Slideshow

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A Note on Format

For the sake of uniformity and readability, Slideshow articles have been formatted using the Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition, even in cases where the author’s original honors thesis work used AAA, APA, or MLA formatting. However, in recognition of the interdisciplinary character of these pieces, our authors were allowed to choose either Chicago’s Author-Date citation system (more characteristic of the social sciences) or its Notes-Bibliography system (more characteristic of the humanities) for their citations.
Foreword

Welcome to the fourteenth volume of *Slideshow*, the annual journal of the Merle Kling Undergraduate Honors Fellowship Program! *Slideshow* showcases undergraduate humanities and humanistic social-science research from the senior Kling Fellows at Washington University’s Center for the Humanities. As humanities scholarship orients itself increasingly toward the public and the political, this issue of *Slideshow* offers a range of insights into the ways in which the twentieth century has shaped the narratives, the interactions, and the physical environment of the twenty-first century.

At the suggestion of our student editor, Hilah Kohen, we decided to organize this volume’s six articles in chronological order by subject; however, the challenges of determining exactly which date to assign a given article demonstrated how ably each of our senior Kling Fellows brought the past into dialogue with the present. We opted to assign Hilah Kohen’s exploration of missed connections in the network of Anglo-Russian literature to the 1920 composition date of poet Marina Tsvetaeva’s *Tsar-Devitsa*, but we could also have settled on its publication two years later, or on the 1927–28 composition and publication of Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*. We could even have looked forward to the 1971 and 2017 English translations of Tsvetaeva’s work (but not *Tsar-Devitsa*), which Kohen argues might have radically reshaped Woolf’s *Orlando* had they been available earlier. Similarly, Patrick Goff might have begun to analyze how the rise of radio affected Bertolt Brecht’s idea of “epic theater” with either the 1926 stage premiere or the 1928 radio adaptation of *Man Is Man* — but, as Goff points out, Brecht continued to rewrite the stage play until its final publication in 1954, while he adapted other plays and wrote some specifically for radio as late as 1940, responding to an ideological imperative to break down divisions between the performers and the audience that still resonates in performance today. Literary transformations, translations, and adaptations are not unique to any century, but Kohen and Goff make persuasive cases for why we are still reckoning with textual encounters from the 1920s nearly a century later.

Like Kohen and Goff, Noah Weber examines a literary work with a long afterlife. Lao She’s *Little Po’s Birthday* was published in 1931, but it received relatively little notice until its author became famous following the publication of another novel in 1937, and even then it mostly elicited puzzlement or dismissal as a failed children’s fantasy. Only in the 1990s did scholars begin to consider the colonial dynamics at work in Lao She’s portrayal of a Chinese family in multiethnic Singapore, laying the groundwork for Weber’s revisionist analysis of the work’s specifically Beijing-oriented references and dialect alongside its Singaporean setting.

Sophie Lombardo also tells a story that begins in the 1930s, when the rise of Hitler and the National Socialist Party resulted in the abrupt firing and timely emigration of German-Jewish lawyer Robert Kempner. On the U.S. side of the postwar Nuremberg trials, Kempner would eventually wield his insider knowledge against former government colleagues and supervisors, but he would also hoard documentation, amassing a significant private library that was broken up only well after his death in 1993, and leaving gaps in
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delighted to present this very timely—but also timeless—collection of articles.

It is rare, however, for a Kling cohort as large as ours to find even more common ground by studying a single time period. This year's volume of Slideshow offers a selective but wide-ranging history of the past one hundred years alone, beginning with Russian expressions of androgyny in the 1920s and concluding with the legacies of twentieth-century infrastructure development in present-day East St. Louis, Illinois. The articles in this volume are further united by their impulse to shape the canons that count in the United States as the archives of recent history. For example, Noah, Patrick, Nate, and I all highlight artistic texts that are not widely read or heard in the English-speaking world despite their significance in histories of ethnic diversity, new media, Latin American identity, and other issues that shaped the previous century. Sophie personally participated in an effort to restore lost archival materials from the Nuremberg Trials to their place in the historical record. Allie created a geographic record of transportation in East St. Louis where one did not previously exist. Together, these archives offer a new look at twentieth- and early twenty-first-century history that combines original documentation with a broad geographic scope.

In a time of rising nationalism, the way this volume uses the institutional context of an American university to shed light on histories that do not dominate American public discourse deserves special recognition. This year's Kling Fellows have written in English about texts written or performed in Mandarin, German, Spanish, and Russian—our wonderful proofreaders even requested extra time to check our various grammars and scripts. At the same time, each of us devoted careful attention to the ethical quandaries that come with bringing underrecognized texts into the purview of the American academy. Nate made extraordinary efforts to let recent Spanish-language research guide his study of Violeta Parra's music and art; Allie used her Kling project to collect data for future use by East St. Louis community leaders; Noah used his scrutiny of Mandarin hegemony in a novel by Lao She to rethink his own approach to translating that novel into English. Patrick's and Sophie's articles even tackle explicitly the ethical tangles that arise when a single authority figure—whether a playwright, a Nuremberg lawyer, or a scholar like one of us—attempts to present a controversial narrative to a broader audience. Taken together, these articles do not just give their readers an opportunity to think anew about recent history; this year's Slideshow asks its readers to question the forces that shape how they come to know about that history in the first place.

My own research has benefited greatly from all of that critical thinking, and I know each of us will take what we have learned from each other as Kling Fellows for-
ward into careers even more impactful and interdisciplinary than our research itself. I hope you will join us in appreciating these remarkable articles and reflecting on their insights into histories and texts that continue to influence human life.

Hilah Kohen
Editor of Slideshow 2018

A Tale of Two Androgynes:
Missed Connections in the Anglophone Canon of Russian Literature

Hilah Kohen

The canon of Russian literature that is widely read in English today began to form only in the first three decades of the twentieth century. This article grapples with the exclusion of contemporary writers from that process of canon formation, which heavily favored writings of the nineteenth century. I reconstruct aesthetic and political relations between the writings of Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) and her influential British contemporary Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) to demonstrate that Tsvetaeva’s absence in British modernist criticism conceals a deeper intellectual kinship. Though neither writer appears to have learned of the other’s existence, Tsvetaeva’s narrative poem Tsar-Devitsa (The Tsar-Maiden) extensively develops an idea that appears in Woolf’s Orlando as whimsical speculation: the Russian language contains distinctive possibilities for the poetic expression of androgyny. Because social and political forces kept the two writers from discovering each other’s work, the task of introducing Tsvetaeva to Anglophone audiences now lies with present-day teachers, scholars, and translators.

— Гляжу, гляжу, и невдомек:
Девица—где, и где дружок?

Ты расплетись, верёвьице!
Где юноша? Где девица?

I stare, I stare, but I can’t see:  
Where does he turn into she?

Untangle, braid, and tell the truth!  
Which is the maiden? Which the youth?

Marina Tsvetaeva, Tsar-Devitsa (The Tsar-Maiden)

The Search

The writings of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) point to diverse objects of literary desire. As Woolf wrote and read, she sought expressions of female kinship, androgyny of thought, and a poetics capable of grappling with what she saw as an emerging European modernity. Woolf’s pursuit of these desires began with past and present literatures but ultimately led her to believe that the things she wanted did not yet exist. In “Poetry, Fiction and the Future,” Woolf asks her readers to take for granted
that all poetry of the past has already capitulated to a new modern era, leaving room only for some as-yet-unknown form.1 In A Room of One’s Own, she plays at discovering a book called Life’s Adventures in which, “perhaps for the first time in literature,” one woman likes another and men are beside the point—but the text she ‘discovers’ is fictional.2 Its invention therefore expresses not a triumphant discovery but a lament that such a tale does not yet exist along with a hope that it will soon be written.3 Mary Carmichael, the fictional author of Woolf’s fictional novel, was in fact just one member of an entire cohort of imagined female artists who appear in Woolf’s oeuvre. Echoing Carmichael, Lily Briscoe of To the Lighthouse and Miss La Trobe of Between the Acts attempt feats of painting and dramaturgy that defy the expectations of a masculine, heteronormative world. Again and again, Woolf wrote as though art that some might today call feminist or queer still required inventing in early twentieth-century Britain. A poetry of the future, unquestioned female affection, and an “androgyneous” or “man–womanly” mind were, at least from Woolf’s vantage point, a milestone that already existing English-language literature had not managed to reach.4

Scholarly works by Rebecca Beasley, Claire Davison, and others have emphasized in recent years that Woolf and her contemporaries often searched for what could not be found in existing English literature by reading and producing literature in translation.5 In 1922, Woolf proposed Russian literature in particular as an alternative heritage for the Georgian generation of British writers: “There’s not a single living writer (English) I respect,” she wrote to Janet Case, “so you see, I have to read the Russians.”6 In this proposal, Russian literature enters Woolf’s set of literary desires. Just as she finds androgyny or truly modern poetry to be absent from contemporary English literature and worthy of that literature’s pursuit, Woolf insists that she must read in search of a Russian point of view—or, more precisely, that she must turn to a Russian point of view in search of the many modes of expression that English literature lacks.

Woolf’s letter to Janet Case portrays Russian literature as a source of ideas that are new even to the very newest English literature: she turns to “the Russians” to accomplish what “living” English writers have been unable to do. It is odd, then, that the Russians whose work Woolf regularly read and discussed—Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910), and Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)—were all dead well before she published her first novel (The Voyage Out, 1915). Woolf admired these writers for, among other accomplishments, their telescopic scrutiny of historical events and their ability to put the depths of the human soul into words, but they did not contribute to Woolf’s search for androgynous, modernist, or feminist writing.7 Tolstoy, in fact, had “a dash too much of the male” in him for Woolf’s liking.8

Beyond the reach of Virginia Woolf’s awareness, however, toiled living writers who expressed not only Russianness but also female kinship, androgyny, and poetic innovation. This article places Woolf’s writing in relation with the work of one of those writers: the renowned poet Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941). Though neither Tsvetaeva nor Woolf appears to have learned of the other’s existence, both social and textual relationships connected their writings. Tsvetaeva’s narrative poem Tzar-Devitsa, or The Tzar-Maiden, extensively develops an idea that appears in Woolf’s Orlando: A Biography as whimsical speculation: the Russian language contains distinctive possibilities for the poetic expression of androgyny. Tzar-Devitsa never appeared in English translation despite its resonances with Woolf’s prose; therefore, the task of this article is to demonstrate how Tsvetaeva’s writing can enrich Anglophone interactions with Russian literature even against the background of Tsvetaeva’s historical non-reception in English.9

This article illuminates the consequences of Tsvetaeva’s omission from the Anglophone canon rather than providing a detailed chronicle of that omission. Nonetheless, my analysis rests on the premise that Tsvetaeva’s reputation did not reach the ears of Woolf and her contemporaries for reasons largely disconnected from the form and content of the texts Tsvetaeva wrote. She and Woolf shared a number of mutual friends and acquaintances, but the particular nature of their relationships with those people—a factor often overlooked in the study of literary circulation—intertwined with a number of broader sociopolitical forces to prevent the two writers

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1 I use the terms “modernism” and “modernity” to refer to Woolf’s conceptions of the root word “modern”. While Woolf frequently described her generation using a vocabulary of “the modern,” her Russian contemporaries rarely employed words like modernizm or modernity to describe their era.
4 This is not to say that such narratives actually did not exist in English; Woolf’s suggestion to the contrary is rhetorical. One might even argue that Mrs. Dalloway published four years before A Room of One’s Own, was just such a story: it portrays an affectionate relationship between Clarissa Dalloway and her childhood friend Sally Seton. However, the feminine kinship in A Room of One’s Own is more certain and less complicated by the presence of men who compete for the women’s affection. In A Room of One’s Own, Woolf imagines a writer who dares to state simply, “Chloe liked Olivia,” while her own Clarissa Dalloway asks with less certainty of her own relationship, “Had not that, after all, been love?” Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, 139–147.
6 Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, 170–182.
8 Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, 180.
9 None of Tsvetaeva’s writing was published in English translation until the 1970s, well after her death.
from colliding without regard for the merits of their writing. As a result, the task of introducing Tsvetaeva to Anglophone audiences now lies with more recent teachers, scholars, and translators. This is a task well worth undertaking, and not only for the unbelievably intricate soundscapes Tsvetaeva creates. Tsvetaeva’s oeuvre makes clear that Russophone traditions of nonbinary gender expression, like many similar traditions that originate outside Western Europe, often consider intersections between gender and nationality with far more nuance than their Western counterparts allow.

This research is the first extended attempt to grapple with what Rebecca Beasley and Philip Ross Bullock have described as a bewildering gap in the history of Russian literature in translation: not only Tsvetaeva but every Russophone writer of the early twentieth century has been excluded from the Anglophone canon of Russian literature.10 That canon remains largely confined to the late nineteenth century even though the early twentieth century, a period of incredible productivity in the Russian arts, is precisely when the canon of Russian literature in English translation began to form.11 Many works of Russian literature contemporary to the early twentieth century were in fact translated and published in English, contrary to the assumptions of existing scholarship. It is their lack of prominence in English relative to their canonical reputation in Russian that should draw scholarly interest.12 To examine the obscurity these works hold for English-speaking readers, I search not for alternative histories (the connections writers could have made in the English language) but for the social and textual relationships that did form between contemporary Russian and British writers. By concentrating most extensively on a textual relationship—one between Orlando and Tsar-Devitsa—this analysis ultimately demonstrates the relevance of Russophone texts for audiences in literary communities that may seem distant from those texts.

10 Beasley and Bullock accurately predict that future research will uncover numerous links between contemporary British and Russian writers in the early twentieth century.


12 Although this article will only address the case of a single writer, it is informed by a wider range of historical and literary readings involving Russian writers who achieved various levels of publicity among Anglophone readers in their lifetimes. I selected those readings from published and unpublished materials in several archives and libraries in Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, most notably the Russian State Archive of Literature and the Arts (RGALI), the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IRLI RAN), the archive of Maxim Gorky in the Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMLI RAN), and the Leeds Russian Archive (LRA). I also turned often to Olga Kuzina, Russkie v Anglii. Russkaia emigratsiia v kontekste russko-angliiskikh literaturnykh sviazei v pervoi polovine XX veka (Moscow: Nasedie, 1997) and other Russian-language scholarship.

Sasha

Orlando: A Biography is an extravagantly stylized reimagining of the family history of Vita Sackville-West (1892-1962), a poet and novelist whose relationship with Woolf is legendary in British LGBTQ history. Orlando begins in the Elizabethan era and ends in the late 1920s; its protagonist begins as a young boy and ends as an ageless woman. Somewhere in between—in the winter of 1608, to be precise—a still-male Orlando meets the beautiful but mysterious Muscovite princess Sasha. The couple’s passionate affair yields a plan for elopement, but one that Sasha does not follow; the princess’s departure for Moscow leaves Orlando to mourn his first true love for years and remember it for the rest of his and her life. In Sasha, Woolf synthesizes many of the literary yearnings she expresses separately elsewhere; Sasha is a Russian, androgynous, female object of a British poet’s desire. Nonetheless, Sasha is a minor character, and it is easy to confine her role in Orlando to that of the title character’s first heartbreak.

My reading attempts to decentralize Orlando—to ask what in him makes Sasha seem so cruel—and thus make space for readers to ask who Sasha is in her own right. This reading reveals that the interpersonal barrier separating the two lovers (Sasha’s betrayal of Orlando) plays a much smaller role in their separation than a broader intercultural gap (the distance between Orlando’s perceptions of Englishness and Russianness). Therefore, a reader who hopes to pursue the concept of Russian androgyny beyond its limited portrayal in Orlando should begin by leaving an English point of view for a Russian one.

Sasha’s love is cruel not because she ultimately withdraws it but because she continuously conceals its limits. When she meets Orlando’s outbursts of poetic affection with laughter or silence, she does not reject his effusions outright; she merely does not affirm them.13 When Orlando spies her making love with a Russian sailor below deck after leaving Orlando himself onshore, she denies his accusations, “now cajoling, now denouncing, so that he came to doubt what he had seen.”14 Most fatally, when she and Orlando plan to elope, Sasha leaves no sign to her lover that she does not intend to keep their rendezvous. Instead, without warning, her equipage sets sail for Moscow. As a result, throughout their affair, what tortures Orlando is not Sasha’s treachery (of which he is not yet aware) but his own fear of what might lie behind her opacity, or perhaps of her opacity itself:

What, then, did she hide from him? The doubt underlying the tremendous force of his feelings was like a quicksand beneath a monument which shifts suddenly and makes the whole pile shake.15

Sasha’s internal world seems impermeable to her lover: it reveals nothing of the rationale (or lack thereof) that underlies its decisions, leaving the young Orlando, whose emotional life depends entirely on that world, in a state of limbo he can do

14 Ibid., 51.
15 Ibid., 49.
Sasha’s concealment of her treachery, however, can have very little purchase with readers of Orlando. The first indication that she will eventually betray him arises at the very moment they begin to speak (which they do in French, a language the surrounding English do not understand). “Perhaps,” muses Orlando’s ‘biographer,’ “it would have been better for him had he never learnt that tongue; never answered that voice; never followed the light of those eyes...” Even Orlando’s nickname for the Princess Marousha Stanilovska Dagmar Natasha Ilia Romanovitch hints quite clearly at their fate despite Orlando’s apparent obliviousness to that fact: “Sasha” was a white Russian fox of his, “a creature soft as snow, but with teeth of steel, which bit him so savagely that his father had it killed.” To Woolf’s readers, then, Sasha’s inscrutable veneer is not really so opaque, and her betrayal comes as no surprise. Her acts of concealment must fulfill a different function for their readers. One of those functions is to increase the dramatic irony of Orlando’s tale: because readers know his doubts will ultimately be confirmed, their investment in his wholehearted love becomes all the more painful. However, reading Sasha as a tragic villain tells the reader very little about Sasha herself. Beyond its effect on Orlando, Sasha’s secrecy can be read as a sign in of its own—a sign not of her infidelity, which she could have achieved without appearing to hide her ambivalence from Orlando, but a sign of something else about her.

Orlando’s thoughts as well as those of his biographer repeatedly indicate that this ‘something else’ is a vast, insurmountable cultural difference between Orlando and the biographer on one hand and Sasha on the other. Though all three characters share a literal lingua franca, Orlando’s attempts to communicate his idea of Sasha to her in French seem to fail him (however spectacular they may seem in English ‘translation’). Orlando flounders: “She was like a fox, or an olive tree; like the waves of the sea when you look down upon them from a height; [...]—like nothing he had seen or known in England. Ransack the language as he might, words failed him. He wanted another landscape, and another tongue.” Orlando’s ignorance of Russian prevents him from conveying the essential core of his love to Sasha, and their miscommunications are therefore not due exclusively to Sasha’s reticence. Likewise, Orlando presumes that it is “the fault of the Russian consonants” and not the fault of Sasha herself that her farewell to the Russian sailor draws Orlando’s thoughts to her: “something else in her [...] something peasant-born”—that is, to her potential distance from his own noble birth.” Orlando draws the conclusion that a language barrier should correspond to a broader cultural one often in his relationship with Sasha. For example, Orlando refrains from asking Sasha about her family background because he thinks he is saving her from cultural embarrassment—“he had heard that the women in Muscovy wear beards and the men are covered with fur from the waist down.” Though Orlando cannot be sure that this cultural gap actually exists, his preemptive attempt to avoid discussing it constructs another verbal barrier between himself and his lover. As a result of all these verbal silences and of the fact that Woolf’s narrator-biographer is omniscient relative to Orlando but not to Sasha, Orlando’s biographer can give the reader insight into Sasha’s intentions but can understand very little about Sasha’s motives. In Woolf’s text, the reason for this barrier to the narrator’s understanding—and therefore to the reader’s as well—is not that Sasha hides her motives too effectively; it is that no reader can understand Sasha’s Russian background if that reader is reading from an English point of view.

To say that Sasha is exotic is, of course, unsurprising, but it is altogether different to say that Orlando attributes both her infidelity and her secrecy about it not to her but to her Russianess—or, more accurately, to the distance between her Russianness and the presumed Englishness of the protagonist-biographer-reader collective that observes her. In other words, Orlando presents Sasha to its reader as an unreadable persona thanks to the distance between Russianness and Englishness in general. In Orlando, that national difference spawns a variety of other gaps in understanding. Relative to Englishness, Russianness is lower-class (Orlando spies Sasha gnawing a candle and immediately suspects peasant origins), masculine (do Russian women have beards?), and animalistic (did Sasha grow up in a cow shed, born to a father half-covered in fur?). As these barriers compound, they make any national distance between Sasha and Woolf’s reader appear to encompass even more of the reader’s identity, from her gender to her species.

