When Soviet officials replaced Alexander Dubček as the Party Secretary with
Gustáv Husák in early 1969 on a platform of “normalization,” many saw the change as a
return to the status quo after an eight-month blip in the nation’s cultural policies. Western
coverage of the Prague Spring’s cultural innovations had been minimal. *The New York
Times* published three times as many articles on the Soviet Union’s August Warsaw
invasion as on the Prague Spring, while *The Wall Street Journal* published only one story on
Prague’s cultural reforms. Though President Lyndon B. Johnson spoke out publicly
against the invasion, his foreign policy was focused on the war in Vietnam. The United
States thus took no direct action to help Czech reformers through United Nations
diplomacy or international sanctions.27

Meanwhile, the Czech government sought to erase all national memory of the
Prague Spring’s cultural reforms. Officials were no longer content to “permit all flowers
to blossom,” to extend the Prague Spring metaphor; rather, they told the Czech cultural
journal *Tribuna* that they “[would] cultivate, water, and protect only one flower, the red
rose of Marxism.”28 Instead of banning rock music and alternative culture outright, the
Czech administration chose to subject all bands to a thorough screening process. In so
doing, they could give official sanction to groups whose messages they felt would not
actively threaten the strict new Soviet regime. Starting in January 1970, Prague officials
shut down nearly all of the city’s rock clubs. The one exception, The Orfeus Klub, was
only allowed to stay open after it replaced its rock concerts with performances from
traditional Czech folk ensembles.

Prague’s third annual beat music festival, which was meant to feature a number of
Western bands, was rescheduled and censored after the Czech press launched a campaign
that claimed that the long-haired Western performers would bring “lice and drugs” into

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26 “Appendix V: Czechoslovak Praesidium Statement: 21 August 1968.” *Czechoslovakia 1968: Reform,
Repression, and Resistance*, by Philip Windsor and Adam Roberts (London, UK: Chatto and Windus Ltd., for

27 Ibid, 78.

Czechoslovakia. By the time the festival was finally held in April 1971, it consisted entirely of government-approved Eastern European bands. As Charter 77 spokesmen later described it, Czech performing artists were forced to live with the “ever-present threat of a partial or total ban on [their] public performances,” which the government used to “stultify, restrict, and homogenize popular music.” Often, bands were allowed to continue performing only if they were willing to make appearances at government-sponsored events. For example, Olympic, the foremost Czech Beatles cover band, was forced to perform “friendship” concerts in the Soviet Union in order to survive, and many other bands were offered similarly censorship-fueled bargains. The government also began subjecting all musicians and artists to qualification examinations that tested “political maturity,” which the Charter 77 signatories took to mean “unqualified agreement (no matter if it is real or feigned) with everything which the state’s political power does and what the official propaganda says.” By 1975, the number of artists who were permitted to work in Czechoslovakia had been halved, from 6,000 to 3,000.

Despite persecution, Czech students remained thoroughly enmeshed in the Western-influenced hippie culture, and protestní songy (protest songs) abounded. Marta Kubisová’s peace anthem “Modlitba pro Martu” (“Prayer for Marta”) wished “the government of your affairs be returned to [the people’s] hands,” and became a wildly popular symbol of the Czech resistance on television and radio until it was banned in spring 1969. Kubisova was later stripped of her Czech professional license as punishment for her outspokenness, but other young performers continued her Western-tinged anti-occupation refrain. Young Moravian Karel Kryl’s songs about violence, terror, and fear struck a chord with Prague audiences when he arrived on the scene in September 1968, mere weeks after the invasion. “In this spring the leaves begin to yellow/ Snow falls upon the flowers,” he sang in June 1969, a year after the Prague Spring’s peak.

Meanwhile, the nation was deeply shaken by the self-immolation of Jan Palach, a twenty-one-year-old student who set himself on fire in Prague’s Wenceslas Square on January 16, 1969 to protest the Soviet occupation. His self-immolation took place amongst the Square’s informal memorials to students who were killed during the August invasion. Palach’s actions were recognized internationally for articulating “the desperation to which patriotic and democratically minded elements in Czechoslovakia have been

29 Ryback, Rock Around the Bloc, 60.
31 Ryback, Rock Around the Bloc, 138, 146, 141.
33 Ibid, 255.
34 Berggren, “Mothers, Plastic People, and Václav Havel,” 64.
35 Ryback, Rock Around the Bloc, 83.
driven,” and half a million Czechs lined the streets for his funeral a week later. Cultural organizations nationwide mourned Palach’s death: all Prague theaters cancelled light entertainment programs on the night of Palach’s funeral as a sign of respect, while the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra performed a requiem concert in his honor.\(^{36}\)

In the midst of this cultural upheaval, one unique Czech band came to the forefront of the Prague underground scene, one whose music Václav Havel praised as “filled with an experience of metaphysical sorrow and a longing for salvation.” Though they were continually persecuted by the government and stripped of their professional license, they refused to stop performing. As Havel put it, “regardless of how many vulgar words they used or how long their hair was, truth was on their side.”\(^ {37}\) They were The Plastic People of the Universe.

**THE REVOLUTION UNDERGROUND: HAVEL AND THE PLASTIC PEOPLE OF THE UNIVERSE**

The Plastic People of the Universe, often referred to as The Plastics, were formed in September 1968 by Milan Hlavsa, a nineteen-year-old student in Prague. Unlike Marta Kubisová and Karel Kryl, The Plastics did not begin with a political agenda. As Hlavsa described it, “We just loved rock ’n’ roll and wanted to be famous. . . . Rock ’n’ roll wasn’t just music to us; it was kind of life itself.”\(^ {38}\) Inspired by Western bands like the Fugs, The Velvet Underground, and Frank Zappa—their name was derived from Zappa’s song “Plastic People”—the Plastics inherited the Primitives Group’s tendency towards psychedelic performance art. They threw fiery disks across the stage at concerts, wore dramatic makeup, and, once, even sacrificed a chicken onstage to the god Mars.\(^ {39}\)

Even so, the Plastics were performing in a completely different context than the Primitives had several years earlier. All Anglo-American band names and lyrics had been banned from Czechoslovakia, along with long hair and Western dress; all performance repertoires had to be approved by government censors; and Czech officials sought in earnest to crack down on any dissenting groups. “We weren’t a political movement. . . . We didn't have any interest in the Communists,” explained the Plastics’ saxophonist and lyricist Vratislav Brabenec. “We told them we are not an enemy, we are just a different culture, separate—we like poetry and music. We didn't write any protest songs, we just made music with some poetical texts and our own taste. It wasn’t their taste.”\(^ {40}\)

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\(^{37}\) Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, 127.


two years, the Plastics had lost their professional status, and with it their right to book concert venues and their access to state-owned instruments, microphones, and amplifiers.

Despite these difficulties, the band continued to play, performing at least fifteen public concerts from 1970 to 1972. Since the Plastics sought the freedom to perform above all else, and did not particularly want to directly challenge the establishment, they quickly chose not to fight to regain their professional status, and embraced their “amateur” label instead. Though the Plastics did not technically do anything illegal—Jirous made sure that they only performed concerts that could be deemed “private,” in accordance with their amateur status—the Czech regime worried about the band’s growing influence on the youth counterculture. Government officials retaliated by portraying the Plastics as “layabouts, hooligans, alcoholics, and drug addicts in the hopes of being able simply to sweep them out of the way,” as Václav Havel later recounted. “Modesty and law prevents us from publishing examples of their lyrics,” reported Czech officials in the party paper *Rudé právo*. “If we were to call them vulgar, it would be too weak a word. They are filthy, obscene.”

In this context of widespread misinformation, dissidents like Václav Havel initially scorned the growing Second Culture movement that centered on the Plastics. Havel’s prior knowledge of the Plastics had been gleaned entirely through “wild and, I discovered, quite distorted stories about the group . . . about deliberately oddball or dilettantish attempts to be outlandish at any price.” The Plastics and their followers did not particularly trust the political dissidents either. Havel described himself as “seen by Jirous as a member of the official, and officially tolerated, opposition; in other words, a member of the establishment.” Thus, for a time the groups remained largely separate, despite their shared anti-Communist sentiments.

Despite this rocky start, Havel’s first one-on-one meeting with Jirous in early 1976 was a huge turning point in his ideas about anti-Communist activism. It also showed him that a possible collaboration between cultural and political dissidents could be mutually beneficial. He was moved by the audio footage that Jirous played him from the Plastics’ underground concerts, calling their music “a profoundly authentic expression of the sense of life among these people, battered as they were by the misery of the world.” He also saw from the outset that their music, with its “depiction of metaphysical sorrow and a longing for salvation,” could be used to demonstrate the necessity of Czech free speech

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41 Jana Chytilova Dir., *The Plastic People of the Universe* [Documentary, DVD], 2001, Czech and English with English Subtitles.
42 Ibid., 127.
43 Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc*, 147.
44 Havel, *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala*, 126.
45 Ibid., 126.
46 Ibid., 127.
amongst the Soviet regime. “Here was something serious and genuine,” he explained, “an internally free articulation of an existential experience that everyone who had not become completely obtuse must understand.”

He felt that the band, with a bit of tweaking, could become a harbinger of honesty amidst government deception, and that the underground counterculture could “give hope to those who had been most excluded.”

Alternatively, some band members worried that becoming politically active would interfere with their mantra, “above all, it is the music that should be listened to.” To the extent that they were political in their early years, the Plastics’ stances were rooted firmly in artistic free expression, despite the Soviet smear campaigns that had pushed them underground. “It is better not to play music at all than play music that fails to spring from the performers’ deepest musical convictions,” wrote Jirous, “and above all it is better not to play than play according to the wishes of the government.”

Although the Plastics stood by their goal to only engage with politics when it helped to maintain free musical expression, the ever-present risk of government persecution tested their resolve. In March 30, 1974, armed policemen raided a Plastics concert in North Bohemia and broke up a crowd of several hundred fans, imprisoning six students and preventing many others from returning to school or taking their final exams.

Young people fled via roadways that were “lined with truncheon-wielding goons, and a lot of blood was spilled and limbs broken,” reflected Plastics member Paul Wilson. “Masses of young people were herded into the train station by cops and soldiers with dogs and riot gear.” And on March 17, 1976, Czech security forces raided the apartments of twenty-two members of the rock underground, including the Plastics and Ivan Jirous. After interrogating over 100 students and confiscating countless records, tapes, and notebooks, the government took nineteen people into custody and scheduled a public trial. The fight was on.