But even as the narrator of Orlando represents Russia as another land and England as home, readers of Woolf’s novel can attempt to understand Sasha beyond her exoticism and inscrutability. Within the confines of Woolf’s text, this means asking not how Sasha thinks but what Sasha stands for, and one of the primary abstractions she signifies is Russian femaleness (a combination of national origin and physical sex that, even in Orlando, does not always align with social concepts of the feminine). This signification seems to compose Sasha’s entire being: neither Orlando nor his biographer ever distinguishes her from other Russians by anything other than her physical femaleness or from other women by anything other than her masculine Russianness. Woolf based Sasha’s character on Violet Trefusi, who was English, but Sasha’s physical and behavioral characteristics, whether presented as fact or imagined by Orlando, are largely traceable to stereotypes about Russians that were widely known in England. In 1859, fully seventy years before Orlando’s publication, Peter Lund Simmons wrote in his international culinary history The Curiosities of Food that Londoners “hear frequent jokes of the partiality of the Russians for tallow candles”; when Woolf wrote of Sasha’s candle-gnawing, that behavior was already

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16 Ibid., 41.
17 Ibid., 44.
18 Ibid., 47.
19 Ibid., 52.
20 Ibid., 48.
long recognized not just as a stereotype but as British satire.\textsuperscript{22} Orlando's suspicions that Sasha's countrymen have fur echo even older British perceptions of Russians and Russia itself as wild or beastly.\textsuperscript{23} This conception was so durable that even Jane Ellen Harrison, Britain's first female career academic and a steadfast supporter of Russophone arts, perpetuated it. She wrote in 1914 that "what ever wild beast Russia makes of herself," that nation's spiritual accomplishments were still worth defending.\textsuperscript{24} In Sasha's character, as British stereotypes of Russian culture abound, Russian femaleness subsumes Violet Trefusis and not the other way around.

If androgynous Russian femaleness is the construct through which a reader of Orlando might grasp what Sasha means, then there is no need to speculate about the nature of the Russian woman using English-language sources alone. Instead, my analysis invites readers of Orlando to drop the novel's assumption that they have no access to the Russian language: regardless of their own language skills, the availability of translation and scholarship makes that assumption false. The remainder of this article seeks out a broader scope of fictions about Russian femaleness both in Russian and in English.

The “Russian Craze” and the Silver Age

'Russianness' was, after all, ever more an entity of its own in Woolf's lifetime—not just in Russia (where questions about the essence of the Russian nation had been simmering for centuries and boiling in earnest since Napoleon's invasion of the country in 1812) but in the English-speaking world as well. Rebecca Beasley, Philip Ross Bullock, Caroline Maclean, and Michael Hughes, among others, have recently described the "Russian fever" that swept Britain from 1910 to 1925 not only as the period in which the first wave of literary translations from Russian emerged in English or as the era of the incredibly popular Ballets Russes but, before all, as a chance for British readers to search for "the Russian soul."\textsuperscript{25} As participants in this search from Woolf herself to contemporaries as diverse as D.H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, and H.G. Wells along with the broader reading public devoted Russian art, their pronouncements about "the Russian soul" and its representatives were consistently both passionate and vague: they repeatedly affirmed the existence and mystery of this essence of Russianness rather than attempting to describe any specific aspect of Russian culture.\textsuperscript{26} As a result, the Russian soul became a highly mobile signifier. The only constant in its significance was that "Russia" was not so much a state as a national spirit open to both allies' and enemies' political interpretation. In this context, Sasha is not simply a Russian woman; she is Woolf's literary contribution to a broader contemporary debate about how the "Muscovitish temperament" operated.\textsuperscript{27}

Absent from nearly all of those accounts is the "Russian point of view" Woolf strove to grasp in her seminal essay of that name. Indeed, when Roger Fry voiced to the eminent Russian literary critic D.S. Mirsky his suspicion that all Russians "suffer from hypertrophy of the soul," Mirsky did not even accept his premise, saying, "No, I don't know at all that I have a soul."\textsuperscript{28} Had British participants in "Russian fever" been inclined to let Mirsky and the many other Russian figures in their midst shape discussions of their own souls, Britain imaginations of Russia (of which Sasha is just one) might have taken a very different form. British writers chose to describe Russian femininity in particular without turning to the explosive dialectics on that topic that were simultaneously shaking Russian culture itself.

The problem of zhenshtvennost', or femininity, was omnipresent in the Russian literary world at the turn of the twentieth century. Many scholars now refer to that period as the Silver Age of Russian literature thanks to the proliferation of literary figures who rose beginning in the 1890s to challenge, build on, or shatter Russian literary norms of the nineteenth century. The various female archetypes that spread through the resulting network of movements and social circles included many who were decidedly unlike Sasha. Aleksandr Blok's Verses about the Beautiful Lady portrayed the eternal feminine in the form of a divine, untouchable figure who, in Blok's own spiritual crisis, would acquire an edge of corruption and cruelty. In Anna Akhmatova's early works, a female narrator often appears as a poetic witness, whether to her own lost love, to the ravages of war, or to the tragedies of her fellow literary heroines.\textsuperscript{29} The futurist poets Aleksei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov took an entirely different route and wrote that the literary demands of their critics (clarity, cleanliness, honesty, tenderness) were "more applicable to woman as such than to...

\textsuperscript{22} Peter Lund Simmonds, The Curiosities of Food: Or the Dainties and Delicacies of Different Nations Obtained from the Animal Kingdom (London: R. Bentley, 1859), 26.
\textsuperscript{24} Harrison Papers 1/1/11, Newnham College Archive, Cambridge University. Cited in Marilyn Schwinn Smith, “‘Bergsonian Poetics’ and the Beast: Jane Harrison’s Translations from the Russian,” Translation and Literature 20, no. 3 (November 2011): 319.
\textsuperscript{25} Or, in some variations, the Slav or Slavic soul.
\textsuperscript{26} The historian Winifred Stephens hoped her anthology, itself entitled The Soul of Russia, would familiarize readers with Russia’s "noble, but sometimes untoward soul"; D.H. Lawrence raged at "these self-divided, gamin-religious Russians who are so absorbedly concerned with their own dirty linen and their own piebald souls." Neither makes an effort to describe the Russian soul beyond stating that it is incongruous.
\textsuperscript{27} Beasley and Bullock, Russia in Britain, 1880-1940, 5.
\textsuperscript{28} Gerald Stanton Smith, D.S. Mirsky: A Russian-English Life, 1890-1939 (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 102. As Maclean notes, "It was perhaps Fry and his contemporaries who were suffering from hypertrophy of the Russian soul." Maclean, The Vogue for Russia, 9.
language as such,” insisting that femininity was not only a stable category (from which Sasha would, by all appearances, be excluded) but also a category without any literary merit. These conceptions of the feminine can be read in conversation with Sasha’s character because they, too, respond not to the question of what ‘woman’ is in some acutal sense but rather to the question of what the sign ‘woman’ can mean after her conception and evolution in the Russian language as zhenschchina (woman), dama (lady), devushka (young woman), or devushchina (maiden). The range of contradictory answers to that question circulating within Russia itself immediately destabilizes the stereotype of an animalistic, androgynous, and above all incomprehensible Russian soul that Sasha represents in Woolf’s contemporary British context. Within “British Russophilia,” Sasha is in line with a consensus about the Russian essence; in the history of Russian literature, that consensus yields to a cacophony in which Sasha’s role is difficult to decipher.

Nonetheless, a further glimpse reveals a number of potential sisters to Sasha at the center of Russia’s literary scene. The eminent poet, short story writer, memoirist, and critic Zinaida Gippius often ran her St. Petersburg salon wearing a close-cut men’s suit (see Figure 1). On occasion, she wrote verses in the masculine voice, a tendency that shocked contemporary critics; her stories coined terms like zhenskost’ (“femaleness”) that subtly refuted any inherent connection between the female and the traditionally feminine. Another constant presence in Anna Akhmatova’s poetry, the muse, travels widely, seeking lovers of all nationalities and genders, an inseminator of ideas who, like Sasha, is too heartless to reveal the motives for her visits. Teffi (the pseudonym of Nadezhda Aleksandrovna Lokhvitskaya) is still known for her sharp satirical prose thanks in large part to her cryptic “Demonic Woman,” whose habits of dress subvert feminine norms and whose unruly behavior leaves Teffi’s imagined audience asking “What for? What for?” (“K чему?”) after every paragraph. These writers provide a group of fictional and nonfictional personae among whom readers of Orlando can include Sasha and get to know her in a new, less English-centric light. Together with Sasha, these writers ask not how Russianness conceals and deceives but how it reveals possibilities of “femaleness” that lie outside traditional European femininities.

31 Olga Matich, Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia’s Fin-de-Siècle (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 305 n. 12.
34 If Woolf knew of any of these writers at all, she almost certainly did not know of their interest in androgyny. She never mentions any of them in her writings.
35 Woolf, Orlando, 37. Russian royal fashion of the early seventeenth century was in fact differentiated by sex, though it would have been very difficult for Sasha to skate in the heavy Byzantine-style gown that would likely have been allotted to her.
36 Ibid., 48.
37 Virginia Woolf did have some idea of those sounds. She eagerly attended the Ballets Russes, which included Russian operas. She also had a number of émigré friends, and her attempt to learn Russian from S.S. Koteliansky stopped early but did include the pronunciation of Russian letters.
39 Orlando constructs Russianness as an important vehicle for androgyny, but asking about the potential
mechanisms of such a vehicle requires reading other texts as well.

The Tsar-Devitsa

Each of the texts associated with Sasha’s Russian 'sisters' provides a highly productive example of how Russian women writers have connected their culture with androgynous identities and performances. However, as a central representative, I will turn to a single fictional Russian androgyne: the Tsar-Devitsa, or Tsar-Maiden, a creation of the poet Marina Tsvetaeva. The Tsar-Devitsa is the protagonist of an eponymous poema, or narrative poem, that Tsvetaeva wrote in 1920 and published two years later in Moscow and Berlin. Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva published her first collection of poetry at the age of eighteen and wrote prolifically for the next thirty years, steadily gaining a reputation for her profound musicality and her autonomy from the various vogues of her literary age (symbolism, acmeism, futurism). A passionate opponent of the Bolshevik Revolution, she emigrated to Prague with her family in 1922 and settled in Paris in 1925. Tsvetaeva’s biography has often drawn comparisons to Virginia Woolf’s: each woman lost her mother at the age of thirteen, had an intellectually productive marriage doted with equally intellectually productive affairs, wrote one of her most famous works thanks to a relationship with another woman writer, struggled with mental illness throughout her life, and committed suicide in 1941. One can only speculate about the significance of many of those parallels, but the textual similarities between Sasha and the Tsar-Devitsa provide more stable ground for analysis.

The Tsar-Devitsa finds her roots in a Russian folk tale (or skazka) that inspired several literary adaptations before Tsvetaeva’s, but Tsvetaeva’s Tsar-Devitsa has become the character’s most widely read resurrection. In the poema, the Tsar-Devitsa resists any suggestion of marriage until she hears of a young tsarevich (a Russian prince) who is similarly averse to the constraints of traditional gender roles. In her pursuit of the Tsarevich, the Tsar-Devitsa encounters a rival in the young man’s stepmother, who has no affection for her much older husband, the Tsar, but is madly in love with the Tsarevich, her stepson. The stepmother, desperate to spend a single night with the Tsarevich, turns to his elderly tutor, who demands sexual favors in exchange for the aid of his abilities in dark magic. Using an enchanted pin, the tutor ensures that the Tsarevich falls into a deep sleep each time the Tsar-Devitsa comes to court him. The poema develops as the Tsar-Devitsa and the stepmother take turns seducing their target, each surmounting increasingly dangerous magical and interpersonal barriers.

The poema boasts a relatively simple overall structure: after an untitled introductory passage, four nights (from “The First Night” to “The Final Night”) of the stepmother’s seduction alternate with three “encounters” (from “The First Encounter” to “The Third and Final Encounter”) between the Tsar-Devitsa and the sleeping Tsarevich, all followed by a closing section (“The End”). On a smaller scale, however, the poema’s form is playfully complicated. It is divided into sections ranging from several stanzas to several pages in length, and while each section is confined to one or two rhythmic and metrical structures, those motifs vary widely and often unpredictably. This formal rollercoaster supplements a kind of narrative instability in Tsar-Devitsa: a new section may or may not signal the emergence of a new narrator, and the identity of that narrator may not emerge until much later in the section. For example, as the Tsar-Devitsa guides her ship toward the Tsarevich’s homeland, a dialogue occurs between two voices shocked at her marvelous appearance. Until the final couplet of that section, no external narrator emerges; then, suddenly, those lines reveal the identities of the speakers: “Thus, having tea with the day before yesterday’s tail, / This argument came to a close for a shark and a whale.” These two unexpected interlocutors never again emerge in the poema. Although Tsar-Devitsa takes place in the same vaguely medieval heterochronia as most Russian folk tales, its formal experimentation seems to answer Virginia Woolf’s call in “Poetry, Fiction and the Future” for a poetics of the “modern” world. Tsvetaeva’s poema is an attempt to grapple with the inexplicable and the absurd through a structured, intentional chaos of poetic writing.

But what about the Tsar-Devitsa herself? What about her could illuminate the ties between ‘Russianness’ and androgyne toward which Orlando gestures? In two recent articles, Veronika Zuseva-Ozkan has thoroughly illustrated the folkloric and historical motifs Tsvetaeva employs to construct androgynous characters in Tsar-Devitsa and elsewhere, but those motifs are international in scope and therefore tend not to illuminate a connection between androgyne and Russian culture. Zuseva-Ozkan’s analysis builds upon a 1979 article by Anya Kroth that

38 Citations of this work are taken from Marina Tsvetaeva, Tsar-Devitsa: Poema-skazka, in Sobranie sochinenii v sei tomakh. Tom 3. Poemsy, dramaticheskie proizvedeniya (Moscow: Ellis Lek, 1994), 190–269.
39 I will generally refer to this character as “the Tsar-Devitsa.” “Tsar-Devitsa” is a title (like “Queen” or “Presiden”) rather than a name and therefore usually requires a leading article in English. I have opted for a partial transliteration rather than a translation of that title because “the Tsar-Maiden,” while more user-friendly, would pose major rhythmic problems for translating Tsvetaeva’s text. In my writing, the title of this poema appears as a direct transliteration from the Russian Цар-Девица and is therefore written without an article.
40 In Russian, the poema is a genre separate from short poems occupying no more than several stanzas (each of these is a stikhotvorenie), but it also tends to be more compact in topic and length than epic poetry (epo). Each publication of Tsar-Devitsa, for example, is approximately one hundred pages long.
41 The subtitle of Tsar-Devitsa is actually Poema-skazka, a narrative poem-folk tale, but I will refer to it as a poema for the sake of concision.
42 «Так, причавившись позавчерашним хвостом, / Спор-заводили беседу акула с китом». Tsvetaeva, Tsar-Devitsa, 205.
provides a textual study of passages from Tsiar-Devitsa that describe the androgyny of certain characters explicitly, as in the epigraph to this article, but those descriptions also have little to do with the location or cultural background of the poem’s plot. In the subsequent pages, I argue that Tsvetaya expresses and explores the androgyny of her characters using features that are not only textual but specific to the Russian language—its grammar, its sound, its poetic conventions, and its history. In other words, while Sasha’s Russian identity emerges in a range of stereotypes, what is concretely Russian about the Tsiar-Devitsa is that she speaks Russian. Although an analysis of the Tsiar-Devitsa’s Russophone androgyny will not help readers parse Sasha’s supposedly androgynous Russian dress or the cultural significance of her unusually large hands, Tsiar-Devitsa does reveal new ways to think about Sasha’s rough consonants and the significance of the language barrier that stands between her and Orlando. The Tsiar-Devitsa displays Sasha’s consonants in practical use as well as a plethora of other androgynies specific to the Russian language whose existence Woolf may not even have suspected.

Even the word “Tsiar-Devitsa” is a conglomerate of the masculine and the feminine. It is a declaration that a language as grammatically gendered as Russian, likely as it may be to spur strict adherence to a gender binary among some of its users, also possesses an unusual freedom to pursue and express various mixtures of gender. A reader’s encounter with the phrase “Tsiar-Devitsa,” the title of Tsvetaya’s poema, is also her first source of impressions about the Tsiar-Devitsa as a character. This encounter in itself sparks a relationship between Tsiar-Devitsa and Orlando: it is much like Orlando’s first sighting of Sasha. As the as-yet-unknown Muscovite skates toward Orlando on the frozen Thames, he becomes convinced that he is male; in fact, he is “ready to tear his hair with vexation that the person was of his own sex, and thus all embraces were out of the question.” Meanwhile, when a reader picks up a copy of Tsvetaya’s long poem, the first syllable to meet her eyes (“tser”) brings similar suspicions. “Tsar” is not simply a gendered word—it is a monogendered one. Unlike a number of Russian words that are grammatically masculine and have feminine counterparts (pisatel’), “writer,” for example, which mirrors the feminine pisatel’nitsa) but can still refer to women nonetheless, a “tsar” is, both grammatically and semantically, decidedly male. “A devitsa,” likewise, is decidedly female. As a first-time reader of Tsvetaya’s poema takes in the full paradox of “Tsiar-Devitsa,” her attempt to grapple with the androgyny of that word mirrors Orlando’s attempt to resolve the Russian figure’s masculine and feminine characteristics as he/she approaches for the first time: “Legs, hands, carriage, were like a boy’s, but no boy ever had a mouth like that; no boy had those breasts; no boy had those eyes which looked as if they had been fished from the bottom of the sea.” In the case of Tsvetaya’s poema, the element unifying the masculine and the feminine is not Sasha’s singular body but the hyphen connecting the Tsiar-Devitsa’s masculine and feminine linguistic units. In Russian, this makes for an unusual creation born of an entirely normal grammatical form, as the hyphen is a ubiquitous hybridizer in that language. English speakers might gain a sense of how idiomatic that hyphenated structure is by thinking of “Tsiar-Devitsa” as a kind of superhero title: anglicized, it becomes “King-Girl,” an incongruity akin to “Spiderman.” As readers ask what new union that hyphen, a particularity of Russian grammar, might bring into existence, new possibilities of androgynous tsars and maidens can enter their vocabulary just as Sasha’s appearance prefigures Orlando’s later experiences of mixed and impermanent gender identities.

The Deva-Tsar

The term “Tsiar-Devitsa” appears in every version of that character’s tale, but Tsvetaya’s retelling takes its androgynous potential to new heights. In her poema, the Tsiar-Devitsa’s title is modular: circumstances of plot, rhyme, and meter twist it into a series of variations with an even broader range of gendered possibilities than their theme.

Tsiar-Devitsa contains at least fifteen unique variations or puns on the phrase “Tsiar-Devitsa,” a few of which are repeated, while the phrase “Tsiar-Devitsa” in its original form appears only ten times, one of which is in the poema’s title. “Tsiar-Devitsa,” then, is the ‘true’ or ‘fundamental’ name of Tsvetaya’s character only insofar as it maintains that character’s intertextual connection with other iterations

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44 Kroth does make one comment about the Tsiar-Devitsa’s grammatically masculine appellatives, a trait that is possible only in heavily gendered languages like Russian. Anya M. Kroth, “Androgyny as an Exemplary Feature of Marina Tsvetaya’s Dichotomous Poetic Vision,” Slavic Review 38, no. 4 (1979): 563–82.

45 The study of “Russophone literature,” which has been applied widely to contemporary Israeli Russian-language works and which Naomi Caffe proposed in a 2013 dissertation as a more general framework in the line of Francophone and Sinophone literature, would find a fitting subject in Tsvetaya’s poema.

46 Woolf, Orlando, 38.

47 “Tsar” even has a feminine equivalent (“tsaritsa”) that can carry a legally and religiously equal status (as it did, for example, when it described Catherine the Great) but which Tsvetaya does not use to describe her protagonist. Tsvetaya’s rhythmic and aural manipulation of the term “Tsiar-Devitsa” throughout her poema is all the more significant for the traditional tie between “devitsa” and “tsaritsa” in Russian poetry. For example, Aleksandr Pushkin’s The Tale of Tsar Saltan opens with an extended play on the rhyming between those two words.

48 Woolf, Orlando, 38.

49 While hyphenated adjectives or adjectival nouns in English are often limited to nationality or ethnicity (e.g., “Indian-American”), Russian hyphenated adjectives can indicate many types of mixed qualities. For example, the “comparative-historical method” (сравнительно-исторический метод) is a cornerstone of Russian philology. The Russian hyphen also forms mixed-identity nouns. For example, a student of medicine is a “student-медик” (студент-медик), and an athlete who also works as a coach is a “sportsman-instructor” (спортсмен-инструктор). This is the grammatical structure of “Tsiar-Devitsa.”
of a single folk tale. In Tsvetaeva’s text, the protagonist can just as truthfully be called the “Devta-Tsar” (as she is named nine times), the “Tsar-Tempest” (Tsar-Buria, as she is named twice), or a host of other titles. The most frequent among these variations do not replace the two basic elements of “Tsar-Devitsa” but instead exclude one or reposition both (as in “Deva-Tsar” or simply “Tsar”). These modifications take advantage of the usage of hyphens in the Russian language in even more detailed ways than Tsvetaeva’s title does: they play especially often on the specific semantic purpose of each side of the hyphen and on the metrical emphases hyphenated words receive in Tsvetaeva’s verse. In the Tsar-Devitsa’s dual-gendered title, each of these variations represents a unique mixture of the masculine and the feminine, and the presence of all those mixtures in a single character’s identity allows her to embody a concept of gender that is both nonbinary and fluid. This wordplay culminates in two passages that explicitly place the Tsar-Devitsa in two imagined communities simultaneously—one of men and one of women.

The Tsar-Devitsa’s feminality does not prevent her from being an androgyne. There is little question that the Tsar-Devitsa considers herself female; all the characters who are personally familiar with her as well as the Tsar-Devitsa herself use feminine pronouns and verbs when they speak about her. However, most authors of Tsvetaeva’s poems have assumed that this confines the Tsar-Devitsa to the status of a woman warrior, an Amazon rather than an androgyne. Visual representations of the Tsar-Devitsa figure from ballet costumes to candy wrappers tend to take that assumption even further, equating “tsar-devitsa” with “tsaritsa” or “tsarevna” and depicting a typical Russian princess in typical feminine dress (see Figure 2). Not only do Tsvetaeva’s visual cues diverge from these more traditional ones (her text emphasizes, for example, that the stepmother wears braids while the Tsar-Devitsa does not); her variations on “Tsar-Devitsa” give the word “Tsar” a role so prominent that it actually calls the Tsar-Devitsa’s gender into question.

In Tsvetaeva’s poem, the Tsar-Devitsa is on more than one occasion discussed primarily as a “tsar” and identified to some degree as a man in the process. The Tsar-Devitsa’s nanny begins to address her former charge and current ruler by crying, “Oh, my tsar, my Tsar-Devitsa!” using the masculine form of “my.” That choice aligns with the idiomaticity of the phrase “tsar moi” in Russian (as in the English “my king” or “my queen”); the history of the Russian language enables the Tsar-Devitsa to become fully male, if only for a single clause. Elsewhere, metrical restrictions leave room only for the first half of “Tsar-Devitsa,” again shifting the character leftward in the spectrum of her name. That she also appears simply as “Deva” only emphasizes the mobility of her persona along that spectrum. At the ceremony marking the Tsar-Devitsa’s departure from her homeland, a chant sounds that showcases her feminine and masculine forms in quick succession, swinging her from one end of the spectrum to the other: “A sighing: ‘Deva! Deva! Deva!’ / And rumbling: ‘Tsar! Our Tsar! Our Tsar!’” While meter or linguistic history underlie the poem’s earlier separations of “Tsar” from “Deva” or “Devitsa,” this farewell chant relies on neither of those constraints. Conventions of Russian phrasing and meter initiate the gendered fluidity of the Tsar-Devitsa’s title, but ultimately, they enable that fluidity to become an autonomous part of Tsvetaeva’s creation. As a reader encounters isolated instances of “Deva” or “tsar moi,” she can consign their sudden swings in gender to poetic

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50 "Devita" is a stylized form of "deva," but the two words are synonymous. Both refer to an unmarried, usually young and usually virginal woman.

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53 In above-mentioned argument between the shark and the whale, one of the interlocutors gazing bewildered at the Tsar-Devitsa cries upon finding out she is at least partly female, “What kind of beauty has no braids?” (or, more literally, “What kind of beauty is this if [her/she] has no braids?”) (“Что за краса без косиц?”). This is a play on character names like “Devitsa Marya, Beauty of the Long Braid” (“Девица Марья Краса Долга Коса”) that are common in Russian skazki and are sometimes even equated with the Tsar-Devitsa figure.

Tsvetaeva, Tsar-Devitsa, 205.
The Vortex-Fire-Hail-Thunder

Russian grammar takes gender seriously, at least relative to languages like English or Mandarin. In addition to pronouns, all nouns, all adjectives, and all past tense verbs receive a feminine, masculine, or neuter ending. It may therefore be surprising that Tsvetaeva turns to Russian linguistic details in particular to assert her protagonist’s androgyny. Tsvetaeva’s manipulation of the word “Tsar-Devitsa,” however, hints at the potential that gendered words possess to execute a kind of gender mixing inaccessible to words that do not carry gender. In one final form of manipulation she applies to the Tsar-Devitsa’s name, Tsvetaeva takes full advantage of that effect, demonstrating that heavily gendered languages can express androgyny in ways unreachable to slightly less gendered languages like English. Translations of “maidens” or “tsar” tend to carry a gender designation even in languages that do not have gendered pronouns. Much of what Tsvetaeva does with those words requires both translation and explanation for an English-speaking reader, but no reader who has encountered both terms has to be told which is feminine and which is not. Most of Tsvetaeva’s variations on the Tsar-Devitsa’s name do not carry

Just as intermittent uses of “Tsar” or “Deva” excused by grammar or history can prepare a reader to digest a gender-bending chant that can only be read as shameless innovation, unstably gendered repetitions of “Deva-Tsar” seem to be mandated by meter, but they lead to broader, more explicit assertions of the Tsar-Devitsa’s androgyny which have no source in metrical constraints. In one instance, a group of

trees warns the Tsarevich not to trust the Tsar-Devitsa: “To you, she is no husband and no maiden (deva).”59 In another, the Tsar-Devitsa asks her friend the wind in “mirror, mirror on the wall” fashion: “My dear, does there exist for me / A brother among tsars / Or a sister among maidens?”60 The trees anticipate that the Tsarevich will assign the Tsar-Devitsa both to a community of men (husbands) and to a community of women (maidens). Because husbands and maidens are abstractions representing thousands of individuals whose existence the Tsarevich accepts but whom he does not personally know, the trees have actually depicted two imagined communities whose interaction contains the Tsar-Devitsa.61 In her banter with the wind, the Tsar-Devitsa not only imagines two similar communities for herself; she derives them from the two portions of her name, whose various gendered implications—the excuse of linguistic necessity has already made palatable for Tsvetaeva’s reader. A pinnacle among a mass of unknown tsars and a crowd of imagined devity, the Tsar-Devitsa possesses some gendered equivalent of national hybridity or dual citizenship. The specifics of the Russian language have enabled her to remain female by pronoun and become androgynous through grammar, history, and intonation.

The “Deva-Tsar” formulation does its most effective work, however, when it falls outside its default context. Shifts in intonation and emphasis can change which portion of a hyphenated word subsumes the other, and poetic verse is an excellent mechanism for conveying those shifts. When the “Tsar Devitsa” hears the Tsarevich sing for the first time, for example, the snatches of song that reach her tell of the singer’s dislike for war and womanizing, leaving the Tsar-Devitsa to exclaim, “Well then, you are what I need! / As I am Deva-Tsar, you see, / You are, we may conclude, Tsar-Deva.”57 The basic meaning of that final couplet follows the typical function of Russian hyphenated nouns: while the Tsar-Devitsa is a woman who is also a tsar, the Tsarevich may be a tsar, but he is also kind of a woman. However, that meaning is overlaid with a metrical emphasis on the word “Tsar” in the first line (with reference to the Tsar-Devitsa) and the word “Deva” in the second (with reference to the Tsarevich). The text’s vocalization emphasizes each character’s affiliation with the gender opposite his or her own, releasing another destabilization of the gender binary and another specifically Russophone representation of androgyny.58

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57 “Ну, тебя-то мне и надо! / Как, к примеру, Лева-Царь я. / Так, выходит, Царь-ты-Дева!”. Where my analysis refers to the meter or emphasis of Tsvetaeva’s text, my translations have preserved that meter or emphasis.
58 This destabilization is so powerful that a number of characters read the Tsar-Devitsa as a man. For example, when the aforementioned shark and whale fall for similar tricks of emphasis, they begin referring to the Tsar-Devitsa using masculine grammar even after they discover her name. Ibid., 205.
that kind of translatability. The Tsar-Devitsa is not only a king who is also a maiden; she is the Deva-Beast, the Vortex-Devitsa, the Fire-Devitsa, the Tsar-Demon, the Tsar-Tempest, and the Tsar-Swan. In this multitude of titles, the word attached to “Tsar,” “Deva,” or “Devitsa” can be grammatically masculine or feminine, making room for compound titles that are completely masculine, completely feminine, masculine and then feminine, or feminine and then masculine. Those words also vary in the gendered possibilities of the things they represent: beasts and swans (both masculine in Russian) have sexes if not genders, demons (also masculine) often have both, and whirlwinds and storms (both feminine) tend to have neither. When Tsvetaeva applies the subtle effects of order and emphasis described above to these already highly varied possibilities of gender and lack thereof, the spectrum of the Tsar-Devitsa's gender quickly expands into something three-dimensional. Even the gender of a noun that is added to the Tsar-Devitsa's name and the sex or lack of sex in the object represented, when paired with the order of two words around a hyphen and the genders of the words “Tsar” and “Devitsa,” yield sixteen possible gendered variants, though only five are represented in Tsvetaeva's poem.62 If neuter nouns are added to the mix, they bring the total to twenty-four different potential intimations of the Tsar-Devitsa's gender.

It would take more time than I wish to demand to explore how different characters put these possibilities into active use by devising various names with various genders to label the Tsar-Devitsa's identity according to their own wishes. I will note, however, that the Tsar-Devitsa both coins one of those identities herself (hers is “Tsar-Demon”) and, later on, adopts two titles created by her nanny to remove all traces of her original title in favor of the new identities Tsvetaeva's text grants her.63 As she mourns over the Tsarevich's sleeping body at their second meeting, the Tsar-Devitsa realizes that she is weeping, seemingly for the first time in her life. In a conversation that takes place silently, “beneath the steel plate of her armor,” she scolds herself for her weakness.65 The Tsar-Devitsa compares her tears to her past excellence as a military commander and her ability to knock foes unconscious with a single punch; implicitly, she is scolding herself for becoming purely womanly, for losing her manliness.66 The first regret she expresses is not for the passing of a wartime accomplishment, however, but for the loss of an identity. Before the Tsar-Devitsa had first heard the Tsarevich's voice, her nanny had praised her as “Vortex-Devitsa, Fire-Devitsa!”67 As “Devitsa” threatens to subsume the previously rich variety of labels from which the Tsar-Devitsa could choose, she momentarily excludes that word from her vocabulary in favor of a purely elemental title: her heart declares, “I was the vortex-fire-hail-thunder—/ Punished for it all!”68 In the world Tsvetaeva creates, ordinary titles become dual-gendered, dual-gendered titles gain variously gendered emphases, variously emphasized dual-gendered titles gain new components that make them decidedly multi-gendered, and the original components of those titles can disappear to yield titles as androgynous as the natural elements. The journey from Sasha's coarse Russian consonants to the Tsar-Devitsa's multitude of specifically Russophone genders is certainly complex, but it nonetheless establishes a concrete relation between those two figures. Tsvetaeva's innovations present her readers with forms of androgyny rooted in the particularities of the Russian language. They are a detailed answer to the question Sasha poses and an embodiment of the longing she represents.

Epilogue: Missed Connections

Why did Tsvetaeva's richly gendered poem—and its answers to the questions that so occupied Virginia Woolf and her contemporaries—fail to reach the English language, let alone Woolf herself? How did it come to be that neither Woolf nor Tsvetaeva even mentioned the other in any surviving record? An extensive network of connections that did exist between the two writers illustrates that the process that excluded Tsvetaeva from Anglophone circles had little to do with the translatability, cultural specificity, or any other characteristic of her work, nor was it shaped by any conscious rejection of contemporary Russian literature on Woolf's part. Instead, the non-reception of Marina Tsvetaeva was a social process shaped by individual relationships and the broader gender norms that governed them. The path in Tsvetaeva's social network from herself to Virginia Woolf was, in fact, quite short. Even the partial set of relationships depicted in Figure 3 reveals that Tsvetaeva lived on the edge of a highly productive circle of English-speaking literary figures:

The two writers shared at least three mutual friends—all of whom knew each other—and several more paths between them cross only three degrees of separation. All of those connections formed thanks to a single individual: Prince Dmitry Petrovich Svyatopolk-Mirsky (1890-1939) or, as he appeared in English, D.S. Mirsky.

Mirsky, a Russian-born literary scholar who spent much of his career in Britain and France, was a tireless advocate for Tsvetaeva and regularly pushed her reputation closer to the Woolfs. In February of 1926, Mirsky published the first academic article about Tsvetaeva in English in The New Statesman, of which Leonard Woolf was the editor.69 Mirsky soon arranged for Tsvetaeva to hold a reading in London and take a leading role in a new Russian-language journal, Vistyot, which received startup

62 “variants,” I mean types such as Deva-(masculine noun representing non-sexed object), Tsar-(feminine noun representing non-sexed object), or (feminine noun representing sexed object)-Devitsa.
63 The potential addition of neuter nouns is not much of a stretch. Multiple characters compare the Tsar-Devitsa's face to the sun, which is neuter, though they stop short of inserting it into her name. Objects represented by neuter nouns can also possess a sex. “Animal,” for example, is a neuter word in Russian.
64 Tsvetaeva, Tsar-Devitsa, 200.
65 Ibid., 235.
66 Before her departure from her homeland, the Tsar-Devitsa shouts to her men, “Make sure you don’t turn woman too!” («Вы бабями не станьте ток!»). Ibid., 203.
67 Ibid., 199.
68 «Вихрь-жар-град-гром был… / За всё наказана!», Ibid., 235.
funds from Leonard Woolf and significant support from Jane Harrison, the classicist mentioned in Section II of this article who also served as a mentor to Virginia Woolf and other members of the Bloomsbury Group. Mirsky even arranged a meeting in Paris between Tsvetaeva, Harrison, and her dear friend and collaborator Hope Mirlees after Harrison and Mirlees began working to translate Russian literature into English. Mirlees, too, maintained a close relationship with Woolf. Mirsky himself was a frequent visitor to the Woolf household. By the end of 1927, then, several members of Virginia Woolf’s social circle had established working relationships with Tsvetaeva in person and in print.

The tireless historical research of Marilyn Schwinn Smith and G.S. Smith has illustrated these relationships in vivid detail.70 I carry forward their work by highlighting the limits of Tsvetaeva’s British connections. Though D.S. Mirsky’s relationships with Woolf, Tsvetaeva, and their mutual friends were highly productive, they were also constrained by Mirsky’s sense of discretion, which itself rested on the heteronormative standards of his surroundings. Mirsky was not personally close enough to Woolf or Tsvetaeva to learn of her intense interest in and experiences with androgyny and same-sex love—or, if he did know, he was not close enough to Woolf or even finding out that such a work would resonate with Woolf’s own reading and writing. As Mirsky monopolized Tsvetaeva’s reception in the English-speaking world, he unconsciously ensured that there would be no one to bring her queerest works—the very works that most resonated with the writings of her closest Anglophone connections—into the English language.

Tsvetaeva’s poetry was published in English translation for the first time in 1971, thirty years after her death. With Marina Tsvetayeva: Selected Poems, Elaine Feinstein initiated something of a Tsvetaeva revival: dozens of books translating Tsvetaeva’s short poems, poems, plays, prose works, and diaries were released in the decades following Feinstein’s foundational collection. Very recently, the American poet Margaree Little has given Tsvetaeva’s Anglophone reputation a new push that might finally facilitate attention to the latter’s gendered innovations. In the October 2017 issue of Asymptote, an online journal of world literature, Little translates four highly provocative poems on topics from the Russian Revolution to the rise of Nazism. In an accompanying translator’s note, Little writes:

These translations are part of a larger project to bring Marina Tsvetayeva’s politically-oriented poems into English. Although a crucial part of her sensibility and her life’s work, Tsvetayeva’s political poems have largely been neglected by translators, who have emphasized, instead, poems she wrote about her personal and romantic relationships; this emphasis suggests a gendered reading of the poet as an extreme personality rather than as a poet responding to the extremity of her time.71

This article has demonstrated that the social politics of Tsvetaeva’s Anglophone reception have long dimmed the significance of her art. Little responds to the decades-long legacy of that history with an actionable demand: if the limits of Tsvetaeva’s translation into English do not result from but rather ignore the nature of many of her texts, then present-day writers and translators can still give Tsvetaeva’s Anglophone afterlife a fuller, truer form.

My readings here amend Little’s vision of what that form should be. She emphasizes that an exclusive focus on Tsvetaeva’s personal writing or her writing about love can only detract from her reputation as a political thinker. The language and plot of Tsvetaeva’s poetry demonstrate that state politics and the politics of gender and

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love intertwine too often for an excision of the latter to be productive. *Tiar-Devitua* challenges existing gendered images of Tsvetaeva by grappling simultaneously with forbidden love and political violence (both state-sponsored and revolutionary). In the process, the *poema* encourages Anglophone readers to rethink broader stereotypes of Russian literature and culture—stereotypes that foreground both heteronormative and state violence without recognizing those who defy the heteronormative state as a longstanding and often central presence in Russian-language discourse.

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Breaking Down the Beer Wagon: 
*Man is Man* (1926) and Bertolt Brecht’s Conception of “Epic” Radio Drama

Patrick Goff

This article looks at how Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) conceived of “epic” drama for radio in the late 1920s. Using the theory of the epic theater and his 1927 radio adaptation of his stage play *Man is Man* (1926), I argue that Brecht’s process of adapting the play for radio while simultaneously theorizing about his goals for the theater illuminates his desire for the traditional institution of the theater to be “dismantled.” This “dismantling” is evidenced in a particular scene in *Man is Man* in which the soldier’s canteen, once a stable point of orientation in the play, is taken apart as the canteen’s owner moves with her customers. As I argue here, Brecht attempts to do the same thing with the theater and radio – to take the old institution apart and reconstruct it where it is most relevant for his audience. By doing so, he hopes to create an audience of detached, critical listeners who are politically instructed and have also gained the capacity to instruct.

**Introduction**

German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) wrote in 1927 that the radio was a “colossal triumph of technology,” which allowed everything from “a Viennese waltz” to a “kitchen recipe” to be transmitted into the homes of millions of people. The traditional stage, in other words, was no longer the sole source of dramatic entertainment – an audience could now experience a show wherever they had access to a radio box. Noting radio’s growing popularity, and unsure about what societal role the radio would carve out for itself, Brecht, for a time, adapted several of his stage plays for radio and wrote two exclusively for the new medium: *The Lindbergh Flight* (1927) and *The Trial of Lucullus* (1940). Both of these radio plays have been understood as deserving of scholarly study, often read through the lens of Brecht’s theory of the epic theater and placed in the context of his life and work. In this article, I will focus on the radio adaptation of his stage play *Man is Man* (1926). I argue that this adaptation illuminates a crucial element of Brechtian theory: that the physical institution of the theater must be dismantled and reassembled into one that serves the contemporary needs of its audience.

Radio producers and literary figures in the Weimar Republic started producing dramatic works specifically for the radio (radio plays or *Hörspiele*) in 1924. While there were only 1,580 registered radio owners in that year, that number quickly rose...
to 1,022,300 by the beginning of 1926, the year of *Man is Man's* premiere. Brecht interpreted the growing popularity of the radio and waning interest in the stage as “living proof” of an institutional crisis of the theater. “If the theater were doing its duty,” wrote Brecht in 1928, “then you would find only one person ready to sacrifice at least half of the pleasure of a play, which consists of seeing and the feeling of immediacy, in order to get the other half, listening, in a really cultivated way.” Brecht believed that his generation, the generation that had lived through World War I, demanded a new kind of theater, one that reflected their day-to-day lives while also politically instructing them. Instead of the theaters rising to meet this demand, however, they became “old and uninspired,” capitalizing on the theatergoing public’s “habit” of attending the theater for pure entertainment while providing nothing of value for them. For this reason, it was clear to Brecht that the old institution might not be sustainable, and that if the theater were to survive, it would have to radically transform itself.

Coining this new type of theater as “epic theater,” Brecht establishes it as an aesthetic and political departure from, for example, a Wagnerian opera, which utilizes grandiose sets, continuous orchestral music, and tragic themes in order to intoxicate and empathetically involve its audience. Epic theater, on the other hand, attempts to create an audience of detached, critical spectators through what Brecht terms the “distancing effect” (Verfremdungseffekt or V-effect). Brecht describes how this effect functions within his work in “A Short Organum for the Theater” (1949), his reflection in exile on decades of praxis:

> The exposition of the story and its communication by suitable means of alienation constitute the main business of the theatre … The ‘story’ is set out, brought forward and shown by the theatre as a whole, by actors, stage designers, mask-makers, costumiers, composers and chœographiers.

As Peter Brooker identifies, “distancing” in Brecht’s plays often takes several forms: “direct and indirect use of a narrator,” “the conspicuous use of songs,” and “placards and images set in a montaged narrative sequence.” The task of the V-effect, he argues, “is to reveal a suppressed or unconsidered alternative; to show the contradictions created by the V-effect are often jarring, interrupting the narrative progression of the play. She argues that the epic theater is intended to be episodic, each episode being performed as a “whole, independent, distinct unit” with a distinct pause, marking the end of one episode and the beginning of another. The interruptions between these “episodes” force the audience to critically reflect on what they are seeing instead of empathizing with it, *distancing* them from the action while simultaneously encouraging them to critique it.

As a form of distancing, Brecht also directly communicates exactly what he intends for the audience to take away from the performance. In “Emphasis on Sport” (1926), an article Brecht wrote for the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, Brecht writes that the audience of his time has little interest in the traditional theater, and he juxtaposes this failure with the success of organized sports. Unlike a sporting event, where every person attending would know exactly what is going to take place, the traditional theater “demoralizes” its audience due to the fact that “neither the theater nor the audience has any idea what is supposed to go on there.” In other words, the theater of Brecht’s day does not communicate its purpose to the audience effectively enough, perhaps because the theater itself is unsure of what it is trying to say. For Brecht, art, politics, and everyday life are closely intertwined, and a play with an “epic” character must be overtly conscious of this relationship, transparently communicating a message that is deeply critical of existing institutions and dominant ideologies.