THE PLASTICS’ TRIAL: CULTURE AND POLITICS INTERSECT

While Jirous and the others waited in jail before their trial, Havel publicized the band’s plight to samizdat authors who were unfamiliar with the government’s attacks on counterculturalists. Havel couched his argument in the concept of free expression, emphasizing how the government was attacking innocent performers who sought only to perform without Soviet censorship. “The objects of this attack were not veterans of old political battles,” he wrote in his essay The Trial, which was widely published outside of

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 128.
50 Ibid., 63.
51 Paul Wilson, “Article [Unnamed]”, Musician magazine, February 1983, 76.
52 Ryback, Rock Around the Bloc, 148.
Czechoslovakia in October 1976. “They were simply young people who wanted to live in their own way, to make music they liked, to sing what they wanted to sing, to live in harmony with themselves, and to express themselves in a truthful way.” Along with six prominent fellow dissidents, Havel penned a letter to German writer Heinrich Böll appealing for solidarity with the rock musicians on trial. “It is paradoxical that a year after the Helsinki conference, the contemporary Czechoslovak regime still feels threatened by people who, in private, sing songs to which the regime itself does not even attribute any hostile political content,” they wrote, emphasizing that the Plastics had been performing entirely within their legal rights.

When the Plastics’ trial was postponed indefinitely in August 1976—it would eventually take place in late September—the counterculturalists who had previously tried to operate outside of politics began to take action. A petition signed by more than sixty people, most in their late teens or early twenties, asserted that “the true reason for [the Plastics’] prosecution lies in their artistic activities and social attitudes,” and that all artists had “the undeniable right to express their impressions of the world around them in a way that they regard as appropriate.” A number of Czech citizens who had been involved in earlier political trials wrote their own petition, calling the Plastics’ arrest “a further step in the streamlining of cultural life and the limitation of freedom of expression” and an enforcement of “Pogrom-like attitudes towards any supporter of a non-conformist lifestyle.”

By becoming a meeting of the minds for Prague’s cultural and political revolutionaries, the Plastics’ 1976 trial finally forged a connection between two disparate anti-government Czech groups. People began to write about the Plastics’ plight in the context of larger human rights abuses aimed at young people nationwide. “A threat to the freedom of these young [performers] was a threat to the freedom of us all,” said Havel, while Jirous described the Czech underground’s music as “the last zone of freedom,” where culture had become “the only authentic existential space in which to live.” In his essay “On the Matter of The Plastic People of the Universe,” samizdat author Jan Patocka used grandiose language to place the Plastics’ persecution in the context of government abuse. “In order to see to it that it remained concealed, good was renamed evil and evil good, freedom was called slavery and slavery freedom,” he wrote, “so that no one would be able to distinguish what is real, and so that everyone might consume deception with

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 131; Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*, 116.
that common mother’s milk known as language.”

Flush with their newfound success, Václav Havel and his dissident followers saw the event as a prime opportunity to spur everyday citizens towards public political action. “It was here, with the case of the Plastic People—through newly established contacts and friendships—that the main opposition circles, hitherto isolated from each other, came together informally,” wrote Havel. Rather than organize a mass demonstration or protest that would be quashed by the government within hours, the newly enlarged dissident community took a far riskier tactic. Combining the power of words with the weight of a significant following, they wrote a series of documents that would set the world of human rights on fire. They created Charter 77.

A COALITION IS FORMED: THE PLASTICS AND CHARTER 77

The cultural momentum that led to Charter 77’s formation was fueled in part by the Third Act of the Helsinki Accords in August 1975. In Helsinki, Gustav Husák and thirty-four other leaders had pledged their commitment to international human rights and the freedom of cultural expression. “A significant aspect of an all-round development of man in conditions of peace is the widest possible access to the genuine cultural values of mankind,” Husák told the conference, “And we are in favor of the broadest possible mutual inspiration through cultural goals . . . of establishing ever broader contacts between social organizations, youth, and culture.” Despite the conference’s lofty aims to “promote access by all to respective cultural achievements” and to “encourage international meetings among young creative artists on questions of artistic and literary creation,” the Accords’ human rights dictates were rarely implemented on the ground in Czechoslovakia. The Charter 77 dissidents sought to broadcast this contradiction to an international audience.

Though Western reporters had been strictly banned from the courtroom during the Plastics’ trial, a smattering of coverage had appeared in the American press, compiled largely through interviews with the detainees’ friends and family members. Vera Jirousová, Ivan Jirous’s ex-wife, took detailed notes in the back of the courtroom and gave a controversial interview with Reuters that described the proceedings. “The trial was shameful, because at all the trials I had been to . . . they actually did not allow the defendants to present their arguments,” Jirousová recalled. “The underground circle was

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59 Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, 131.
the working young people . . . whose only expressions of freedom came through music, through this kind of creativity.”

News coverage had also become one of the chief ways that Western government officials could gain insight into Czechoslovakia’s well-guarded political proceedings. In a series of briefings to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, U.S. ambassador Thomas Ryan Byrne cited reports from Reuters, Le Monde, and The International Herald Tribune. “Not a good [time] for civil liberties, free artistic expression, or due process,” Byrne told Kissinger in September 1976, grouping the Plastics’ trial with the persecution of playwright Pavel Kohout, a dissident and friend of Havel’s, as indicative of a larger trend in Czech human rights violations.

In the months following the Plastics’ trials, the Chicago Tribune, The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, and England’s The Guardian all published stories about the Plastics and the greater persecution of Czech musicians and the working class. The American media began to latch onto the idea that “in a totalitarian country, a musical and cultural underground amounts to a political underground, too,” as Karel Kovanda, a Czech-born émigré who was at Charles University during the Prague Spring, wrote in The Los Angeles Times. “Rock music is not highbrow art; rock lyrics use four-letter words; rock musicians are young and unknown. Such must have been the thoughts of the authorities when they arrested 20 of the ‘Plastic People’ and their followers last April. Who would stand up for them?”

Meanwhile, the Plastics’ trial had attracted the attention of Amnesty International, which would receive the Nobel Peace Prize several months later. Acting under the belief that the Plastics and their followers “were arrested and subsequently convicted for the legitimate exercise of their right to artistic expression,” Amnesty International’s German Section published and distributed a detailed account of “the persecution of these non-conformist artists.” The organization also sent two Austrian lawyers to observe the Plastics’ trial in September and their appeal hearing in November. Though Czech law stated that these trials would be open to the public, Amnesty International delegates were prevented from attending either hearing. Despite this, the organization continued to monitor Czechoslovakia closely, and Amnesty officials spoke with the American press about the illegal persecution of the Czech counterculturalists.

Capitalizing on widespread disgust with how the Plastics had been treated, Havel

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65 Ibid, 240-45.
brought together a diverse group of dissidents in late 1976 to sign Charter 77, in order to publicly chastise the Czech government for human rights abuses. “[After the trial.] I started to think about forms of resistance against this morally corrupt and unbearable spiritual and political situation,” said philosopher Martin Palous, one of the Charter’s first signatories. The Plastics’ trial had united different generations of anti-Communist dissenters as little had done before: “Everyone was concerned, because it was about children, or the children who were growing up,” reflected Vera Jirousová. “Their children all listened to rock and roll at home, so it was simple. When someone wanted to stand up for them, for the Plastic People, they were standing up for their own children, too.” Many Charter signatories fell into their support as a result of connections to literary, artistic, or academic circles. “Most of the signers, if you follow their personal history, were sort of pushed into it by their circumstances . . . from school or from other circles,” explained Daniel Kummerman, a Czech journalist who was forced to work as a window washer after signing Charter 77.\(^\text{67}\) But for others, choosing to sign the Charter was a huge risk, since the Czech government was bound to persecute anyone who publicly stated dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime.

**CHARTER 77, THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

Among the signatories of Charter 77, cultural figures comprised the second largest occupational contingent, exceeded only by those who identified as dělníci (a classification that included both white- and blue-collar workers). They made up 13.7% of the Charter’s 978 signatories from its first two years, including twenty-five writers, five translators, fifty journalists and editors, twenty-four artists and five arts critics.\(^\text{68}\) Within its first year, Charter 77 published a piece on the Plastics’ cultural persecution, Document Thirteen, which called the right to free cultural expression “among the fundamental human rights which our state has pledged to observe.” Relating the underground directly to young people’s roles in political dissent, the Charter called the lack of a legally approved youth culture “the suppression of a whole plane of collective experience.” They also posited that this repression [“oversight” is too neutral] was “the real reason for the ever-more frequent conflicts between youth and the security organs.” The document included an outright condemnation of the way that Czech musicians and artists had been muzzled: “Performing publicly today means subjecting oneself to a complex, rigid, and nonsensical bureaucratic system of controls and directives which not only debase the artist from a civic point of view, and make of the right to artistic activity a special privilege or gift, but which above all are demonstrably stifling the entire sphere of popular

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\(^{68}\) Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*, 41.
music from an artistic point of view.” By giving voice on an international platform to Czech citizens’ mounting dissatisfaction with artistic censorship, the Charter 77 authors brought the artists’ plights to a wholly new audience, opening the door for foreign intervention.

Dissidents made a point of distributing all Charter 77 documents to foreign correspondents, and a steady stream of Charter excerpts were printed in *The New York Times, The Guardian, Le Monde, Toronto’s The Globe and Mail,* and several other prominent newspapers. Journalists grew interested in the Czech authorities’ reactions to the Charter, and particularly in their arrests and detainments of Charter signatories. But verifiable information was difficult to come by. When *The New York Times* reporter Paul Hoffman attempted to leave Prague in February 1977, he was ordered off his train by three Czech border patrolmen, subjected to overnight interrogation, and refused any telephone contact with the United States embassies in Prague or Vienna. Czech party officials denied Hoffman’s story on national radio, claiming that they had stopped Hoffman briefly when a border check showed he was carrying literature by banned dissident writer Ludvík Vaculík.70


The Charter 77 movement had also attracted the attention of politicians in the

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72 Ibid.
United States Senate and the House of Representatives, who sought to spur fellow delegates into direct action. In February 1977, Representative James J. Blanchard and Senator Strom Thurmond both included the opening document of Charter 77, “Manifesto Charging Rights Violations in Czechoslovakia,” in the House and Senate Congressional Records, so that other members of Congress could read the piece in its entirety.  


Newly elected President Jimmy Carter also emphasized human rights enforcement in his foreign policy. “The spirit of Helsinki is alive, but there have also been important setbacks,” Carter told politicians at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1979, four years after the Helsinki Accords had been signed. “In Czechoslovakia, members of the Charter 77 movement remain in prison, facing trial for their dedication to basic human freedoms. . . . I rededicate this administration and this Nation to strive tirelessly for full implementation of the [Helsinki] Final Act.”