Brecht believed that a major reason for the theater’s increasing obsolescence was that it only served to reinforce the power of the those that owned the theaters and performance halls. While drama written for the radio might make the theater more relevant, he noted with caution that the radio had yet to be controlled in the same way that the theater was, and that if that were to happen, then it would become antiquated as quickly as it arrived. The radio station owners would broadcast to the world everything that they had to say, and we would realize only too late that they had “nothing to say.” In order for the radio to avoid the same fate of irrelevance as the theater, Brecht believed that drama on the radio must also maintain an epic character. Could the radio provide for the Brecht’s audience what the traditional stage could not? Did Brecht succeed in creating a kind of epic theater for the radio?

Although no recording of *Man is Man’s* original radio adaptation exists, by reading the play in the context of Brecht’s writings on stage and the radio written at the same time as he was working on *Man is Man’s* adaptation, we can better understand how Brecht conceived of “epic” radio drama. In addition to demonstrating the goals of the epic theater, *Man is Man* also attempts to show both how mankind and its institutions, specifically the theater, can change as conditions around them change. The main character, for example, undergoes several personal changes over the course of the play, and by the final scene, he has transformed into a completely different person. In other words, Brecht demonstrates with this play that neither the theater nor society need remain isolated or fixed within certain hierarchies or ways of thinking.

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It is important to note that the theory of the epic theater is not something “fixed” or “unchanging;” although Brecht’s work is always expressly political, the specific terms and goals that he outlines in his theoretical writings evolve and change with his practice. In this article, I deal with just three aspects of the epic theater: pedagogy, disruption, and timeliness.10 My discussion will also focus on the changeability of a particular setting in the play: the canteen of the widow Leokadja Begbick. While both the audience and the characters in the play initially take this setting to be a habitual point of orientation, a stable place for reflection on the events taking place on stage, the “beer wagon” is taken apart and reassembled in a completely different location. Begbick, in other words, adapts to the needs of her customers. By adapting the play for the radio, I argue, Brecht does something similar — he tears down the theater’s walls and moves its location, a place of habit, to the home radio unit, the place that he believes is the most relevant for his audience.

Man is Man (1926) on Stage

Man is Man is generally taken to be an experimental piece for Brecht. The play, both in form and content, contains a great deal of “firsts,” being the first play that he wrote after coinining the term “epic theater.” It is the first play of his, for instance, in which the characters are represented as changeable.11 According to Bert Cardullo, Brecht is attempting to show through Mann ist Mann that, like the characters in the play, mankind is not isolated by an unchangeable society. While the protagonist, Galy Gay, assumes several identities over the course of the play, Cardullo identifies that these changes are always the result of his changing environment and not of some fixed inner psychology. Additionally, this is the first of Brecht’s plays to be a constant state of flux; everything from individual characters, set pieces, and dramatic form are constantly altered, taken apart, and reassembled throughout the play, keeping in line with one of Brecht’s guidelines for the epic theater that it treats dramatic form are constantly altered, taken apart, and reassembled throughout the play.

Begbick, for instance, adapts to the needs of her customers: in which the characters are represented as changeable.11 According to Bert Cardullo, Brecht is attempting to show through Mann ist Mann that, like the characters in the play, mankind is not isolated by an unchangeable society. While the protagonist, Galy Gay, assumes several identities over the course of the play, Cardullo identifies that these changes are always the result of his changing environment and not of some fixed inner psychology. Additionally, this is the first of Brecht’s plays to be a constant state of flux; everything from individual characters, set pieces, and dramatic form are constantly altered, taken apart, and reassembled throughout the play, keeping in line with one of Brecht’s guidelines for the epic theater that it treats dramatic form are constantly altered, taken apart, and reassembled throughout the play.

Begbick, for instance, adapts to the needs of her customers:
Begbick's Traveling Bar.

Begbick's beer wagon is apparently well known among the soldiers of Kilkoa, so this exposition might appear a bit unnecessary. But Brecht provides us with this explicit description for two reasons: to establish Begbick as a simultaneous character and narrator in the play and to construct the setting of the canteen as a stand-in for the theater. Read in conjunction with Brecht's theoretical writings, this scene draws a clear connection between the soldiers' canteen and the audience's theater hall. Begbick is explaining "exactly what goes on" in her canteen as Brecht argued that the theater should do in "Emphasis on Sport," and her description of the canteen also "sets out" the story of the play similarly to the transparent form of exposition that Brecht outlined in "A Short Organum for the Theater."

Brecht makes the connection between the canteen and the physical location of the theater even more explicit in Begbick's following "Interjection" (Zwischenspruch), using her as a proxy for himself and his own views as she stands alone onstage next to a picture of him. In this short scene, she explains the core message of the play directly to the audience:

You now will see the ground beneath your feet
Melt away like sleet
And please don't miss the moral of this case:
That this world is a dangerous place.

While Begbick (and Brecht) make the "moral" of the play clear in this instance, the mysterious, foreboding tone of this interjection anticipates the confusion about to take place for Man is Man's characters, as the setting of the canteen and the structure of the play itself will completely change. Up until this point, the play had progressed in a straightforward manner, with characters interacting with each other in distinct scenes with stable, static set pieces and musical numbers occasionally interrupting their dialogue. But during the following transformation scene, the location of the canteen and the form of the play itself are taken apart, their "walls" torn down as Gay's own sense of self is dismantled. Not only will Gay, after he is transformed, assist Begbick in taking apart and moving her canteen to the Tibetan fort of Sir el-Djwor. The play ends with the sergeant's roll call, the source of anxiety for the machine-gun unit that set their plan in motion, and Gay faints, and when he comes to, he finds himself at a funeral:

Galy Gay (wakes up): Who is that they're carrying?
Jesse: One who, at his final hour, was shot.
Galy Gay: What was his name?
Jesse: If I'm not mistaken, his name was Galy Gay.

At this point, Gay has now become Jip, and by the end of this scene, he enthusiastically prepares for a mission to attack the Tibetan fort of Sir el-Djwor. The play ends with the sergeant's roll call, the source of anxiety for the machine-gun unit that set their plan in motion, and Gay faintly announces himself as Jeriah Jip!

As we have seen, both mankind and its institutions are represented as changeable in Man is Man, and the changeability of the canteen reflects several important aspects of the epic theater. In the first place, the epic theater takes the old, familiar institution apart, both through its politically conscious and critical themes and episodic form. Additionally, the epic theater is timely; its fundamental purpose is to satisfy the needs of its audience. But in Man is Man, this timeliness is reflected not only in the entertainment and stability that Begbick provides for her soldiers in the canteen, but also in the fact that what Begbick provides need not be restricted to one particular location. Perhaps, as Brecht attempts to demonstrate during the adaptation process of Man is Man, the epic theater can exist in several places at once by utilizing the new medium of the radio.

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16  Ibid., 134.
17  This is an example of another "first" for Brecht in Man is Man in that it is the first play in which an actor steps out of her role as a character in the play to address the audience directly. According to Margaret Setje-Eilers, in "A Man's a Man, but What about Woman?", Begbick can be read as a truly "epic" character in the play because she simultaneously drives the plot forward as a character while also acknowledging her role as an actor, someone separate from the action of the play, in order to comment on it as a kind of narrator. See Margaret Setje-Eilers, "A Man's A Man, but What about Woman? Widow Leocadia Begbick in Bertolt Brecht's Play (1926-2006)," Women in German Yearbook, no. 24 (2008): 96.
18  Brecht, "A Man's a Man," 160.
20  Bertolt Brecht, Mann ist Mann, ed. by Carl Wege (1926, repr. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982), 223.
Radio as a “Communications Apparatus”

One reason for Brecht’s interest in radio after the first few productions of Man is Man could have been its mixed critical reception. While Brecht intended for his audience to leave the theater transformed and politically instructed after attending the performance of Man is Man, the Berliner Tageblatt’s Alfred Kerr devastatingly (for Brecht) derided Man is Man as outdated and unoriginal, describing it in one 1927 review as “a simple pleasure for the friendly Germans... of two generations ago.” Kerr’s critique demonstrated for Brecht that he failed to effectively communicate to his audience that he was attempting to take the old institution apart, not to recreate the same things that they had already seen before. Brecht directly responded to Kerr during a brief speech critique before the radio broadcast of Man is Man. The following quotation comes at the very end of the speech, which could also be read as a kind of preface for the adaptation that was to follow:

For a time, my generation caught sight of an actual chance for ourselves in this intense demand for the theater, but in reality, the theaters were the ones who had to give us this chance, namely to use this chance, yet they were no longer in a position to justify themselves. The theaters could no longer take advantage of the opportunity. They were simply too old.

In other words, Brecht believed that he was unable to communicate this message on stage because the limitations of the institution would not allow it. As a result, Brecht took his project of dismantling the theater to the radio, a medium that was both growing in popularity and one that he felt had the potential to convey his transformative message more directly to his generation.

Brecht correctly identified the degree of excitement about radio among his contemporaries. Radio, at least in the cultural imagination of Weimar Republic, was something that had the potential to completely transform society, as the radio could transfer content from tower to receiver unhindered by any preexisting physical or social structure. Carolyn Birdsall observes Weimar’s excitement about radio through the old ways, represented by the policeman, have no power over the rising tide of new technology that is becoming increasingly accessible to all (the film machine-gun unit gives him is real when it is clearly made out of paper, etc. But by adapting Man is Man to radio, Brecht seems to be saying that the core message of the play is found not in its visual humor but in its transparent and expository dialogue. He outlines this in “The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication” (1932), the closest thing we have to radio, Brecht seems to be saying that the core message of the play is found not in its visual humor but in its transparent and expository dialogue. The audience, in other words, would be forced to listen intently to every expository statement that was, of course, an advertisement for an affordable, new radio box).

There were also several medium-specific aspects of the radio that interested Brecht. The poor signal quality of radio in the Weimar Republic would have regularly interrupted broadcasts through technical “disturbances” and “distortions.” Keeping with Ferber’s argument on the importance of “interruptions” of epic theater, this unpredictable, interruptive aspect of the medium might have only added to Brecht’s interest in it, as these inherent technical qualities could add to the “stuttering” and “stumbling” character of the epic theater. Similarly, without a stage, costumes, or sets, both an audience’s focus on the spoken word and static interruptions of words increase in significance, and the listening audience is free to create their own, imagined visuals for the drama. “If seeing is not involved,” writes Brecht in “On Utilizations” (1927), “it does not mean that one sees nothing, but equally that one sees an infinity of things, ‘whatever you like.’” This sentiment is echoed in the later writings of media theorist Marshall McLuhan, who famously described these consequences of acoustic art in Understanding Media (1964):

If we sit and talk in a dark room, words suddenly acquire new meanings and different textures ... All those gestural qualities that the printed page strips from language come back in the dark, and on the radio. Given only the sound of a play, we have to fill in all of the senses, not just the sight of the action.

This is especially interesting in the context of Man is Man, as so much of the content of the play is seemingly based around sight gags: Gay is constantly referred to as Jip despite the audience knowing otherwise; Gay believes that the elephant that the machine-gun unit gives him is real when it is clearly made out of paper, etc. But by adapting Man is Man to radio, Brecht seems to be saying that the core message of the play is found not in its visual humor but in its transparent and expository dialogue. For Brecht, this focused immersion of his audience must not only be disruptive, but it should also be politically instructive, and this can only be done if the audience is actively engaging with the performance – not just passively receiving it. He outlines this in “The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication” (1932), the closest thing we have to a coherent theory of Brechtian radio. For Brecht, the problem of the radio is that it is “one-sided.” Producers create news reports, shows, etc. in one studio and broadcast this content to a large number of consumers, but the radio does not allow for the flow of information to go the other way. Brecht’s vision for radio is “two-sided,” a “communication apparatus” instead of a “distribution apparatus,” consisting of a vast system of interconnected “channels” that would bring listeners at

The invention of radio was "a technical invention that still must create for itself a mass need rather than be instructed," writes Brecht, "would lead to nothing more than a new fashion and we have enough old fashions!" Instead, epic radio drama must make the "transformation of reality" its primary goal and must also "work according to the principle that the audience is not only to be instructed but must also instruct." He imagines a kind of radio in which the "instructional undertakings" of the epic theater are not just presented matter-of-factly to the audience, but also that the "interests are made interesting," which the current theater is failing to do. Man is Man's early stage productions failed to make themselves interesting to some members of the critical audience, but "transformation" and instruction are nonetheless core elements of its content. Its radio adaptation was an attempt by Brecht to bring these themes and ideas to where his audience wanted them to be (or where they would find them the most interesting), no longer confined by the restrictions of the old institution of the theater.

By adopting a more epic character, Brecht believed that the radio would carve out a clear, socially conscious purpose for itself in a way that the theater no longer could. In an essay called "Young Drama and the Radio" (1927), an article he wrote while developing Man is Man's radio adaptation, Brecht writes that the radio is "a technical invention that still must create for itself a mass need rather than subordinating itself to an antiquated, exhausted need." The invention of radio was "not prescribed;" the people do not necessarily demand its presence in their lives, yet the radio attempts to create this demand. Brecht identifies that at the beginning of its life, the radio acted as a substitute for the old institutions (theater, opera house, etc.), but now the radio has entered the "adolescent" stage of its existence. Now, it is difficult to discern where the performance begins and where it ends, but Brecht abolishes yet another division between performer and audience: he provides the audience with a script and has them play the role of Lindbergh. "Here the pedagogical role that the 'listener' assumes," writes Brecht in "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication," "is both that of the airplane and of the crowd. It communicates with the role of the trained chorus provided by radio ... this is a model for a new application of your apparatuses.”

He is referring to several technological developments at the beginning of the twentieth century in this passage: film, photography, the phonograph, and radio, to name a few. But his observation here can also apply to Brecht’s experiments with the "old" medium of the stage in Man is Man. Brecht attempted to create a demand for a new kind of theater, an epic theater, only to find that the medium of the stage might no longer be an appropriate outlet for his project.

With the advent of the radio, a “changed technical standard,” Brecht saw the potential for his new art form to find its proper, socially disruptive channel and its audience of distant, critical spectators. Just as the epic theater need not be restricted to the location of the theater hall, Man is Man’s canteen can be similarly read as a representation of the medium through which the epic theater is operating. The theater, like the beer wagon, must travel with its audience and show them how the medium can be taken apart and reassembled, ensuring both that they are instructed and that they have the capacity to instruct.

### Conclusion

Brecht’s learning-plays (Lehrstücke), which he started writing immediately after Man is Man, elaborate on and experiment with the idea of abolishing existing performance structures that he developed while working on Man is Man. The "total abolition of the division between performance and audience," argues Roswitha Mueller, is "the most far-reaching impact of the Lehrstück." The premiere of The Lindbergh Flight at the Baden Baden Music Festival in 1929 made this abolition explicit: the audience sat in a tent and were surrounded by speakers. The composer Kurt Weil, with whom Brecht collaborated on Lindbergh, conducted an orchestra and chorus in a separate location, and the music was broadcast via radio into the audience tent. Already, it is difficult to discern where the performance begins and where it ends, but Brecht abolishes yet another division between performer and audience: he provides the audience with a script and has them play the role of Lindbergh. "Here the pedagogical role that the 'listener' assumes," writes Brecht in “The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication,” “is both that of the airplane and of the crowd. It communicates with the role of the trained chorus provided by radio ... this is a model for a new application of your apparatuses.”

For Brecht, both the stage and the radio are apparatuses, technology that has the
potential for communication, collaboration, and social change. But it is important to understand that, although Brecht believed that the radio might be able to effectively address the communicative shortcomings of the traditional theater, his radio theory and later experiments with radio reflect a degree of caution and ambivalence on the potential of this new medium. Brecht did not believe that the radio marked the end of the theater’s process of transformation or that it would be the last time that such an apparatus would need to be dismantled. All productions of Man is Man after 1927 again took place on stage, and Brecht’s period of experimentation with radio ended after he wrote The Trial of Lucullus in 1940.

“It is simply not our task,” Brecht writes, “to renovate the ideological institutions on the basis of the existing social order through innovations. Instead our innovations must get them to abandon this basis.”

From Man is Man, we learn that Brecht would like to change us, to reveal to us the questions that we should be asking about our institutions of entertainment. As Cardullo writes, “[Brecht] would like us to be able to encounter a wise man like Galy Gay, absorb his knowledge and openness to experience, and change the world.”

Like Gay, the canteen, the stage, and the radio, Brecht identifies that the world that we live in is in a constant state of flux, and that, while a machine used for one purpose today might be used for something completely different tomorrow, none of these changes are necessarily final. The onus falls on us, Brecht’s audience, to identify how these institutions function, understand how and why they should change, and pressure them to change in whatever way we can.

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33 Ibid., 45.

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Bibliography


Language Teacher as Author: Narrative Experimentation in Lao She’s *Xiaopo de shengri* (小坡的生日, *Little Po’s Birthday*), 1931

Noah Arthur Weber

The early career of Beijing author Lao She (老舍, 1899–1966) covers a wide range of genres and settings—from a realist romance set in London to a sci-fi satire set on Mars. Among these early works is *Xiaopo de shengri* (小坡的生日, *Little Po’s Birthday*), a novella about Singaporean children written while Lao She lived in Singapore. The narrator of the novel fluctuates between a close third-person that attempts to reproduce its young protagonists’ worldview, and a more adult-like perspective, which casts ironic distance on the children and their behavior. My paper’s core claim is that the age discrepancy between the author and his characters is only one important factor explaining their distance. Differences of race (zhongzu 种族), nationality, and language also separate them. These make Lao She’s attempt at close-third narration more difficult, and ultimately more flawed.

A Note on Translated Titles and Names

The novel that Lao She wrote in 1931 was called 小坡的生日: not *Xiaopo de shengri* or *Little Po’s Birthday*. My ideas on the differences between these three would be the topic of another essay. As the first translator of the English version of the novel (an ongoing project), I am clearly interested in broadening the readership to an English-speaking audience. And I obviously value the important work of translation. With that being said, I feel uncomfortable as a reader when I encounter English-language papers that seem to implicitly favor translated titles and names over the Chinese original. While I do not accuse the authors of doing so consciously, I fear consistently referring to, for example, Lao She’s 1931 novel as *Little Po’s Birthday* runs the risk of erasing the original in the context of the paper. I refer to the text varyingly as *Little Po* and *Xiaopo*, the protagonist’s name in *pinyin* (the international standard for Romanizing Chinese characters). I do this for all titles and character names I mention. I hope this achieves a harmony between respecting the translation as a worthy entity of its own, and rejecting the notion that the translation should be this paper’s reference point merely because it is an English-language paper. Some of my readers might find this note trivial or even obvious, but to me it feels greatly important to make explicit. Thank you for understanding.
A Beijing Author Abroad (1924-1930)

“In any case, Singapore was closer to home than Marseilles.”
—Lao She, “Hai xiangzhe ta (還想著它, ‘Still Thinking About It’), 1934

Though heavily associated with his hometown of Beijing, Lao She (1899-1966) spent a significant amount of his life outside China. As a young man he spent several years teaching Chinese at the School of Oriental Studies at University of London (1924-1929). As a Chinese person in London—an “Oriental”—Lao She incurred a great deal of discrimination. Popular movies of that time routinely included tropes of savage, filthy “Chinamen” and all of their revolting habits. In the pea-soup smog of London's streets, it was young Lao She, the language professor and aspiring author, who many Londoners considered dirty.

During his London tenure he published his first three books in the Chinese literary magazine Xiaoshuo Yuebao (小說月報, Fiction Monthly). Each was progressively sophisticated. By Er Ma (二馬, The Two Mas) in 1929, Lao She thoughtfully and personally retaliates against Western depictions of Chinese people as immoral, opium-addicted rat eaters. His Chinese characters are fully rounded—complicated, flawed. Narratively, some of the action toward the end is admittedly rushed. A Chinese student protest in London ushers in the denouement all too quickly and too decisively to be fully satisfying. But the energy of the prose is youthful and urgent, the humor deliciously dark and biting. He might have been scraping his salary up as a language professor, but after Er Ma it was clear that Lao She the author was headed somewhere.

Outside of his literary production, a wealth of information is available about Lao She's five years in London, especially compared to the relatively little that we know about his travels thereafter.1 We know he spent his free time outside the classroom developing his English by reading the likes of Charles Dickens and Joseph Conrad.2 He also worked with Clement Egerton on a translation of the classic Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) text Jin ping mei (金瓶梅, The Golden Lotus).3 Clearly he was up to quite a lot, working hard for little pay. And if the frustration and isolation many of the Chinese characters feel in The Two Mas is any indication, his life abroad was not without its difficulty. Considering all these distractions, Er Ma is a remarkable novel for someone in his late twenties to produce.

Er Ma's promise—and, indeed, its somewhat shaky ending—would prove to temporarily haunt Lao She's pen. Leaving London for the Continent, he tried and failed to write a sequel set in France, tried and failed also to sustain himself in France. He traveled around Italy and Germany, and wrote in his characteristic dry wit that all the while he felt “quite comfortable, because [his] money had run out. When the money ran out there was nothing I could plan.” Financially, Europe was no longer working out for him. He couldn't seem to wrap up the Er Ma characters' stories the way he wanted to. So he left. He cobbled together just enough for a third-class ticket from Marseilles to Singapore, where he arrived in October of 1930. As he put it, “For one thing, I only had enough money to get to Singapore; but for another, I’d long wanted to see the South Seas [Nanyang南洋]...because I wanted to find materials for writing a novel.”4 Seeking inspiration and direction, Lao She set sail.

He spent his time on board crafting what he thought might be his next novel. This new work would feature a Chinese man living in London. Poor but erudite, he would “sink into a sea of feeling” over a wealthy woman who had met misfortune. She would offer him little more than polite courtesy, and the unrequited passion would drive the protagonist slowly to ruin.5 In other words, the novel would map almost perfectly onto one of the romantic subplots in The Two Mas. Though moving on from Europe, the young writer struggled to move on from his previous work. Even the tentative title—Dogai ruci (大概如此, About Like This)—expresses hesitation. When his ship hit land in Singapore he scrapped all forty thousand characters of the manuscript. It was time for a new start.

When he arrived in Southeast Asia, Lao She was not the international celebrity he would become when his masterwork Luotuo Xiangzi (駱駝祥子, Camel Xiangzi) burst onto the Chinese literary scene in 1937. His fame would have to wait until the end of the decade. In 1938, fellow authors would elect him to lead the All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists, which included such respected figures as Mao Dun (茅盾), Ding Ling (丁玲), and Ba Jin (巴金).6 In the mid-forties, the United States Department of State would name Lao She a cultural ambassador to the USA, a three-year tenure that saw him give many lectures and receive contemporary English translations of his later work.7 But in 1930 Lao She was thirty-one, poor, and somewhat creatively stuck. A schoolteacher—respectable, but not yet renowned.

1. Ann Witchard’s Lao She in London (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012) is an essential text for the scholar of Lao She’s UK years.

2. For the Dickensian in Lao She, see David Der-wei Wang, Fictional Realism in Twentieth-Century China: chapter four. For Lao She and Conrad, see Wong Yoon-wah, “Lao She’s Obsession with Joseph Conrad’s stories of the tropics.”

3. For Lao She’s invaluable part in this project, see Robert E. Hegel’s introduction to The Golden Lotus (Clarendon, VT: Turtle, 2011). In short, Hegel feels Lao She doesn’t receive proper credit for what must have been his hefty role in translating the novel, considering Egerton’s modest Chinese abilities would likely not have qualified him for the task.

4. Lao She, “Hai xiangzhe ta” (‘Still Thinking About It’), Luoniu pioche (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1986).


6. Ibid.

7. The All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists (Zhongguo quanguo xiaoxi xiehui, 中華全國文藝界抗日救國會) was formed in 1938 as a cultural resistance movement against insurgent Japan. Lao She was elected leader as much for his literary repute as for his perceived political neutrality. His early writings indeed favored the sort of nuance that one might characterize as neutrality. He was keen to not universally stand alongside or against student movements during his early stage.

8. The receptability of these translations is fraught. Lao She’s earliest work to be translated into English was Luotuo Xiangzi, translated as Richshaw Boy by Evan King in 1945. In this bowdlerized edition, King adds characters and changes a tragic tale into a Hollywood-style heroic romance. Nevertheless, the translation sold millions of copies in the United States, and was a major reason Lao She was invited in 1946.
Influences on Lao She during His Time in Singapore (1930-1931)

Singapore reinvigorated Lao She. The novel he wrote there—Xiaopo de shengri (小坡的生日, Little Po’s Birthday)—is playful, experimental, and consequential. Xiaopo dismisses the romantic tropes that figured prominently in The Two Mas (and, as Lao She journals, in Dagai ruci). Lao She himself attributes the failure of About Like This to his inability to continue writing “romance novels” (aiqing xiaoshuo). His students at Nanyang huqiao zhongxue (南洋華僑中學, South Seas Overseas Chinese School) impressed him a great deal with their competence and political awareness. These fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds, he reflects, “were ideologically radical, and the questions to which they wanted answers were unlike anything I had encountered in my five years at a foreign school…. I started to feel that new ideas were in the East, not the West.”

The historical record corroborates Lao She’s characterization of the Chinese-language school as politically charged. The British colonial government suspected such schools of harboring communist sympathies. In January 1931—roughly the halfway mark of Lao She’s time in Singapore—the police raided the school for suspected communist activities. Given that Lao She cites his students’ progressive politics as a major reason romance novels no longer interested him, one might expect an event like a police raid would play a prominent role in the author’s writing.

Yet Lao She upholds his record of political neutrality. He makes no reference to police interference in the school. While he seems impressed that at such a young age his students demonstrate such conviction, he simultaneously cannot help but subtly mock the extremity of their beliefs. He reports that his students were always thinking about “overthrowing [打倒] their fathers and brothers.” The sardonic tone seems consistent with earlier depictions of revolutionary students in his London works. He admires their fire, but remains skeptical of their agendas.

Skepticism toward his students’ fervor aside, several of his writings from the period could be characterized as decidedly nationalistic. Nationalist politics play an important role in the most influential Chinese literature of this period. Lao She’s London texts are no exception, in which a great number of his characters offer different strategies on how China might go about “saving the nation” (jianguo救國). Many of China’s intellectuals felt wounded by their nation’s scientific and military weakness relative to many Western colonial powers (and the Japanese). Lao She similarly sought methods to heal that wound.

One such method occurred to him after reading widely the works of Joseph Conrad. When Lao She reached Singapore, the sorts of “materials” he says he was searching for were precisely “the sort that Conrad used in his novels.” But unlike Conrad’s works, in which “the main characters…were largely white, [and] Oriental [dongfang東方] people made up only his secondary cast,” Lao She wanted the novel he wrote in Singapore to reverse the Conrad formula. He envisioned a novel that might serve as an ode to the region’s Chinese immigrants. In hyperbolic language, he wrote:

To state the fact bluntly, would Singapore’s development really have happened if there had been no Chinese people there? Chinese people are able to endure the most bitter hardships…. Desolate jungles entrenched with venomous pythons and fierce tigers are flattened by the Chinese…. Chinese people do not fear death. They know how to handle the environment; they know how to survive.

Surely his language here is to some degree tongue-in-cheek. After all, he attributes to the Chinese immigrants a nearly superhuman ability to withstand Singapore’s local climate, a climate he portrays as intolerable, habitable only insofar as it has been tamed by the brave and powerful Chinese. Then again, it might be no wonder that Lao She’s nationalistic spirits would be at a fever pitch by the time his ship docked at Singapore.

After all, he had just spent several years in London, where being Chinese suggested to most Europeans anything from sexual deviance to lack of hygiene and a disgusting diet. He felt as though substantial portions of his work there had to be devoted to the nation-saving cause. That he might be tempted to write a novel in which Chinese immigrants could withstand any disease is perhaps an understandable urge after facing several years of such discrimination.

But such a novel Xiaopo is not. It is no record of politically rebellious teenagers. It is no salute to the indefatigable, intrepid Chinese immigrants building Singapore brick-by-brick with their bare hands.

It is the story of a young boy and his friends. The young boy’s name is Little Po. He loves his little sister very much. The two of them go on fantastic imaginary journeys. They go to school. The teacher is incompetent and Little Po skips class. In the middle of the novel Little Po has his birthday. His family goes to see a film. He falls asleep. He dreams of tigers and monkeys and wolves. The monkeys and wolves have a great big battle. He wakes up. The novel ends.

What happened here? What do all these influences have to do with the final product? Why is the final product worth reading? What role does it play for understanding Lao She’s early career? Settle in as we set sail for the South Seas….

9 Lao She, “Still Thinking About It.”
10 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Lao She, “Still Thinking About It.”
14 Lao She, “How I Wrote Little Po’s Birthday.”
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
Xiaopo de Shengri: Lao She’s Flawed, Experimental Fourth Novel (1930-1931)

Much is written about Lao She, one of China’s most well-known modern writers. He remains a figure with a great deal of cultural capital. A teahouse named after him (referencing his famous play, Chaguan茶館, Teahouse) is a major tourist attraction for foreigners and out-of-towners in today’s Beijing. Anyone who attended Chinese public schools through high school will be familiar with his name and at least two of his works: Camel Xiangzi (1937) and Teahouse (1957). Commentary on his earlier work is less common, and critical analysis of Xiaopo de shengri in particular is less common still. At present, Xiaopo remains one of the few Lao She novels without a published English translation.17

For a long time the dominant scholarly argument was simply whether Little Po was a novel worth reading. C.T. Hsia, whose A History of Modern Chinese Fiction has long been a classic among English-speaking scholars in particular, gave merely passing reference to Xiaopo, calling it “a fantasy for children” (1961). Film director King Hu (Hu Jinquan 胡金銓) called the novel “not at all brilliant,” writing that it “doesn’t resemble reading material for adults” (1977). Ma Sen similarly found the text to be “a superficial fantasy,” and “not the sort of children’s book for adult readers like Saint-Exupéry’s The Little Prince” (1957).18

Being the story of a young boy and his young friends, one reason repeatedly suggested for the text falling into obscurity is the charge that it is children’s literature unfit for serious criticism. None of these scholars point out exactly what they mean by dismissing the novel as “for children,” or characterizing the novel as a “children’s book.” To be sure, our young protagonist, Xiaopo—son of a Cantonese mother and father, born and raised in Singapore—is a child. So are all of his friends. But surely this fact is not enough to claim the novel is not worthy of adult eyes.19 Indeed, at the very least, Xiaopo’s publication history mirrors that of Lao She’s previous work Er Ma; both were serialized in the same literary magazine, Fiction Monthly. It is at least the case that among the novel’s early readers were a significant number of adults.

An argument against reading the novel would have to provide more reasons outside of a—wrongly perceived—juvenile audience to be taken seriously. Such an argument might claim that the novel feels less narratively cohesive than Lao She’s other work from this period. It might also claim that the novel lacks a central theme that unifies its plot in the way that the experience of racism in England unifies the ensemble cast of Chinese characters in Er Ma. The argument might conclude that the dream sequence is the ultimate representation of both of these flaws, that it is the moment when Lao She’s plot flies entirely off the rails with no seasoned conductor at the helm.

I acknowledge the novel’s risky potential for these negative readings. I disagree with some of the claims. And I encourage alternative readings of the other claims, arguing that Lao She’s narrative experimentation—rocky though it may be—signals a creative breakthrough in his corpus. It sets the stage for even more outlandish experimentation in his corpus, as his science fiction Maocheng ji 马可星记, Cat Country, 1933), which stars feline protagonists on Mars, would go on to show.

To counter the dismissal that the novel is substance-less, I turn to a line of scholarship that began in the 1990s with Malaysia-born poet and academic Wong Yoon-wah (王潤華). Wong has a pair of essays—one Chinese, one English, though published many years separately and not precisely translated—that both identify a rupture in critical opinion on Little Po between scholars from the Chinese mainland and those from “the West.”20 He cites the scholars I have cited above as representing the Chinese camp. He cites a few more to represent the Western camp, which he characterizes as having long been generally more willing to take the novel seriously.

But beyond this dichotomy, Wong’s most important intervention is his attunement to the local Singaporean society. Wong’s main thesis is that Little Po contains a wealth of insight into the “Singaporean aspects” of the novel, which Chinese critics had either “overlooked or misunderstood.”21 For Wong, even if the child characters don’t fully grasp the social issues at play in the novel, the novel is still deeply engaged with them. Primary among these social issues are the “racial problems” Little Po wrestles with in chapter two, the segregated school system the protagonist is forced to attend. Wong’s main thesis is that Little Po represents the identity of a “new Singaporean.”22

As valuable as Wong’s essay is for moving the scholarly conversation away from whether the novel is any good, neither his Chinese nor his English-language essay on Xiaopo offers much in the way of detailed textual analysis. Others offer supplemental readings in light of his work, but before moving on, I’d like to supplement all three of Wong’s main ideas with important moments from the novel. Lingering here will help us answer the questions I posed earlier about what worthwhile content actually ends up in the novel, and what it tells us about Lao She as an author.

First, Wong’s point on the “racial problems.” Wong takes his phrasing from the title of the novel’s second chapter, zhongzu wenti 種族問題). It might be alternatively translated as “The race question” or “questions of race.”23 Singapore was

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17 I am currently producing the first English translation.
19 The argument that children’s literature is worth reading seems well-enough established at this point to not have to go into. An entire field—Children’s Studies—devotes a significant amount of energy into the task of analyzing works as children’s literature. This angle is slightly out of the scope of this particular essay (although a worthy topic of future study.) What’s more, so-called “children’s literature” is notoriously ill-defined; to even label Little Po as such would require much more convincing reasoning than the scholars cited above are interested in pursuing. See Marah Gubar, “On Not Defining Children’s Literature” for more on this topic.
21 Wong, 103.
22 Wong, 108-110.
23 I tend to think “The race question” conjures a specific discourse on race that comes out of Western culture. Although wenti (問題) could be translated as either “problems” or “questions,” the phrasing “racial problems” sounds to me like it has a negative connotation, which I do not read in the original. “Questions of race” might get closer at the innocent confusion that Little Po experiences in the chapter.
at the time and remains to this day a multiethnic society. Its major ethnic groups include Malay people as well as Chinese and Indian immigrants. Having been a British Crown colony from 1867 to 1942, there is also a small minority population of Europeans and Eurasians.

In the second chapter of *Xiaopo de shengri*, the young protagonist reckons with the different-looking faces of his friends. Little Po meditates on the various "types of people" (renzhong人种) he has heard about:

As far as all these people were concerned, although Little Po had apparent understandings, he still was not one hundred percent sure how to distinguish between them all, and what's more he simply did not have a clue which sort of person he was. He assumed that all these people were of one family—that people who liked having yellow faces would grow yellow faces, that people who liked black faces would get black faces to play with. It goes without saying that people could change their appearances and bodies at will...

His notion of ethnicity is fluid and borderless. It is in stark contrast to his father, who discourages Little Po from playing with people who are not Cantonese. Little Po does not even know the difference. For instance, we learn early on, "Little Po had two aspirations, and only his sister knew about them: become an Indian doorkeeper (all the larger stores in Singapore had an Indian person who guarded the door at night) or else become a Malay police officer." Little Po acts out these fantasies of becoming other races with the aid of his treasured red silk cloth, which he wraps around his head like a turban to "become Indian," or else around his waist like a skirt to "become Malay." In Little Po's eyes, the game isn't one of pretending, but of becoming another ethnicity. When he wraps his cloth around his waist like the leather belt of a "Western devil," we read, "The moment he tied up his belt, in his mind he felt his nose grow taller and his eyes turn blue."

In playing with this boundary-less notion of zongzu, Little Po's confusion urges the reader to see such a concept as arbitrary or constructed. As such, Lao She's original impulse to write a story describing the innate "greatness of Chinese people" has been revised. No longer do we see a project aimed at detailing innate superiorities of any certain group. Instead what we see is a narrator presenting the worldview of a young protagonist, from whose perspective all his friends seem equal.

At the same time, blind as Little Po may be to concepts such as "ethnicity" or "nationalism," young Xiaopo is far from blind to the stereotypes and characteristics that mark the ethnic groups of Singapore. He may not know what it means to be Indian, or what India is, or whether he himself is Indian, but he does know that Indian people are doorkeepers. When he "becomes Indian...his head would ever so slightly bob left and right as he spoke, in the same lovely way a real Indian person's did." The childish ignorance in the description runs the risk of reading as condescending and stereotyped. That Little Po does not see the condescension is one thing; that his actions here are conveyed directly through dialogue is another. Behind the façade of a young boy playing with his scarf, signifying nothing, there is the thirty-year-old man who wrote in an essay, "Malay people don't know how to do anything but be lazy; Indian people cannot do better than us [Chinese] either; [馬來人什麼也不幹，只會懶。印度人也幹不過我們]." 24

The tug-of-war between innocent child narrating stereotypes and grown man who should know better is often more uncomfortable than charming. Lao She was conscious of this risk, writing that the great flaw of *Little Po* is that he "was willing to play together with the children, but unable to forget that [he] was an adult. This is what was screwy [這就糟了]." 25 When it comes to racialized stereotypes, admitting screwiness hardly feels like a satisfying defense.

Another layer gets added to this messiness when we consider that Lao She himself was Manchu. China's last dynasty, the Qing (1644-1912), was ruled by the Manchu people. Race and ethnicity were hot-button issues in late Qing and early Republican China (1912- ). 26 Words used to describe these ideas were changing. Lao She and his family went from being manren (滿人, Manchu people) during the Qing Dynasty to manzu (滿族, Manchu ethnicity), as zu (族) became the new nomenclature for classifying race and ethnic group. 27 During this period, many Chinese people were coming to their own understandings of race and attempting to categorize it. From the beginning of Republican China, race and nationalism were closely linked, since with a new nation came a new nationality. Chinese people themselves disagreed on what that meant. Jing Tsu notes also the influence of eugenics on the Chinese nation-building task, writing, "During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the period of nation building in China, racial improvement was propagated as the key to national survival." 28 Tsu outlines the Chinese desire during that period to legitimize their country as a global force. Often, as in the case of Liang Qichao, the idea of the Chinese people as a "race" was used to articulate that desire.

Liang Qichao (1873-1912) was a highly influential philosopher who believed in nationalistic revolution. He looked up to the then-recent Meiji Restoration (late 1860s and early 70s), which earned Western respect toward Japan. He wanted a respectable national identity for China. In his eyes, "In order to rouse the nationalistic idea, naturally we cannot keep from attacking the Manchus." 29 He was not alone in this belief. A common phrase at that time was, "Hanren qiang, manren wang" (漢人強,滿人亡, "The rise of the Han is the death of the Manchus."). 30 Those who didn't directly attack the Manchus believed they had already assimilated themselves culturally into the Han—that already the people of China ought to be regarded as one people, and the real enemy was the Western imperialists.

24 Lao She, "Still Thinking About It."
25 Lao She, "How I Wrote Little Po's Birthday."
26 Republican forces began the Xinhai Revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynasty in 1911. The warlord Yuan Shikai declared himself the emperor of the Qing the same year. Yuan was eventually defeated and the Republic of China (中華民國) was established; after the Chinese Civil War between the Guomindang (國民黨) and the Chinese Communist Party (共產黨) in the late 1940s, the Guomindang leaders of the Republic of China fled to Taiwan, where it is still located to this day.
27 Ann Witchard, _Lao She in London_, 16.
29 Witchard, 16.
30 Tsu, 41.
This was more or less the official position of the Republic, as its leader Chiang Kai-shek argued that his country was home to only one zu, “the Chinese people” (Zhonghua minzu 中华民族).31 These ideas in his homeland, as well as his time abroad, surely had a great effect on Lao She’s fundamental understanding of his own zhongzu identity. In England, he was simply a “Chinaman,” “yellow-faced” to use the pejorative parlance of the day. The ugly racial politics manifest in Little Po, therefore, are not precisely the prejudiced caricatures of a unilaterally empowered Lao She. In two contexts, his identity—be it Manchu or simply Chinese—had been marginalized. This is not to excuse his frustrated response. It is simply to suggest a few reasons why he found himself unable to fully “forget that he was an adult.” Needing to reaffirm to his readers that the Chinese identity was one to be proud of, Lao She found he had bones to pick. He didn’t think a kid protagonist could pick them.

Related to this discussion on zhongzu in the novel are the other two points Wong makes about Xiaopo—that Lao She offers a coherent critique of the Singaporean education system, and that Little Po represents a “new Singaporean” identity, as opposed to the Cantonese identity of his father and mother. Wong believes Little Po to have “identified with Singapore by accepting a multi-racial society.”32 He adds that Little Po “speaks Malay fluently” and is “full of love for everyone.”33 As such, Wong argues, Lao She writes a Singaporean story with Singaporean protagonists—one that readers ought to embrace if for simply that reason.

Little Po’s acceptance of multiracial Singapore is a point worth reflecting on. Little Po’s worldview, as we have seen, is limited by his author’s own preconceptions of racial superiorities and inferiorities. But surely Little Po’s open-mindedness and his rejection of nationalist politics are worth something. Xiaopo sees the world quite differently from his father. In a classic example of the author’s dark humor, the narrator writes that “whenever anyone mentioned Japan [Little Po’s father’s] neck would get thicker than the gullet of a toad.” At first Little Po cannot understand his father’s prejudice, until one day he pulled out a geography book and realized Japan looked quite like a messily split up fried stick of dough. “How could a dough stick that had gotten that screwed up even still be called a dough stick?” wonders Xiaopo, “and so he began to hate Japan.” No question that the game here is a send-up of the absurdity of nationalist ties.