Meanwhile, Charter members had refused to back down despite continued maltreatment, and Havel led a group of signatories to form the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted (abbreviated in Czech as VONS) in April 1978. “The isolated and unknown individual is helpless against injustice,” explained founding member Gertruda Sekaninová Calrtová, and VONS sought to “obtain at least a certain amount of information and thus to assure public control.” By closely monitoring all legal cases, keeping a record of STB victims, and offering aid to prisoners’ families, VONS helped keep the government’s abuses in the public eye. While unaffiliated with Charter 77, VONS increased the Charter’s on-the-ground influence on the Czech population, while making Czech human rights an international issue. The group filed over 1,000 legal protests, collaborating frequently with international human rights organizations like Helsinki Watch and Amnesty International, and became a member of the International


POST-COMMUNISM: HAVEL’S DEMOCRACY AND THE PLASTICS’ REBIRTH

Though Czechoslovakia’s Communist regime continued for twelve years after Charter 77 was introduced, the counterculturalists had made a significant dent in its political structure. Communist leaders, wary of the counterculture’s power, tried to distract young listeners by loosening import laws and issuing government editions of many Western albums. For their part, youths gravitated towards local punk groups with more blatantly political agendas, who sang about alienation, government greed, and non-conformity. The government’s attempts to shut down rock groups in the early 1980s proved largely unsuccessful. “When the activity is stopped, the musicians for the greater part break up and start to appear in another district or another region and under another name,” complained a Communist official to Rudé právo in June 1983. “They again damage in particular the cultural and aesthetic education of the youth.”

By 1986, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s mantra of “control from below” was played out in Czechoslovakia’s “Rock Fest ’86,” the country’s first national rock festival since the Prague Spring. Over sixty rock groups, many of them previously banned, performed at the Palace of Culture, an imposing marble castle that had once epitomized government censorship. As Communism crumbled, the underground rock scene came out triumphant.

When the Velvet Revolution officially ended Czechoslovakia’s Communist regime in 1989, Václav Havel was the natural choice to lead the nation’s new democratic government. He brought a unique combination of cultural appreciation and dissident fervor to the position. “[Havel] saw the world through the eyes of an artist and as a moral human being,” explained former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who maintained a close friendship with Havel. “He brought a newness, morality, a spirit of what the future could be about.” Early in his first term, Havel stressed the importance of culture by appointing rock musician Frank Zappa as Czechoslovakia’s “special ambassador to the West” on trade and tourism. Havel also emphasized cultural exchange in his dealings with foreign leaders. During a visit from President Bill Clinton in 1994, Havel presented Clinton with a tenor saxophone. “He told me that under the Communists, Czechoslovakia had to make all the saxophones for the Warsaw Pact,” Clinton recalled. “But now, he said, we will have to compete, and I hope we are up to

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77 Skilling, Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia, 118-19.
78 Ryback, Rock Around the Bloc, 200-201.
79 Stoppard, Rock ‘n’ Roll, 73.
At the Reduta Jazz Club, one of Havel’s favorite meeting places from his dissident years, Clinton and Havel performed a jazz session together. Upon Havel’s death in December 2011, his official funeral featured Dvorak’s *Requiem* and Handel’s *Messiah*, but artists and culture lovers flocked to the Lucerna Hall for a tribute concert led by the Plastic People of the Universe.82

As for the Plastics, the fall of Communism allowed band members to finally perform the music they loved without interference. Though the Plastics disbanded in 1988, less than a year before the Velvet Revolution, several band members continued to perform together as Pulnoc (Midnight). In 1997, the Plastics reunited upon Havel’s invitation to perform at Prague Castle as part of Charter 77’s twentieth anniversary celebration. As more requests for concerts began pouring in—the Plastics even performed at the White House for Havel and President Clinton in 1999—the band "became famous in their own right all over again," recalled former member Paul Wilson. Instead of being known for their political connections alone, "people actually loved their music," said Wilson, and the band toured extensively in the West.83

For the first time, the Plastics could perform freely in the Czech Republic. When Tom Stoppard’s drama *Rock ‘n’ Roll*, which depicted the Plastics’ influence on Czech politics, came to Prague’s National Theater in 2007, the Plastics performed live as part of the production.84 Meanwhile, Peter Sís used the Plastics to help explain Communist Czechoslovakia to young audiences in his picture-book memoir, *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*. “I somehow got the memoirs of my friend Mejla Hlavsa, who played with the Plastic People of the Universe, and I had tears in my eyes because [he was] a working class guy who just wanted to play rock music and wanted to grow long hair,” said Sís.85

Despite the Plastics’ newfound popularity, their most potent power lay in their original context, when the band’s music gave voice to the repressed citizenry as few artists had done before. “The atmosphere of the [Plastics’] concert was dream-like, unreal . . . giving the sense of a small desert in a hostile ocean which may at any time blow a storm and wipe it off the face of the earth,” recalled Ivan Kyncl, a Czech student who was fifteen during the Prague Spring. “Under such circumstances, one listened with greater feeling and understanding to music which, in the relative peace of his own room, might

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strike him as strange and incomprehensible.”

In a world of human rights abuses and government censorship, the Czech countercultural underground embodied the struggles of normal citizens and intellectual dissidents alike, and its legacy lives on in the human rights movement it inspired worldwide.

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**NONFICTION BOOKS AND ARTICLES**


**FICTION BOOKS**


In his final paper for John Demos’s “The Colonial Period of American History” course, current freshman Zach Schloss documents the varying punishments that were assigned for seemingly identical crimes in 17th century Essex County court records. For example, some individuals indicted for drunkenness were fined anywhere from 10 to 40 shillings while others were sentenced to the stocks or even a cage. These discrepancies could be attributed to a lack of standardization within the Essex County court system. Schloss provides a more interesting explanation, arguing that these often public and shame-based punishments reflected the values of a patriarchal, class-biased colonial society.
Sarah Row was unfaithful to her husband. In March of 1673, the Ipswich Quarterly Court of Essex County, Massachusetts, made her pay dearly for her crime, sentencing her to one month in prison—an extraordinarily harsh sentence at the time. But Row’s punishment was not limited to incarceration. The court also forced her, at the next town meeting, to stand “on a high place where the master of the house of correction shall appoint, in open view of the congregation, with a fair white paper written in fair capital letters FOR MY BAUDISH CARRIAGE, open also to the view of the congregation.”