Describing the father’s prejudice, the narrator does not offer a political speech detailing the reasons one might despise Japan—a nation whose imperialist mission was spreading quickly by 1930, and which would occupy Singapore from 1942 to 1945. Rather, the narrator presents the father’s bulging neck—a detail his protagonist might more readily reach for. But the perspective is not entirely Little Po’s. The reader is by no means expected to similarly hate Japan—indeed, the opposite is true. The narrator chuckles at Little Po’s naïveté, plays his childish perspective for ironic laughter.

Scholars since Wong have problematized his unilaterally positive appraisal of the novel. Chen Tao, for example, writes, “Although [Xiaopo] describes the condition of Singapore’s symbiotically multicultural society, not only is it written from a Chinese person’s perspective and intended for a Chinese readership, it furthermore calls for a primacy of Chinese ideology and identity.”34 He points out that in Little Po, the young protagonist justifies playing with his multiethnic friends to his suspicious older brother with the line, “When we’re playing together I tell them all to become Chinese.”35 And as for Lao She himself, Chen says the author is unwilling to avoid “nationality worship” (minzu chongbai 民族崇拜), a phrase Lao She uses himself in an essay in which he also proclaims, “We [Chinese] are below the Westerners but above other nationalities.”36 While Wong merely stipulates that Lao She’s text appears attuned to contemporary Singaporean society, Chen argues that the author maintains an outsider position in that society, and that that outsider position affects his narration and his characters’ behaviors.

Brian Bernards also calls attention to Lao She’s Chinese nationalist tendencies (which manifest themselves particularly in the author’s essays) while simultaneously reiterating the pointedly anti-nationalist aspects of Little Po. Bernards begins by quoting Lao She’s thesis that without “hardworking” Chinese people, “there would be no Nanyang [南洋, the term for Southeast Asia in Lao She’s time].”37 He also points out Lao She’s outsider position during his stay in Singapore, writing, “If Lao She truly desired to research the region’s history, culture, and politics, he could have reached out local writers, journalists, and educators in an increasingly vibrant Sinophone intellectual and literary community in Singapore and Malaya. ... There is no record of Lao She having any knowledge of these developments or having contacted local writers.”38 There exist any number of possible reasons as to why Lao She would have remained outside the local literary scene. For one thing, perhaps a young Lao She, still several years away from publishing any of his most renowned works, would have felt uncomfortable inserting himself—at the time a poor, unknown schoolteacher—into a literary conversation.

Although Lao She might not have exchanged ideas with other writers in Singapore, Bernards maintains that features within Little Po still too a clearly anti-nationalist line. Recalling Lao She’s scrapped draft that would have focused on the labors of Chinese immigrants, Bernards writes, “This discrepancy between original concept and outcome, I argue, illustrates the author’s supplanting of a diasporic nationalism organized around an ethnic, racial, or ‘blood’ consciousness...with a trans colonial consciousness organized around a shared commitment to one’s place of inhabitance (embodied by the multiethnic Singaporean schoolchildren).”39

31 Thomas Mullaney, Coming to Terms with the Nation (University of California Press: 2011), 2.
32 Wong, 110.
33 Wong, 111.
34 Chen, 73.
35 Chen, 76.
36 Chen, 76.
37 Bernards, 9.
38 Bernards, 10.
39 Bernards, 3.
symbol for what he calls a “transcolonial consciousness.” Indeed, this seems to be the very consciousness to which Wong was referring when he deemed Little Po a “new Singaporean.” Bernard frames the argument through the language of diasporic nationalism, writing, “By not communicating in Mandarin, Little Po and his sister are not being good diasporic Chinese nationalists.” The two are united with their friends not by means of the author’s Mandarin, but within the medium of “their own” local language. In another instance, Little Po’s mother requires her son’s help when going to the market, since she only speaks Cantonese and needs her son to translate so that she not be swindled by the Malay-speaking merchants. Here again, the diverse culture of Singapore plays an important role in the lives of his characters.

And yet, in his Chinese narration, Lao She effectively robs them of that local language. Generally speaking, Lao She’s corpus is notable for its use of a specifically Beijing-accented style of vernacular Chinese. In this, Little Po proves no exception. My intervention is centered on this fundamental element of the novel, and enters the dialogue between Wong, Chen, and Bernard concerning “diasporic nationalism” (Bernard’s words) or “the primacy of China” (Chen’s).

With dialogue that might have come out of any of his other works, Lao She’s multilingual cast might as well all be native-born Beijingers once their words have been rendered on the page. The narrator merely informs the reader that the characters do not speak Mandarin amongst themselves, and as such it is as though Lao She has himself translated Little Po’s story into Chinese from a multilingual original that does not exist. While it may be a common language that unites Xiaopo with his friends, it is the very same language that would have separated all of them from Lao She, who did not speak Malay. Since only Chinese (and perhaps English) were available to Lao She as viable options for narrating his text, his narrator’s identity cannot help but remain markedly different from that of his characters.

To understand the manifestation of the language barrier in the novel, take, for example, a moment in chapter three, in which the distance between the narrator and his characters is at its most extreme. He writes:

> The place where Little Po lives—Singapore—does not have all four seasons. It’s hot all year round. No matter whether a tree is an evergreen or not (if you don’t know what an evergreen tree is, please look it up in your Mandarin Encyclopedia) the leaves on the trees are always green through the end of the year.

By framing Singapore’s climate as necessarily unfamiliar to the reader, the narrator acknowledges his reader as a non-Singaporean person literate in Chinese. He further emphasizes this point by encouraging the reader to look up “evergreen tree” in their Guoyu jiaoke shu (國語教科書, Mandarin textbook). His gesture to the guoyu (國語, “national language”: Mandarin) text in particular makes it clear to anyone that the intended audience is not in Europe or America, but in China. It is a Mandarin teacher’s gesture—a gesture of the author’s, himself Chinese, himself a teacher of Mandarin Chinese.

But who is this reader who has never been to Singapore, yet nevertheless would have to look up evergreen tree in their textbook, which the narrator simply presumes they have? Of course, the question could merely be dismissed by arguing that the parenthetical about the textbook was just Lao She telling a joke. And he absolutely is. Certainly a reader in Fiction Monthly would merely chuckle (or roll their eyes) at the line, and quickly move on. However, if we hope to reconcile this moment with, for instance, Wong’s reading of the novel as primarily Singaporean, surely the language politics in the moment become clear. Why would a “Singaporean” novel need to describe the environment in this way, and why would it refer to the language of an immigrant population?

Further complicating this question is the narrator’s insistence to color his narration with references to Beijing culture. For example, in the same direct address in chapter three, the narrator asks readers if they have “ever seen a snail larger than a screw?” In doing so, he calls the snail the same sort that will “first pop its horns out of its shell and then poke out its head (先出犄角，後出頭).” That particular description references a popular Beijing children’s song, “Water Snail” (shuiniu'er, 水牛兒). The song is considered a classic Beijing folk tune, and dates back over 200 years to the Qing Dynasty. One cannot be entirely sure how likely the son of Cantonese immigrants born and raised in Singapore would be to reference such a tune. In any case, the reference still marks Lao She’s impulse to defer to his home culture.

This impulse recalls the problem Lao She mentioned about not always being able to identify with his child main characters. Related to the novel’s experiment with language, Lao She writes, “Only upon writing Xiaopo de shengri was I able to realize the power of vernacular writing. I dared to use the simplest language—seemingly a child’s language—to describe everything.” That is, except when he does not. Just as the child’s perspective argument is “screwy” (糟了), so is the argument that Little Po is a clean effort to represent a “new Singaporean” identity. In the same way that age separates Lao She and his characters (as the earliest critics of the novel emphasized), so too do race / zhongzu, nationality, and (I want to stress particularly) language. The narrator moves between close third-person—the “dough stick” moments—and separation from his characters—the “Mandarin textbook” moments.

The ultimate manifestation of this fluctuating narratorial position is Lao She’s experimentation with “free indirect style” in the novel, in which the narration attempts to act as a direct conduit for the protagonist’s perspective. Take for example the extended meditation on why Little Po’s younger sister has the name that she has, which is the conundrum that opens the novel. Little Po considers turning to the textbook was just Lao She telling a joke. And he absolutely is. Certainly a reader in Fiction Monthly would merely chuckle (or roll their eyes) at the line, and quickly move on. However, if we hope to reconcile this moment with, for instance, Wong’s reading of the novel as primarily Singaporean, surely the language politics in the moment become clear. Why would a “Singaporean” novel need to describe the environment in this way, and why would it refer to the language of an immigrant population?41

41 And not even the dominant language of Singapore’s Chinese community. Xiaopo’s parents, after all, spoke Cantonese. Most Chinese immigrants to Singapore were from areas in southern China (Fujian, Guangdong, etc.) where Mandarin (especially at that time) was not most peoples’ native Chinese dialect.

42 Lin Chang, Quwen Beijing [Interesting Tales from Beijing] (Taipei: Songbo chuban shiyue youxian gongsi, 2017).
the reader learns about those relatives: “What about asking Older Brother?”, the narrator writes, “Pah! Who would have the guts to go ask him? And anyway he already nabbed up all the books with pictures and hid them so we couldn’t find them. Just thinking about Older Brother made Little Po hate him a bit.” The exclamatory “Pah! [呸]” in the midst of the narration queues the transition into free indirection narration.

An excerpt such as this might be the sort of moment Lao She has in mind when he takes pride in the novel having been written from a “child’s perspective.” Surely the line “Who would have the guts to go ask him? [誰那麼有心有腸的去問哥哥呢!]” is Little Po’s own perspective; an adult narrator would have no reason to fear the child Big Po. But in the next sentence the narrator intrudes on Little Po’s thoughts, from an exterior perspective: “Just thinking about Older Brother made Little Po hate him a bit.” Such an observation is that of an omniscient third-person narrator; including this line just after the lines of Little Po’s internal thoughts self-consciously calls attention to the text’s construction. Free indirect style is a technique Lao She develops further in his later work. Lydia Liu makes it a centerpiece of her analysis of *Camel Xiangzi*. She points out that free indirect style is one of the many “‘imported’ narrative techniques” with which Lao She would have become familiar while reading modernist literature in England.43

However, as Liu states in the context of *Camel Xiangzi*, “the changing stylistics of modern Chinese fiction involve more than the introduction of a cluster of novelistic techniques. It also invests the meaning of a literary text in the person of its protagonist, male or female, who dominates the fictional world as the locus of reality in possession of certain psychological and moral ‘truths.’”44 The same can be said of *Little Po*. Little Po’s truths are the novel’s moral truths at their best. Since he is very young, Little Po’s truths are necessarily messy.

Indeed, the novel is somewhat messy. But as an experiment in narration, an experiment in perspective, plot, and characterization, it is marvelously sophisticated. It moved Lao She on from romance novels, and set him up for the next phase of his career. Most importantly, *Little Po* invited its author to play.

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Contested Ownership, Contested Narratives: Robert Kempner and the Nuremberg Archive

Sophie Lombardo

As the sole German national to serve on the American prosecutorial team at the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal (IMT) and Subsequent Trials, Robert Kempner played a critical role in the Allies’ denazification proceedings. Yet a large percentage of the narratives surrounding his life have transpired among Holocaust deniers rather than historians. Both an archival history and a biographical analysis, this article contends that Kempner’s relationship to the Nuremberg Archive produced contested narratives of his life and legacy. By consulting archival sources from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as well as the Mazal Holocaust Collection at the University of Colorado-Boulder, it analyzes the Nuremberg Archive as Kempner envisioned it rather than as it currently exists, dispersed in collections across the country. Ultimately, it argues that Kempner, by taking on the roles of the archivist as well as the historian, complicated his legacy by creating a space in which a variety of conflicting narratives could emerge.

Introduction

I was working in Special Collections at the University of Colorado-Boulder when I met Robert M.W. Kempner. I had been hired as a research fellow in the Mazal Holocaust Collection, an enormous repository of documents from the National Socialist and post-World War II periods, and my daily tasks mostly consisted of cataloging and sorting archival materials.1 One morning, we opened an unusually heavy box. Upon removing the packing paper that had been stuffed into it two years prior, we found what appeared to be several massive books. Searching for the title, I pulled one out, only to discover it was not a published text but rather a bound version of original transcripts from the Ministries Trial, the eleventh of twelve American-led military tribunals conducted after the conclusion of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg (IMT). The name “RMW Kempner” had been printed on both the navy cloth spine and blue-and-white marbled cover. The next box of materials contained several more of these tomes, as did the next box. By lunch, we had counted a total of 119 volumes, each marked with Kempner’s name and the section of the transcripts contained therein. As a research fellow, I had been asked to identify materials relevant to a graduate seminar on Genocide and the Holocaust.

1 The collection’s original founder, a businessman from San Antonio named Harry Mazal, had dedicated his life to combating Holocaust denial, running a research center for students and scholars of the Holocaust until his death in 2014. In the 1990s, Mazal had also assisted the defense in the Irving-Lipstadt libel suit, in which Holocaust denier David Irving sued Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, a Holocaust historian at Emory University, for statements made about him in her book, Denying the Holocaust. For more on the Irving-Lipstadt Trial, see Richard J. Evans, Lying about Hitler: History, Holocaust, and the David Irving Trial (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Deborah Lipstadt, History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving (New York: Ecco, 2005); and Robert Jan van Pelt, The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).
For several weeks, I had been searching for sources pertaining to the course’s unit on postwar justice, but little had jumped out. The Kempner materials, however, had piqued my interest.

A quick scan of the transcripts immediately revealed that RMW Kempner had been deputy chief counsel at the Ministries Trial. The last and longest national military tribunal at Nuremberg, the Ministries Trial sought to prosecute diplomats who had served in the Third Reich’s Foreign Office, the Auswärtiges Amt. In his capacity as chief prosecutor, Kempner had done a great deal speaking at the trial; many of the transcripts recorded his examinations and cross-examinations as well as the occasional exchange with a judge. I could glean little more than that from the sources, however, and consequently turned to the internet. What I discovered surprised me. The search results offered a short Wikipedia page, Kempner’s obituary, stories on the recovery of something called the Rosenberg diary, and then, just the fourth link down, “Real History,” by the notorious Holocaust revisionist David Irving.

After several weeks in the Mazal Collection, I had grown all too familiar with David Irving. A self-proclaimed historian of World War II, he had cast his lot with other Holocaust deniers during the 1980s. Chief among Irving’s aims was to exonerate Adolf Hitler of complicity in atrocities committed against Jews during World War II. After initially attracting attention for arguing that Hitler had not been aware of the genocide against Europe’s Jews (and consequently had not authorized the Final Solution), Irving wrote the foreword to the revisionist Leuchter Report, which asserted there had been no gas chambers at Auschwitz. With the extreme diCetion commonly used among writers, Irving concluded, “until the end of this tragic century there will always be incorrigible historians, statesmen, and publicists who are content to believe, or have no economically viable alternative but to believe, that the Nazis used ‘gas chambers’ at Auschwitz to kill human beings.” His statements earned him the title of “Holocaust denier” in Deborah Lipstadt’s 1993 book, Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory. Affronted by Lipstadt’s description of him as an antisemite whose claims about the events of World War II hold no credence, Irving filed a libel suit against Dr. Lipstadt, making international news (he lost the case in 2001). That he—and no one else—had something to say on the lawyer’s life but admits its failure to consider Kempner beyond his work as a prosecutor.

Kempner’s narrative of the Nuremberg Trials has, over the years, been lost in a way that has not held true for other Nuremberg prosecutors of similar standing. Although he gave countless interviews and headlined hundreds of newspaper articles during his lifetime, the body of literature produced after his death is scant—but not inexplicably so. The little scholarship that does exist has all been produced after 2001, the year in which the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum acquired a significant portion of his personal archive. Mario zur Lüwen’s student paper, written in 2004 and entitled "Robert Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche," provides a summary of the lawyer’s life but admits its failure to consider Kempner beyond his work as a lawyer. Historian Dirk Pöppman’s essay, a contribution to Kim Priemel and Alexa

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4 David Irving, "Index to Documents Relating to Dr Robert Kempner." The International Campaign for Real History (blog), n.d.
5 As of February 26, 2018, the radical antisemitic website associated with Radio Islam had been taken down from its server. As historian Christian Mentel defines them, Holocaust revisionists are individuals who “intend to create the impression that they belong to the world-wide community of scholars. Contrary to this, almost none of the self-appointed revisionists are trained historians but rather in most cases, they are simply Holocaust deniers with outright sympathies for Nazi ideology” (Mentel, Christian. “The Nurnberg Protocol: Object of Revisionist Falsification of History.” Pdho-Org (blog), December 26, 2009).
Stiller’s 2012 collection *Reassessing the Nuremberg Military Tribunals,* contributes a significantly more incisive work. Using archival material absent from zur Löwen’s essay, Pöppman demonstrates how Kempner’s pragmatism and self-assurance propelled him to the Nuremberg stage. He identifies a number of skills that made Kempner uniquely valuable to the staff at Nuremberg. Ultimately, Pöppman’s contention is that Nuremberg, in altering the trajectory of Kempner’s life, ensured his status as a historical figure, redefining his identity and thereby “ma[king] the man.”

The most extensive contribution to the scholarship on Kempner is David Kinney and Robert Wittman’s *The Devil’s Diary,* a parallel biography of Alfred Rosenberg and Robert Kempner’s lives published only in 2016. This text, more than any other, consulted a breadth of materials from both the Kempner collection in D.C. and Kempner’s autobiography (as well as a vast body of secondary literature on the postwar archives). Kinney and Wittman ground their framing of Kempner on Kempner’s illegitimate removal of some several thousand pounds of trial documents after the trials concluded. Contrary to the narrative Kempner forged for himself, *The Devil’s Diary* contends that Kempner’s legacy is not as a critical agent of postwar justice, but rather as a lawyer who broke up the Nuremberg archive, preventing a not-insignificant body of research from being conducted for decades. In particular, it addresses Kempner’s removal of chief Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg’s diary. The Rosenberg diary, as Kinney and Wittman illustrate, provided unparalleled access into the mind of a man who had “orchestrated the theft of artwork, archives, and libraries from Paris to Krakow to Kiev.…planted the insidious idea in Hitler’s mind that a global Jewish conspiracy was behind the communist revolution in the Soviet Union….and] laid the groundwork for the Holocaust.” Between Kinney and Wittman’s image of Kempner as ruthlessly pragmatic and deeply human, and Pöppman’s legal-historical perspective, two divergent narratives of Kempner the historical figure have emerged in academic circles.

Kinney and Wittman’s examination of Kempner reflects the dominant narrative surrounding the Nuremberg prosecutor; despite zur Löwen and Pöppman’s scholarship, Kempner has been discussed far more frequently as the man who broke up the Nuremberg Archive. By considering the motivations and implications of Kempner’s actions—rather than examining the mere facts of the act itself—this article seeks to fill a gap in the literature on Kempner. As this paper will show, Kempner, in removing materials from the state-run archive, effectively constructed a new archive of a particular sort; he removed files from Nuremberg’s Palace of Justice with the clear intention of crafting a specific narrative about the nature of postwar justice. In so doing, he assumed the roles of both archivist and historian. Not only did he build a personal archive—that is, organize and store materials according to a specific framework—but he also began producing a historical analysis of those materials.

Consequently, I have turned to a section of the archive Kempner himself constructed—his personal collection of bound materials. Today, these materials reside in separate collections hundreds of miles apart, a consequence of multiple lawsuits that broke up the collection after Kempner’s death in 1993. Kempner, however, originally envisioned them as a single entity. Taken together, the 119 volumes of transcripts in Boulder and the two additional volumes of identically bound ephemera in Washington, D.C. present a narrative consistent with Kempner’s belief that the Americans conducted trials of multiple kinds at Nuremberg. In a letter written to Telford Taylor shortly before the Subsequent Proceedings concluded, Kempner provided what remains perhaps the clearest articulation of his perspective on the war crimes project:

“We had, so to speak, two sets of trials: the first one within the kingdom of the Nuremberg courthouse, known only to the participants in the work here. The second one consists of the emanation of the trials as they appear in the eyes of the German and European public, involving distortions, half-truths, over-emphasizing or under-emphasizing certain parts, in toto, a very sketchy and inaccurate picture.”

His assessment of the tribunals reflected a commonly held opinion among the Nuremberg prosecutors. The war crimes enterprise’s success extended only so far as public support for the tribunals, and that the public sphere itself amounted to a contested space.

Additionally, this paper seeks to place various analyses of Kempner’s legacy in conversation with one another. By consulting Kempner’s bound materials alongside his autobiography *Ankläger einer Epoche,* government files, and personal papers housed in the Robert M.W. and Benedicita Kempner Collection at USHMM, this paper provides a more textured biographical analysis of Kempner as well as contends that such a narrative has been overshadowed as a consequence of both his identity as a German Jew and his polarizing actions on the Nuremberg stage.