By modern standards, punishments like the one that befell Sarah Row seem cruel and unusual. Yet the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s punishment methods of the seventeenth century expressed the widely accepted—and fundamentally prejudiced—values held most dear by those in power in colonial New England. The court system and structure reinforced the rigid class and gender inequalities that permeated New England society. Court sessions were open to members of the public, which exacerbated criminals’ embarrassment and reflected colonial society’s emphasis on public humiliation as punishment. Courts in Essex County met every three months and were typically presided over by a panel of at least four male judges. A “jury of trials” or a grand jury of colonial men was also frequently present during each day’s court session and helped judges to determine appropriate punishment in most cases. Meanwhile, appointed commissioners within each town helped resolve petty matters and disputes. Overall, the Essex County courts possessed a great deal of judicial discretion, which they used to dispense a range of haphazard punishments that often bore little regard for legal precedent. The result was a colonial legal system that used shame and humiliation as powerful means of both reflecting and reinforcing existing social hierarchies.

Colonial courts used their broad power to mete out a wide variety of penalties, even for seemingly identical crimes. In 1636, the Salem Quarterly Court fined Thomas Brooke ten shillings “for being overseen in drink.” Three years later, the court fined George Dill 40 shillings, also for drunkenness. In the same court session, another man was condemned to sit in the stocks for one hour for the same crime. And over 40 years later, the Salem court issued an especially bizarre punishment, sentencing Allixander Mackmallen to be fined or “put in the cage for three hours” for “being much in drink.” Because no standard punishment for “drunkenness” existed and the term “drunkenness” itself had no consistent definition, punishments for such a crime were often unpredictable and arbitrary.

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1 Essex County Court Records, vol. 5, 147.
2 Ibid., vol. 1, 3.
3 Ibid., 15.
Bonds for good behavior further complicated colonial court dealings by adding another unpredictable dimension to the judicial process. These bonds were typically tacked on to other punishments and required criminals to pay a deposit that they could later recoup if they avoided troublesome behavior. Many different types of criminals were forced to pay bonds for good behavior, and no evident pattern exists as to when these bonds would or would not be part of a criminal sentence. The Salem Quarterly Court, for instance, sentenced William Russell to be bound to good behavior, whipped, and “kept in irons” in 1682 for his swearing, threats, and “abusive carriages.” Yet just over 10 years earlier, the same court convicted Edward Goodwyn for swears and threats—an almost identical crime to the one Russell committed—and did not implement a bond for good behavior. Clearly, the implementation of bonds was not standardized, and different judges and jurors administered them quite differently.

Additionally, the length of these bonds varied from case to case. In September of 1657, the Ipswich Quarterly Court ruled that Edmond Bridges was to be bound to good behavior and whipped for fornication. He was released from his bond one year later. In April of 1677, the Salisbury Quarterly Court convicted Joseph Peasly on two separate assault charges, one involving the beating of another man with a chain. Peasly was fined and bound to good behavior in both cases, yet the court terminated his bonds only six months later. Though some of the discrepancy between these bond lengths can be attributed to the inconsistencies of the Essex courts, cultural values and perspectives must also be considered. Colonial Americans took adultery very seriously, especially in Massachusetts, where Puritan influence was substantial. In 1644, for instance, a Massachusetts court sentenced James Britton and Mary Latham to be hanged for adultery. In addition to serving as another example of how punishments varied for seemingly identical crimes, the Britton-Latham case demonstrates the importance placed on religious and moral purity in New England. Assault, meanwhile, was a crime with no significant religious implications and was fairly commonplace. The combination of colonial society’s disdain for fornication and its relative lack of concern for assault led to the discrepancy between bond lengths for Bridge and Peasly.

Colonial courts often provided defendants a choice of punishments, further exacerbating the inconsistencies of the court system. In the Mackmallen drunkenness

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5 Ibid., vol. 8, 347-48.
6 Ibid., vol. 4, 132.
7 Ibid., vol. 2, 53.
8 Ibid., vol. 2, 118.
9 Ibid., vol. 6, 264.
10 Ibid., 343.
case, for example, the defendant had the choice to either pay a fine or be put in a cage.\textsuperscript{12} During the same period, the Ipswich Quarterly Court punished three different women for fornication, each of whom was given a choice between a whipping and a fine.\textsuperscript{13} This decision between a whipping and a fine was by far the most common choice of punishment provided to colonial defendants. A shameful and painful penalty, the whipping option likely existed for those unable to pay the fine demanded by the courts. In many cases, the punishment a person received for a crime depended on his or her social standing and wealth, rather than on the nature of the crime itself.

Indeed, almost every element of colonial society depended on one’s social class. Clothes were designed to reflect the status of the wearer, and sumptuary laws prevented members of the lower class from dressing like members of the upper classes. A person’s seat in church also reflected his or her social position within the town or village, and townspeople often squabbled over proper seating arrangements. Colonial class bias extended into the court system and the Essex County records. In fornication cases involving servants and non-servants, for example, servants received the harshest punishments. In 1673, servant Henry Salter was “sentenced to be whipped and wear a lock on his leg” for “running away twice and stealing.”\textsuperscript{14} This punishment, which permanently limited Salter’s ability to move and travel where he pleased, is unique within the court records. Meanwhile, punishments given for abusing servants were relatively weak in comparison to those administered in other assault cases. The Salem Quarterly Court merely scolded Nicholas Cary in 1636 “for extreme correction of his maid servant.”\textsuperscript{15} Because the explanations for punishments were not included in the court records, it is difficult to specify factors that led to particular rulings. Still, trends in the Essex County records indicate that servants were given distinctly harsher punishments relative to upper-class members of society.

Women faced additional discrimination in the colonial courts. In 1680, a maid named Ellen was convicted of having sexual relations with Benjamin Hooper, another villager. While Ellen received the standard choice between a whipping and a fine, Hooper received no punishment at all.\textsuperscript{16} Ellen’s societal role as both a servant and a woman ensured a doubly harsh punishment for her crime, and her case represents one of many instances in which more severe punishments were reserved for women. When the Salem court convicted Alexander Greime and Sarah Lambert of fornication, Greime was ordered to pay child support, while Lambert was sentenced to a whipping.\textsuperscript{17}

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\item\footnotesize\textit{Essex County Court Records.} vol. 7, 107.\textsuperscript{12}
\item\footnotesize Ibid., vol. 6, 256.\textsuperscript{13}
\item\footnotesize Ibid., vol. 5, 230-1.\textsuperscript{14}
\item\footnotesize Ibid., vol. 1, 6.\textsuperscript{15}
\item\footnotesize Ibid., vol. 7, 406.\textsuperscript{16}
\item\footnotesize Ibid., 238.\textsuperscript{17}
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Abigaile Sibley was even more extreme—she was to be “severely whipped or pay a fine” for fornicating with Thomas Cooper, while Cooper was not punished at all. Gender and class bias were not limited to sexual crimes. For instance, in May of 1676, the Hampton Quarterly Court bound Michaell Emerson to good behavior and ordered him to pay a fine for the “cruel and excessive beating of his daughter with a flail swingle and . . . kicking her.” Colonial society expected Emerson’s daughter to revere and fear her father because Michaell was superior both as a man and as the patriarchal leader of the family. As a result, the punishment for Emerson’s vicious assault was considered minor by both modern and colonial standards.

Still, society’s patriarchal system sometimes worked against men by holding them responsible for the actions of their wives and children. In one 1658 incident, the wife of John Rowden became enraged following William Canterberry’s accusation that the Rowdens’ pigs were on his property. Rowden’s wife confronted Canterberry and his daughter, attacking them with stones and verbal assaults. The Salem Quarterly Court ruled that John Rowden should be “fined and bound for [his wife’s] good behavior” as punishment for his wife’s actions. Rowden had not directly committed any crime, but he was still legally responsible for allowing his wife to act out in such a manner.

Colonial methods of punishment reveal much about the purpose of the contemporary criminal justice system. Because society then emphasized reputation and social status, punishments that publicly shamed the offender predominated. Whipping, which always took place in a public space, is the most prevalent form of punishment in all eight volumes of the Essex County court records, but even criminals whose actions did not call for physical punishment were forced to openly acknowledge their misdeeds. For example, a person charged with slander was almost always ordered to publicly admit to lying, presumably to restore the reputation of the slandered while damaging that of the convicted. Wearing a sign, as Sarah Row was forced to do, was an effective means of temporarily but publicly shaming a criminal. In a case similar to Row’s, Joseph Severans was ordered to “stand at the meeting house door at Hampton, half an hour before the lecture with this inscription written in capital letters pinned upon his breast: ‘THIS PERSON IS CONVICTED FOR SPEAKING WORDS IN A BOASTING MANNER OF HIS LASCIVIOUS & UNCLEANE PRACTICES’.” Being whipped or holding a demeaning sign in public not only forced the criminal to contemplate his transgressions but also taught him to fear the way in which he was viewed by his peers.

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18 Ibid., vol. 8, 47.
19 Ibid., vol. 6, 141.
20 Ibid., vol. 2, 100.
21 Ibid., vol. 5, 239.
A 1677 incident illustrates how severe and complicated public punishments could become. Thomas Oliver’s wife was convicted for calling her husband a variety of vulgar names on Lord’s day. As a result, she “was ordered to stand with her husband, back to back, on a lecture day in the public market place, both gagged for about an hour with a paper fastened to each of their foreheads, upon which their offence should be fairly written.” In this case, a woman insulting her husband merited an extreme punishment, which reveals both the importance of male superiority and the colonial tradition of holding husbands responsible for their wives’ actions. The Olivers’ punishment pales in comparison to that of Salem resident Thomas West. Convicted of burglary on the Lord’s day, West was subjected to a highly public and permanent punishment that called for him “to be branded in the forehead with a ‘B’ [for burglar] and have one of his ears cut off.”

While the courts had forced Sarah Row to hold a sign at one town meeting in order to express her misdeeds, West’s physical mutilation ensured that his criminal status would forever be apparent.

In the Essex County court records, the varying severity of punishments for different crimes reflects both a lack of judicial standardization and an intense focus on religion as the building block of society. The public nature of punishments reveals the importance of social status in colonial America. By assigning harsher punishments to women and those from lower classes, the system of shame-based punishment reinforced social status and reputation as the driving forces of society. The colonial definition of justice showed little regard for proportional punishment or criminal rehabilitation, instead emphasizing public mortification and the destruction of reputation. Criminals were not expected to learn why their actions were wrong, and punishments for repeat offenders were generally similar to those for first-time criminals. In essence, the court records from Essex County demonstrate that the colonial system focused not so much on correcting social ills as on humiliating those responsible for such ills.