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13 Kempner’s private library has been discussed at length in the media. See Richard Simon’s column in *The Los Angeles Times,* “The hunt for the lost Nazi diary”; Athena Jones of CNN’s article, “Recovered Nazi diary gives rare view into ‘Third Reich’”; Lazar Berman at *The Times of Israel*’s “US Authorities Locate 400 pages of Hitler’s confidant’s diary”; the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s August 2013 Curator’s Corner video, “An Over 15-Year Journey.” Countless other pieces have been published online by a variety of Holocaust deniers and vocal antisemites as well.
15 Letter from Kempner to Taylor, 8 April 1948 (Box 26/ Folder 3), RG-71.005.01, Robert M.W. and Ruth Benedicta Kempner Collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, D.C. A note regarding archival sources: Box/Folder identifications correspond with the collection’s finding aid. “Folder” refers to the number assigned it on the finding aid. Whenever multiple folders existed within that categorization, I have indicated the specific subfolder in brackets.
Robert M.W. Kempner: A Life in Brief

On January 16, 1946, snickers filled Nuremberg Courtroom 600 as American prosecutor Robert M.W. Kempner took the stand. Ignoring the titter from the defendants’ box, the ex-legal advisor to the Prussian Interior Ministry presented “document after document” of evidence “condemning the Nazis for their crimes against humanity.” Though he still wrestled with his German accent—and indeed, had preemptively penciled phonetic clues onto his court notes—he painted such a damning account of the accused’s crimes that, within moments, the twenty-one men in the defendants’ box had fallen silent. It was a complete inversion of circumstance: just ten years earlier, Kempner had been imprisoned in a concentration camp. Now, he stood on the greatest stage in modern legal history, as a prosecutor at the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal.

Kempner had been fighting the Nazi Party since its inception, longer than perhaps any other man at the IMT. As a member of the liberal Social Democrat Party (SPD), he had actively participated in leftist circles and joined the politically diverse Republican League of Judges in Berlin (“Republikanischen Richterbund Berlin”). On May 2, 1928, he began working in the Prussian Interior Ministry’s Personalburo, operating within a number of conservative and liberal circles to better attain his goals. In what he identified as his crowning achievement in the Ministry, Kempner undertook the massive task of updating the Prussian police force’s legal codes; under his supervision, the law was modernized to grant civilians greater protections from the police—an effort that would be rendered moot by the Nazis several years later.

Though Kempner himself described the late 1920s as a more democratic period under the Weimar government, the liberal experiment had polarized alarmingly by 1930. The ranks of the right-wing National Socialist Democratic Workers Party (NSDAP) had swelled since its charismatic leader Adolf Hitler had been released from prison. Galvanized further by worldwide economic instability, the NSDAP earned 18.3% of the German population’s vote in 1930, a significant growth that provided the party with major political inroads. Kempner, concerned by the Nazis’ increasing hold on the Republic, began investigating the NSDAP threat to state security in his capacity as “disciplinary judge…superior government counselor and legal advisor of the [Prussian Interior Ministry’s] Police Division.” In the spring of that year, he and his leftist colleagues began drafting a memorandum against Hitler, with the intention of providing “a legal basis for outlawing the party and jailing its members.” A collaborative effort among liberals in the political, economic, and religious sectors, Kempner’s confidential report analyzed the history of the early Nazi Party as well as its structure and political intentions. It was finished several months later. Concluding that the NSDAP was nothing more than a criminal, terrorist organization, the memorandum recommended the party’s dissolution. With the help of Otto Braun’s government, Kempner saw to the memo’s distribution throughout the German political sphere, but according to his autobiography, influential pro-Nazi elements suppressed the document, and no action was taken against the NSDAP.

Two years later, the NSDAP became the largest political party in the Reichstag when it more than doubled its share of the German vote. On January 30, 1933, President von Hindenburg appointed Hitler chancellor of Germany. Under Hitler’s direction, countless Nazis were appointed to high-ranking ministerial positions to consolidate party control of the bureaucracy. In Kempner’s own division, the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, Alter Kämpfer (“old fighter,” or an early member of the Nazi Party) Hermann Göring filled the position of provisional minister. His task was to implement the Gleichschaltung policy—or, as he explained it, to lead government according to the National Socialist spirit. For Kempner and his liberal colleagues, the NSDAP’s ascendency in Weimar government portended nothing good. Concerned the Nazis would leverage their personal archives against them, opponents of the party began expunging “politically risky” materials; independent of later party-sponsored book burnings, “left-wing politicians and intellectuals burnt or otherwise disposed of their papers,” throughout 1933. The purges began almost immediately. At a meeting on February 9, 1933, Göring assured bureaucrats that those true to the spirit of the Nazi Party would retain their positions. The same day, Kempner received a note requesting he meet with the ministry’s personnel representative. Under the Nazi government, any and “all officials and officers who could be considered in any way doubtful” were to be removed from their positions. At Göring’s request, Kempner had been fired.

Two weeks after he was dismissed from his position at the Interior Ministry, Kempner was walking home from a party on Kurfürstendamm when he saw the Reichstag consumed in flames. All too aware of the suspicious convenience this

17 Robert M.W. Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein Verlag, 1983), 45.
18 For more on Kempner’s prewar networks, see 109-118 in his autobiography, Ankläger einer Epoche.
19 Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche, 65.
22 Wittram and Kinney, The Devil’s Diary, 111.
23 Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche, 65.
26 Fulbrook, The Divided Nation, 66.
27 Fulbrook, The Divided Nation, 66.
28 Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche, 88.
29 Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche, 89.
32 Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche, 89.
33 Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche, 109.
posed for the nascent regime, Kempner recognized that a wave of arrests would soon follow.44 Conversations with a number of former colleagues had alerted the liberal attorney to the fact that the Nazi Party had been compiling “new lists” of all potential threats for several weeks.45 Though Kempner felt confident he was not high-profile enough to land on the initial purge lists—and even if he was, he believed his relationships with Nazi-aligned colleagues would shield him from arrest—he was well aware that the situation in Germany had grown increasingly inhospitable to opponents of Nazism, particularly Jewish ones.46 In just a year’s time, the Nazis had radically transformed Kempner’s old police force into a vehicle for state terror. Established by Göring as the Geheime Staatspolizei (shortened to Gestapo), the secret corps operated independently of the criminal division and existed solely to eliminate dissidents. And, just as Kempner had feared, the Reichstag fire offered a pretext for the complete dismantling of Weimar Germany’s democratic structures.47 In March 1933, the first concentration camp opened.

Kempner would become all too familiar with the Nazi state’s secret police. On March 12, 1935, Gestapo agents arrived unannounced at his Lichterfelde residence. According to a police report drafted three days later, they took Kempner into “protective custody” for suspected “subversive activity,” interrogating him at their headquarters on Prinz-Albrecht-Straße before interning him at the Columbia-Haus prison in Tempelhof.48 As Kempner would later recall, Columbia-Haus was the most notorious torture center in Berlin; many who arrived never left, and he firmly believed he would not survive his incarceration.49 Despite his family’s appeals to politically influential characters, the lawyer remained in prison for two months.50 When he was finally released, he immediately fled Berlin. That same year the regime stripped him of his German citizenship.

Stateless, a political threat to the Third Reich, and racially categorized as a Jew under the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, Kempner determined it was time to leave his homeland. Because one did not need a visa to cross the border into Italy, he and his wife Ruth fled to Florence, traveling separately to improve their chances of at least one’s successful escape.51 They each packed but one suitcase, leaving the vast majority of their personal effects behind in their home on Potsdamerstraße. As a consequence of the blatantly extortionist Reich Flight Tax, Robert and Ruth Kempner would have been taxed significantly by the time of their departure from Germany. Originally a measure to disincentivize Germans from moving ahead, the tax had been manipulated during the Nazi Period to target victims of religious and ethnic persecution in the Third Reich. By emigrating, then, it is very likely that Kempner and his wife lost most of their possessions.52 Theirs was a common story during the mid-1930s: emigration nearly always involved “the dispersion and loss of personal papers, libraries, heirlooms, photographs and other family memorabilia.”53 The Kempners—and thousands of other German-Jewish émigrés—had been forced to leave behind their histories.

It is remarkable, then, that among the few valuables Kempner brought with him was a stack of government papers—including his 1930 report against Hitler and the NSDAP. As he would later write, he “brought [these original documents] out of Germany…under personal risk,” recognizing there were “probably no other copies” in existence.54 As a comprehensive account of the Nazi Party’s leaders, proclamations, plans, and tactics, the report against Hitler contained such incriminating material that it would not be preserved by the Nazi state if left behind.55 Consequently, though it imperiled his own life, Kempner packed away the report. Though it would not be published as an article, entitled “Blueprint of the Nazi Underground—Past and Future Subversive Activities,” until two months after the Reich’s surrender, Kempner recognized it as deeply valuable to the American war effort. That he not only refused to destroy such compromising political documentation, but also made the effort to smuggle it out of Nazi Germany, says a great deal about the émigré’s belief in the power of the written historical record. It also foreshadowed the decision that would mire Kempner in controversy for decades to come.56

Once war broke out, Kempner, determined to aid the Americans in their effort against the Nazis, began contacting the intelligence agencies. Long before he arrived in the U.S., he sent letters to the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and even J. Edgar Hoover. Advertising himself as an “expert criminalist” with significant experience in German government, Kempner stated that he would “be able to render very good services” to the United States.57 In other letters, he underscored his status as “a college-level lecturer in administrative law, and a writer” as well.58 Emphasizing his intimate knowledge of the German ministries’ inner workings, he more or less wrote his way into a position as a wartime consultant for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the agency chiefly responsible for intelligence

45  Kempner, Akhlag der Epoche, 66.
46  Kempner maintained a lifelong distrust of state archives, particularly because research facilities such as the National Archives and Records Administration allowed anyone interested to access their materials. After a particularly unsettling interaction between Kempner and denier David Irving, Kempner wrote to J. Edgar Hoover to inform him he anticipated Irving would attempt to “tamper with transcripts or tapes of the Nazi war crimes trial.” (“War-Trial Archive Tampering Was Feared.” Los Angeles Times, November 15, 2000.)
47  Letter from Kempner to Hoover, 21 December 1938, (Box 43/Folder 22 [1 of 3]), RG-71.001.04, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC.
48  Wittman and Kinney, The Devil’s Diary, 228.

34  Kempner, Akhlag der Epoche, 111.
35  Kempner, Akhlag der Epoche, 110.
36  Kempner, Akhlag der Epoche, 111-112.
37  Fulbrook, The Divided Nation, 67.
38  Staff Evidence Analysis, No. 2499-PS, 31 January 1946, (Box 419a), p13-14, RG-71.007, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC.
39  Kempner, Akhlag der Epoche, 133-134.
40  Kempner, Akhlag der Epoche, 134.
41  Kempner, Akhlag der Epoche, 138.
efforts in the European Theater of War. He also provided his skills to domestic anti-Nazi efforts as a member of a German research and translation unit based in his new home of Pennsylvania.49

Additionally, Kempner produced a number of essays advocating for a nuanced approach to the issue of German nationals residing in the U.S., contending that conventional legal definitions for “enemy aliens” were insufficient given the circumstances that had forced many Germans—specifically German Jews—abroad.50 By war’s end, his contributions had proven significant enough to draw attention from members of the Department of Justice. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, newly appointed chief counsel for the prosecution of German war crimes, tapped Kempner to join his legal team at the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in the spring of 1945. On March 8 of that year, Kempner became a naturalized American citizen,51 a moment countless newspapers reported on when discussing his involvement in the proceedings.52 Later that summer, he returned to “the dark continent of Europe” to begin his work for Justice Jackson.53

As “the only ‘German’ fellow on the table,” Kempner proved uniquely equipped to address a number of issues that the American prosecutorial team faced at Nuremberg.54 Not only was he fluent in German, but he was also intimately familiar with the machinations of law and bureaucracy in the German Nazi state. He proved a successful—albeit controversial—interrogator, and his research skills, though dubious in some instances, were of the highest order. Because he was so adept at identifying key evidence, he was even appointed head of a research unit, which granted him significant hiring powers in what he considered the most important facets of the proceedings.55 In his later years, Kempner would reflect that perhaps more than anyone else, the research teams at Nuremberg shaped the enterprise.

51  Memo from Kempner to SAC, 8 March 1945, (Box 43/Folder 22 [1 of 3]), RG-71.001.04, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC.
52  Memo from Kempner to Dodd, 1 March 1945, (Box 43/Folder 24), RG-71.001.04, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC; Russell Hill, “Man He Exiled Presents Case Against Frick,” New York Herald Tribune, January 17, 1946, (Box 264/Folder 17), RG-71.005.01, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC.
53  Memo from Kempner to SAC, 20 July 1945 (Box 43/Folder 22 [1 of 3]), RG-71.001.04, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC. Kempner’s expedited naturalization process after World War II’s conclusion was not a peculiar one; during the course of the war, some 100,000 servicemen had been granted U.S. citizenship. (Patricia Kollander, “Boomerang Resistance: German Émigrés in the US Army during World War II.” In A Companion to World War II. Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012, 643.)
54  Kempner, Ankläger einer Epoche, 222.
predominantly textual evidence."

That the Nazi regime meticulously documented every facet of its bureaucratic and military apparatuses only increased the degree to which the written record would impact the unfolding Nuremberg Tribunals. Just as the regime had deliberately destroyed some archives, it had expanded others drastically during the Nazi Period, producing tons of files in offices across the country. The National Socialist project “obligated individual Germans to maintain extensive racial archives about their bodies, lives and families,” as a means to promote national unity.65 Moreover, the various German ministries—including the Interior Ministry, Foreign Ministry, and Ministry of Finance—produced thousands of documents of correspondence, internal memos, and policy papers as Germany underwent the process of remilitarization. For the Allies, these documents provided a wealth of information, and, by extension, power; the French, American, British, and Soviets all acknowledged that whomever had the greatest access to the Third Reich’s papers would exercise significant pedagogical, juridical, and political control in the postwar era. Additionally, they recognized that the Germans themselves could not be trusted to maintain ownership of the files. As reports emerged of German officers attempting to burn such incriminating materials as SS personnel records, the efforts to seize the German archive grew only more fervent.66 Additionally, recent history offered its own lesson: after Germany’s defeat in World War I, “The Auswärtiges Amt [German Foreign Office] had been able to steer the so-called war guilt debate in the Germany’s (sic) favor by publishing pertinent diplomatic records.”67 Aware that ownership of the archives equated to ownership of the narrative, “the Allies wanted to forestall any attempt to open a new debate over war guilt by controlling the German diplomatic records.”68

As Kempner later observed, the transcripts produced over the course of the proceedings offered the first comprehensive documentation of the Third Reich, its militaristic apparatuses, and its genocidal policies. As such a definitive synthesis of Nazi Germany’s history, the record provided, in his estimation, “one of the most important weapons in the fight against totalitarianism.”69

Kilometers upon kilometers of files, he wrote, lined the shelves of the Nuremberg Archive.68 According to Kinney and Wittman, the court produced some “sixty-four thousand cubic feet of administrative files, press negatives and releases, a film library, courtroom recording tapes, interrogation report tapes, library books and other publications,” by the time the proceedings concluded in 1949.69

The files, however, proved exceedingly difficult to manage. And the collection’s size was only part of the problem. The personnel hired by Allied forces to manage the files were not professional archivists and struggled to track the movement of sensitive materials. Tasked with providing both defense and prosecutorial parties access to these documents but doing “little to keep track of the flow of records,” many pages went missing.70 Even Kempner, himself deliberately removing documents from the Nuremberg Archive, expressed concern at the fact that “material is ‘vanishing.’”71

Before Kempner departed from Nuremberg, he expressed concern that such a vast archive of significant historical value would prove an uncommon burden for most people.72 Additionally, Kempner did not trust that an archive could locate all the documents he would eventually need. “If I ever wanted to write something,” he wrote, “and had to contact archives to get them…some things would not be found.”73 For him, the only viable solution was to establish a private archive of his own.74 Consequently, he requested permission to remove some documents from the Nuremberg Archive for research purposes. By Kempner’s version of events, Nuremberg’s head archivist, Fred Niebergall, granted his request, and the prosecutor began packing away the documents he deemed necessary for his postwar life.75 This time, he took far more than one suitcase with him. On November 4, 1949, some 8,000 pounds of documents arrived at the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Lansdowne Station.76 So, Kempner had his documents.77 His decision to remove such a vast body of materials from the Nuremberg Archive was a fateful one, however. The transcripts technically belonged to the American people; the evidentiary materials, to the Germans. Though they should have been stored under the purview of the U.S.’s National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the German Bundesarchiv, respectively,

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62 “The Allied attorneys recognized not only the potential danger in building a case largely on testimony, but also the power of leveraging the Nazi’s own documentary record against them. As Justice Jackson noted in his historic opening address: "We will not ask you to convict these men on the testimony of their foes. There is no count in the Indictment that cannot be proved by books and records. The Germans were always meticulous record keepers, and these defendants had their share of the Teutonic passion for thoroughness in putting things on paper." Additionally, it was the Allies’ dedication to providing thousands of pieces of textual evidence in building their cases that produced a pervasive Juridical passion for thoroughness in putting things on paper.”
63 Fritzche, “The Archive and the German Nation,” 27.
64 Patricia Kollander, “Boomerang Resistance: German Émigrés in the US Army during World War II,” 646.
66 Eckert, The Struggle for the Files, 33-34.
the files would remain stashed in Kempner’s basement for the next several decades, stymying research and casting doubt on the legitimacy of the tribunals until their recovery in the 1990s.

Kempner Presents: “The Nuernberg Story”

In his autobiography, Kempner made it abundantly clear how he felt about his claim to the Nuremberg documents. As one of the key prosecutors at Nuremberg, he felt somehow entitled to a monopoly on the files. So he assumed the role of the archivist—and simultaneously, that of the gatekeeper. As Kinney and Wittman discuss in The Devil’s Diary, Kempner sought exclusivity by constructing a personal archive in his home. Referred to in his autobiography as “Archiv Kempner,” Kempner referenced materials in his possession in a number of publications—in 1961 he even included an analysis of “missing” pages from the Rosenberg diary. A number of researchers later approached Kempner regarding these materials, but he refused to grant them access to his private stash, referring them instead to other existing publications or to the state archives (which did not know of, let alone hold, the sought-after materials). In so doing, Kempner limited access to the files, ensuring he be the sole authority responsible for their analysis—an exclusivity that ran counter to the spirit of academic exchange.

Of the materials he shipped back to Pennsylvania, Kempner elected to bind only a fraction. The 119 volumes of transcripts that I began researching in Boulder in 2014 constituted the vast majority of them. Until the summer of 2016, I thought they were the only volumes in existence. Several thousand miles away, however, an additional couple volumes have found their home in the U.S. Holocaust Museum’s Robert M.W. and Benedicta Kempner Collection; bound identically to the transcripts, these books are entitled, “The Nuernberg Story.” Taken together, the two halves of Kempner’s bound materials reveal a great deal of insight to the way Kempner perceived his own work at the Nuremberg Tribunals.

The materials housed in CU-Boulder’s Mazal Holocaust Collection are particularly illustrative. From the standpoint of historical valuation, the trial transcripts that Kempner took from the Nuremberg Archive and eventually bound mean little. While Kempner’s handwritten notes can be found penciled in throughout, they provide little additional information to the sources themselves. Nor do they shed light on the way Kempner grappled with these sources in his legal work. Although they were technically not his papers to take, Kempner’s removal of these documents did not leave the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration empty-handed. Rather, they were one of many copies made by stenographers in the Nuremberg Courtroom, and they were later published in their entirety as the fifteen-volume Green Series. The complete series is currently housed at countless private and public libraries around the world. And as early as 2003, both private entities such as Harry Mazal and federal authorities such as NARA began digitizing the materials; now, all that stands between a researcher and the trial transcripts is a Google search. For anyone wishing to read about the examinations, cross-examinations, or re-examinations; the motions, objections, or introductions of evidence, these documents contain a wealth of information. But Kempner’s set is unique only in the respect that he, a historical figure, possessed them until his death in 1993.

It is telling, then, that Kempner retained materials pertaining to both of these contested spaces. Although little historical value can be ascribed to the materials housed in Boulder, the same cannot be said for those located at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. What Kempner constructed in those two volumes overwhelmingly tells the story of the trials “in the eyes of the German and European public.” Embossed on each of these covers is the title “The Nuernberg Story.” Within their covers, Kempner pasted hundreds of newspaper clippings as well as countless letters and confidential memos. Where the Boulder transcripts provide a legal and military history of the Nuremberg proceedings, the D.C. materials provide a social history. They capture the international public’s reception of the trials, both in published materials such as magazine and newspaper articles and in private correspondence. Letters from Kempner’s family and friends shed light on his personal experiences in Nuremburg; deeply critical op-eds capture the years-long struggle to legitimize the war crimes enterprise in the eyes of the public. Ultimately, the scrapbooks reflect the great significance Kempner placed on Nuremberg’s pedagogical aims. For him, German and American attitudes toward the Nuremberg tribunals were essential to the story of the proceedings.

It is no secret that Kempner intended to publish articles and books based on his work at the International Military Tribunal as well as the Subsequent Proceedings; for him, the publication of materials regarding the Nuremberg proceedings was critical to winning his so-called trial beyond “the kingdom of the Nuremberg courthouse.” Even as he concluded his prosecutorial work at Nuremberg, Kempner began outlining the possible books he would write about his contributions to the war crimes enterprise. In January 1949, he even pitched a tentative title, Hitler and His Diplomats, to E.P. Dutton Publishing House. The book never materialized, but eventually, Kempner did begin contributing to the research on postwar justice, the Third Reich, and World War II. In 1961, he published Eichmann und Komplizen (“Eichmann and his Accomplices”), an account of Adolf Eichmann’s complicity in the extermination of European Jewry using “the evidence—which had been largely adduced at the Nuremburg trials.” According to a review from fellow Nuremberg prosecutor Whitney Harris, “Dr. Kempner’s book” provided “an important contribution to the record of the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’ by the Nazis.”