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“PERO PA MI ERA OTRA COSA”: CONTESTED MEMORIES OF PINOCHET’S CHILE

By Emma Sokoloff-Rubin, TD ’11
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The senior essay serves as the culmination of a Yale History major’s academic work. As a year-long project, the essay allows seniors to work one-on-one with a member of the faculty on a topic that interests them. Seniors rely on Yale’s extensive archival resources and often travel around the world to gather research for their project. This essay examines the response to Augusto Pinochet’s death in 2006. Sokoloff-Rubin conducted forty-two interviews with Chileans as part of her research. Each provides a close look at the memory of Pinochet and the aftermath of his death. Her essay received the Andrew D. White Rest of the World Prize.

The following pages contain an abstract of the senior essay, which is available in full online at www.yalehistoricalreview.org.
Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet died on December 10, 2006. That afternoon, Pinochet’s supporters held a vigil in downtown Santiago, outside the military hospital where he died. From 1973 to 1988, Pinochet trampled labor unions, outlawed political parties, and eliminated freedom of speech. He oversaw the death or disappearance of upwards of 3,000 Chilean citizens. Estimates of the number of people tortured under his rule start at 27,000 and continue past 100,000. When Pinochet died in 2006, he remained to many Chileans the face of a terrifying period they could not forget.

To others, he was a hero. The Chileans who gathered outside the military hospital to pray for “The Ex-President” on December 10, 2006, then flocked by the thousands to his military funeral two days later¹, saw Pinochet’s legacy in a positive light. To them, he brought order to an otherwise uncontrollable nation and set in motion economic changes that many believe account for Chile’s relative prosperity today.

The range of reactions to Pinochet’s death, and the controversy that ensued over his funeral, suggest that eighteen years after his dictatorship ended, what he meant for Chile—and whether he should be remembered with respect or disdain—was still up for debate. To some Chileans, Pinochet deserved the honors former heads-of-state traditionally receive: a state funeral, a national day of mourning, and the Chilean flag flown at half-mast in his or her honor. Those whose memories of Pinochet were of torture and fear asked in response, what honor does a brutal dictator deserve?

“For three days, everything was Pinochet.”² Manuela Flores, an art student at the Universidad Católica, remembers dancing in the streets the day Pinochet died. Others remember family gatherings in private homes, endless phone calls from friends to talk about what had happened, and media coverage that swung between celebration and commemoration. Pinochet’s death became a string of conversations, a day and then a series of days, an event. In this essay, I include in the phrase “Pinochet’s death” not only the actual moment in which Pinochet ceased to breathe, but also the actions, demonstrations, and decisions that followed his death. I argue that Pinochet’s death shifted the boundaries of public and private by pushing the government and Chilean citizens to reckon publicly with a history that was individual as well as collective. The event “rendered visible”³ contested memories of the past, putting Chileans face to face with enduring beliefs and emotions held by their government, family, friends, and selves.

Memory occupies a central space in scholarship on Latin America, and many historians of Chile, including Steve J. Stern, Peter Winn, Kristin Sorensen, and Mario Garcés, have approached Chilean history through the lens of memory. But Pinochet’s

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¹ Jen Ross and David Usborne, "Thousands Pay Respects to Pinochet but President Blocks Full State Funeral," The Independent, Dec 12, 2006.
² Manuela Flores, interview with the author, June 2010.
death has not been examined in depth: Stern includes five pages on the event in the third book of the “Memory Box” trilogy, and Sorensen briefly analyzes a short film produced the day Pinochet died. The rich secondary source materials on memory allow me to build on a strong foundation as I address a more recent event that has not been studied in detail. During May and June of 2010, I conducted forty-two interviews with Chilean government officials, lawyers, shoeshiners, businesspeople, university students, journalists, professors, and supermarket employees. I have translated interview quotes from Spanish, and each quote comes from the transcript of a recorded interview or notes I took during the interview. I include a footnote the first time I use a quote from a given individual; subsequent quotes from that individual come from the same interview and so are not cited separately. All interviews took place in Santiago.

My interviews reinforce historians Steve J. Stern and Elizabeth Jelin’s criticism of scholarship that interprets post-dictatorship memory battles as competitions between remembering and forgetting, and their suggestion that the appropriate framework is instead “memory versus memory.” My interviews also show that concerns that one’s memory will be forgotten, or covered over by other memories, do shape how people respond to events like Pinochet’s death, and how they judge the responses of those around them. Thus, I argue that while “memory versus memory,” may be the most accurate interpretation of the memory battles surrounding moments like Pinochet’s death, “memory versus forgetting” remains an important framework, so long as it reflects people’s experiences on the ground.

In my analysis of Pinochet’s death, I draw on Stern’s concept of a “memory knot” and Alexander Wilde’s description of particular moments as “irruptions of memory” to explore the strength of reactions to the death, then use interviews with individuals to further develop these terms. I argue that part of what was at stake in the debate over how Pinochet’s death should be commemorated was how he would be remembered by future generations. The government’s decision about what sort of funeral Pinochet would have, and individuals’ reactions to his death, were also statements about the legitimacy of the kind of leadership for which he stood. Pinochet’s death called up existing memories of the past, and the days surrounding his death created new memories, as the conversations, demonstrations, and silences that filled those days became something people remembered. In this way, as people debated the present and the past, they were also debating the future, laying groundwork for Pinochet’s burial in 2006, and for his legacy going forward.

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5 Kristin Sorensen, *Media, Memory, and Human Rights in Chile* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 68.