78 Letter from Kempner to Taylor, 8 April 1948 (Box 261/Folder 3), RG-71.005.01, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC.
79 Letter from Kempner to Taylor, 8 April 1948 (Box 261/Folder 3).
The Kempner Narrative, Contested

Though the Third Reich collapsed in 1945, its ideology did not; antisemitism had existed long before the Nazi Party, and it would continue to exist long after. German and American detractors alike constructed a number of veiled antisemitic arguments throughout Kempner’s time on the Nuremberg stage, and the émigré collected multiple folders’ worth of hate mail for his work at the tribunals. Compelled though he was to serve on the Americans’ prosecutorial team, he privately admitted, “I do not feel too happy, because I dislike the dark continent of Europe and do not like the fact that I am the only ‘German’ fellow on the table.”82 With his promotion to deputy chief counsel for the Ministries Trial in 1947, the attacks only grew more frequent; Kempner’s popularity declined significantly as he was portrayed “by critics as the mastermind of ‘victors’ justice’ with clear implications of the stereotype of the ‘vengeful Jew.’”83 Even one of the tribunals’ judges, Charles Wennerstrum, offered scathing criticism of the Nuremberg enterprise, identifying those “‘lawyers, clerks, interpreters, and researchers . . . who became Americans only in recent years, whose backgrounds were imbedded in Europe’s hatreds and prejudices,’” as devastating to postwar justice.84 The claim was couched in antisemitic stereotypes, namely that of the Jew as the perpetual foreigner.85 Moreover, as the only recently naturalized American to serve as legal counsel at the tribunals, Kempner was the obvious target of Wennerstrum’s invective. Regardless of whether Kempner had illegitimately removed materials from the Nuremberg Archive, he would have been singled out for antisemitic attacks; his identity alone provided sufficient grounds for criticism. This fact, in and of itself, could explain the nature of the internet-based conversation surrounding Robert Kempner. As illustrated by Rightpedia’s inclusion of a Star of David next to Kempner’s name in their discussion of the Wannsee Conference, Kempner’s Jewishness is deemed suspect.86 In his self-described memoir of recovering the Rosenberg diary, David Irving echoes such antisemitism, stating, “The Germans have a saying, ‘He could not jump over his own shadow.’ Robert Kempner could not forget his own Jewishness.”87 Per Irving’s analysis, Kempner’s performance at Nuremberg was inextricably tied to identity; “Jackson (one of my heroes),” he writes, “refused to give him [Kempner] a leading position, as he said (Columbia University Oral Interviews) he did not want a high Jewish ‘revenge’ profile” on the prosecutorial team.88 In multiple respects, then, critics of Kempner’s work at Nuremberg cited his identity as grounds for delegitimization.89

Equally relevant to revisionists, however, was the dubious nature of Kempner’s actions. As historian Christian Mentel has observed, “lack of transparency is the starting point for revisionists.”90 By refusing the public access to his collection, Kempner provided deniers the foundation upon which to build their critiques. As one such denier website has claimed of the Wannsee Protocol and other documents entered as evidence of Nazi atrocities, “these originals are jealously guarded in archives and any attempt at scientific and technical analysis is nipped in the bud.”91 In this regard, Kempner's assumption of the role of gatekeeper provided deniers with the leverage they rely upon to craft their arguments. More problematic still, however, was Kempner’s republication of facsimile documents in his book, Eichmann und Komplizen, without identifying them as such. Though the technology available at the time Eichmann und Komplizen was published may have limited Kempner’s ability to reproduce a photograph of files such as the original Wannsee Protocol, Kempner and his publisher failed to indicate that they had “alter[ed] or manipulate[d] historical documents,” a “highly questionable” practice, regardless of one’s field.92 Doubly problematic, however, was the contested nature of Holocaust studies specifically: because deniers build their arguments on the flimsy identification of any document that may prove “exculpatory,” to dismantle a Holocaust historian’s argument, Kempner’s practices as a historian provided deniers with exactly what they desired.93

Conclusion

As revealed by the preponderance of blatantly antisemitic readings on Robert Kempner, both identity and action played a significant role in the construction of narratives on the German-Jewish attorney following his death in 1993. Though his Jewish identity alone would likely have singled him out for revisionist critique, the fact that he illicitly broke up the Nuremberg Archive in an effort to build his own collection significantly galvanized their attacks. In this regard, Kempner’s relationship to the Nuremberg Archive became the underpinning for various contested narratives.

82 Letter from Kempner to Mumford, 1 December 1945, (Box 44/Folder 27), RG-71.001.04, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC.
83 Priemel and Stiller, Reassessing the Nuremberg Military Tribunals, 8:9.
88 David Irving, “The Long Search for Alfred Rosenberg’s Stolen Papers.” Irving proceeds to state that “Jackson's team had a low opinion of Kempner's ability.” Letters from Jackson, Telford Taylor, Drexel Sprecher, and Ben Ferencz as well as a performance report Taylor completed regarding Kempner's work all contradict this claim.
89 Monika Schwarzs-Friesel and Jehuda Reinharz, Inside the Antisemitic Mind, 105.
Both his strong personality and his experiences under the Nazi regime critically influenced his relationship to the written record as well as the import he ascribed to it. The result was a decision to craft his own archive, reflective of his perspective that the Allies had held "two sets of trials" at Nuremberg. In assuming the roles of both archivist and historian, however, he complicated the biographical and historical narratives that resulted. Despite his efforts to produce a history of Nuremberg reflective of the archive he curated, his actions led to a narrative predominantly focused on his break-up of the original Nuremberg Archive.

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Authenticity in Production: Violeta Parra and the Cultural Project

Nathaniel Young

As with many icons, Chilean folklorist Violeta Parra’s star rose to prominence posthumously. Remembered for her markedly raw, socially committed revitalization of folkloric tradition, Parra constructed a radical, focused cultural project that attempted to reimagine a Chilean identity rooted in its rural past. This article strives to understand the importance that cultural translation and authenticity holds in Parra’s project, and in the multidimensional art of performance and identity formation. Approaching Parra’s life works as a single, unified text, I contend that they formulate an authentic representation of Chilean identity. In studying Parra, given the breadth of documentation on her life and artistry, I underscore her self-representations and personal worldview as important manifestations of the discourse enacted by her cultural project. In conversation with contemporary scholarship on Parra, I attempt to isolate how she reworked traditional models of politically charged artistic production, while simultaneously positioning herself as a mediator between cultural worlds.

Introduction

In 1954, during an interview with a local Santiago newspaper, Chilean artist Violeta Parra made sure that the interviewer understood why she was doing what she was doing:

I don’t pretend to completely understand folklore, because my dream would be to travel the entire country, imbue myself with the music to get acquainted with it, and then give it away so everyone else can learn it too.¹

Biographies, testimonies, personal recordings, and other interviews echo Parra’s desire to represent those whose voices had been lost in the new Chile. This new Chile—a socially and economically modernizing state that would promote a strong nationalism—was also actively eschewing the indigenous, peasant, and rural traditions that Parra was so fervently trying to unearth.

The Chilean Music Review, in a 1958 article, describes Parra’s music as “weird and beautiful...unlike anything else...but still so belonging to this Chilean land.”² Parra was in the midst of her rise to international fame, and these unusual artistic aesthetics—those that also subverted socially normalized ideas of gender and performance—became a centerpiece in both her work and her artistic identity as a whole. Singing, painting, and performing in Santiago, Parra wears tattered, Mapuche-inspired garments, goes out with unkempt hair, and maintains a rural sensibility that

belies the well-to-do, modernized woman of her time. 3

In 1966, Parra released her most well-known and reproduced anthem, “Gracias a la vida” 4 Parra sings:

Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me this heart that shakes its frame,
When I see the fruit of the human brain,
When I see good so far from evil,
When I look into the depth of your light eyes…
Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me laughter and it gave me tears.
With them I distinguish happiness from pain
The two elements that make up my song,
And your song, as well, which is the same song,
And everyone’s song, which is my very song.

Parra’s abstract yet nuanced lyrics, evoking images of collective memory, dualities of humanity, and the unifying power of the song, have transcended their status as a form of revolutionary musical expression.

Violeta Parra would reconstruct notions of Chilenidad, or “Chileanness,” and in turn, signal a larger renovation of a “pan-Latin American” identity, one that would incorporate sounds, aesthetics, and performativity derived from indigenous Andean cultures and rural Chilean cultural production. 5 Outside of Chile—where she initially found her stardom—Parra’s legacy would signify a transnational call for social justice and reform, enacting a dialogue that attempted to reverse the perils of economic industrialization and reconfigure the unjust hierarchies of social power that she saw as plaguing the modernizing world.

In this study of Violeta Parra, I argue that her life works, specifically her best-known songs and tapestries, formulate a calculated cultural project that attempted to blur the line between artist and audience and create an “authentic” representation of indigenous Chilean and rural Latin American tradition. In constructing this “authentic” folkloric project, Parra provided Chileans with an opportunity to rediscover their historical origins, while also constructing and performing a hybridized Latin American cultural identity to her intrigued foreign spectators.

Parra and Folk Revival

Violeta Parra began her career by studying and listening to a wide array of traditional Latin American song. After devoting several years of her life to the study of this music, Parra encountered a void of true, “authentic,” Chilean music in the public sphere, and realized that the music industry was highly influenced by imports from other Latin American countries and the United States. Disillusioned by the lack of pride or interest for national music, Parra engaged with already burgeoning Chilean folkloric movements to create her own specific interpretation of “true” Chilean culture. At the peak of the country’s move towards modernization in the 1950s, these folkloric movements would advocate strong cultural nationalism, and positioned the practices and art forms of the Chilean pueblo 6 as true representations of a genuine Chilean identity. As modernization in Chile signaled rapid cultural change and a rejection of traditional national identity, Parra and fellow folcloristas 7 found that the mere essence of this identity—its folklore—was simultaneously under attack. Scholar Ericka Kim Verba notes that Parra’s cohort of folcloristas “undertook their work propelled by the shared belief that there existed a ‘true’ and untouched Chilean folklore awaiting their discovery.” 8 This imagined purity of Chilean folklore, then, sparked the impetus for Parra’s project, which would aim to represent a Chilean cultural identity that held true to its most pure, “authentic” origins. In this sense, Parra’s “authentic” folklore marked a distinct, socially committed revival of “pure” Chilean culture and the “true” historical origins that it represented.

Jedrek Mularski articulates the importance of identity politics and folk “revival” in the construction of works like Parra’s, also signaling the importance that nationalism had in this cultural transformation. He notes that “in the case of Chile, the folk revival expressed a deep sense of national pride: folklorists and musicians developed over the first three-quarters of the twentieth century a profound interest in exploring, recapitulating, and popularizing folk sounds from within Chile.” 9 This internal search for “folk sounds,” then, began to motivate a subsequent rediscovery of Chilean national identity, one that folkloric artists like Parra would eventually bring to the masses. As folkloric music signified a traditional representation of the campesino 10, a figure that politicians and artists would promote as the “most Chilean” of the most Chilean,” its dissemination in national discourse began to reconstruct Chilean identity as one deeply connected with the population’s rural compatriots. Subsequently, many Chileans began to ascribe their own cultural identities to this imagined authenticity, and consumed popular culture that heralded this national past. Mularski underscores this tendency by articulating what folkloric revitalization could foment. He notes that, especially during the height of the careers of folklorists like Parra, “the sounds of Chilean folklore became synonymous with Chilean identity

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3 The Mapuche are the most prominent and socially visible indigenous peoples of Chile.
4 “Thanks to life”
6 The folk, the people
7 Folclorista can take on two meanings: someone who collects folklore, but also someone who performs it.
9 Mularski, Jedrek. Music, Politics, and Nationalism in Latin America: Chile During the Cold War Era, xii.
10 Peasant, countryside person
and patriotism.” The patriotic tendencies of this folk revival, then, signal more broad desires to represent the nation’s cultural “authenticity” and to produce bodies of work that would act as catalysts for reclaiming potentially lost foundations of “true” Chilean culture. During her project of reviving folklore, Parra aimed to represent a Chilean cultural experience that would forge a reconstruction of collective national identity, yet her efforts also functioned to connote innovative meanings of “authentic” Chilean cultural performance.

**Authenticity**

Violeta Parra’s folklore can be called “authentic” because of its supposed connection to the “true” or the “real.” In presenting her cultural production as “authentic,” Parra produces a constructed genuineness that is up to interpretation by her audience, as she positions herself as a mediator who represents *chilenidad*, at first, to a largely Chilean audience. Her performance, subsequently, relies on its eventual reception by Chileans themselves, forcing this authenticism to represent nationally relevant and “valid” interpretations of identity to its spectators. The case of Parra, then, necessitates this dual understanding of authenticity: a construction forged and legitimated by author that is also deeply informed by audience perception and cultural context. Phillip Vannini and J. Patrick Williams define authenticity through a similar frame of reference, claiming that it is “not so much a state of being as it is the objectification of a process of representation.” As a construct informed by a social or cultural process, then, authenticity serves as an “object” that holds “true” to the origins of its subject, operating through modes of creation and production rather than mere representation. Vannini and Williams further suggest the significance of social processes in the creation of the “real” or “true” representational object, articulating that “is not something that exists as an inherent property of some social object, but as part of a process of interaction and experience in everyday life.”

If authenticity functions to produce an object from representation, it must also serve as a product that is consistent, recognizable, and “true” to its origins or referents. Jennifer Scheper Hughes and Ariane Dalla Déa echo these notions of authenticity but articulate them with particular emphasis on artistry and cultural context. Phillip Vannini and J. Patrick Williams define authenticity through a similar frame of reference, claiming that it is “not so much a state of being as it is the objectification of a process of representation.” As a construct informed by a social or cultural process, then, authenticity serves as an “object” that holds “true” to the origins of its subject, operating through modes of creation and production rather than mere representation. Vannini and Williams further suggest the significance of social processes in the creation of the “real” or “true” representational object, articulating that “is not something that exists as an inherent property of some social object, but as part of a process of interaction and experience in everyday life.”

Viewing Parra as an agent of cultural translation is an often overlooked focal point of analysis. Parra’s work is often studied in the context of her influence on the “folkloric” process, yet her efforts also encompassed the role of mediator and collaborator in the creative process of cultural representation.

Parra as Cultural Translator or Mediator

Violeta Parra assumed various roles throughout her career—researcher, songwriter, artist, and performer. However, in her most underestimated position, she embodied a cultural mediator and subsequently became the most important one in contemporary Chilean history. After gathering her materials from years of travel and research, Parra proved successful in embracing the task of “translating” or “mediating” authentic Chilean folklore because of a seemingly natural sensibility to dialogue well with cultural “others,” reproduce their songs, and perform them for her audiences. In her analysis of Parra, Scholar Erin A. Miller points to this capacity to appropriately translate this “other” culture because of Parra’s reputation as being the “most folkloric” folklorist, as her music came from primary sources and firsthand accounts. This close interaction with her folkloric subjects, in essence, allowed Parra to construct her folkloric project as an “authentic” intermediary whose job was to unearth and disseminate the “true” culture of her home country.

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11. Mularski, Jedrek. *Music, Politics, and Nationalism in Latin America: Chile During the Cold War Era*, xii.
13. Ibid., 14.
point of her legacy. Identifying its significance, however, helps to create a more nuanced understanding of how Parra conceived of her novel interpretations of Chilean cultural identity, and, in essence, how she viewed her own cultural project. Ericka Kim Verba, in detailing how Parra transitioned into the role of “authentic” cultural mediator, argues that “as folkloric interpreter,” Parra’s job was to make the authentic folklore she collected from non-cosmopolitans in non-cosmopolitan sites understandable to her cosmopolitan audience in cosmopolitan settings and media.” 17 Acting as an intermediary that would make “authentic,” traditional cultural production intelligible to modernized sectors of society, Parra would expand upon this position by representing folklore as a signifier of “authentic” national identity. In this context, Verba indicates that, in turn, “Parra presents herself as an intermediary between the authentic ‘Chileanness’ and the cosmopolitan world.” 18 Parra’s task of intermediation, translation, or interpretation of folklore, then, would aim to create a cultural project of reconstruction or rearticulation of national remnants of identity. Because Chilean cultural “cosmopolitanism” became largely removed from the interpreted “authenticity” that Parra claimed came from traditional folklore, her proposition would also highlight the idea that the Chilean nation could not be “authentically” Chilean without its recognition of the origins of its national culture. Boris Buden and Stefan Nowotny reiterate this notion, and go so far as to say that the “cultural task of the translator is always a social one—indeed a political one, the task of nation-building.”19

**Self-Representations in Interviews and Testimonials**

As the Chilean public believed in her work and its seemingly unadulterated nature, her self-portrayals and representations in the various interviews and testimonies that I detail here reaffirm her position as an “authentic” cultural translator, yet also give a glimpse into how Parra saw her cultural project as a process of representation that must be “true” or “genuine” because of its reception by fellow Chileans. To assume Parra’s role as in-between for distinct cultural sectors of Chilean society, then, also necessitates a perspective on how she frames her own folkloric ventures, forcing self-representation to inform the cultural and political discourse she engendered. Because Parra knew that, of course, the Chilean people had a certain idea of what could be considered truly “Chilean” or not, she acted as an intermediary that did not pretend to better appreciate or understand folklore, but rather allowed it to become a consumable and democratic medium. In remaking the experience of folklore for the Chilean public, Parra emphasized her role as a cultural translator, thus signaling a subjective removal from her own personal work. This recognition and separation of artist from her work echoes clearly in a 1958 interview with the *Revista Musical Chilena* (Chilean Musical Magazine). 20 In the interview, Parra articulates her positionality in simple yet strikingly poetic terms, identifying that her work, in essence, is that of her country’s. Parra tells interviewer Magdalena Vicuña, the editor for the magazine at the time, that her audience really was not “applauding for her…because when you sing the Chilean song it’s Chile that they’re applauding for.” Parra’s blurring of artist and muse, then, allows her audience—both contemporary and scholarly—to relish a rather novel outlook on her place as artist, translator, and Chilean. Recognizing the complexity and nuance with which she articulated her personal identity, Parra identifies that she is simply a disseminator of the already “authentic” cultural product, as she signals that those who would consume it would judge it based on its true Chilean origins, and most likely not her personal representation. Parra’s claims on the importance of artist-audience cooperativity in her work, especially in her self-representations, serve to reify the notion that her “authentic” cultural project could not be a “true” or “real” object of representation without collaborative social or cultural processes. 21 In presenting her project as a process in which she can mediate representation instead of assert it—up to interpretation by both artist and audience—Parra rejects the notion that modernized Chile represents a real “Chileanness,” and also resists framing her project as an authoritative, ultimate representation of who Chileans are and where they come from. Intrinsically anti-hegemonic and democratic, Parra’s views on an artist’s societal role seem to frame her conviction to represent Chilean people and culture in a way that resisted notions of superiority or omniscience. Parra rearticulates these notions of an artist-audience cooperation in a 1965 interview with *Revista Vistazo*, a Santiago music journal, when the unnamed interviewer asks what she believes to be her main mission in creating her folkloric project. Parra comments that “our people understand clearly what pure folklore is and what is not. This is like going out to fish with a net, the big fish stay, the smaller and the slippery ones go back to their place in the sea.”22 Particularly important to Parra’s recognition of the Chilean people’s cultural radar for authenticity is her articulation of a large-small binary. Knowing full well that she could not perform every portion of materials she compiled, Parra took a more broad, representative approach to portraying Chilean folklore by seemingly isolating the parts she saw as appropriate for her audience. In doing so, she demanded from both herself and her listeners a critical performance and reception, one that would largely reaffirm her identity as a translator for sociocultural difference. This identity would help to shape her “authentic” representability for the Chilean population, and further

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18 Ibid, 284.
21 See Vannini and Williams.
blurred the lines between artist and audience.

In an undated interview, conducted in Switzerland at a presumably late point in her career, Parra confirms her ideals on a democratic dialogue between herself and the public by further removing herself from the world of a superior, all-knowing artist. When asked about her relationship with her audience, Parra explains herself in simple terms: “I don’t see any difference between the artist and the public; it’s the miracle of contact. I believe I am closer to the public than the public is to me, because I sing for them, not for myself. To have an audience is the natural result of my work. We must justify our existence, and I’m sure that anyone is capable of achieving what I have. In my way of seeing it, it’s a duty.”

The act of singing the Chilean song, then, represents a unification of artist and audience for Parra. Because of her motivations to act as an intermediary for Chileans to “know” their own cultural history, it is only logical that she would portray herself as an artist whose job it was to relinquish her cultural power to her audience and allow them to identify with the music just as she had. Underscoring that she is not the only person that could fulfill this project, Parra further separates her identity as artist from that of the performative act, identifying that her personal creations are more for her audience than anyone else, and that disseminating these works is innately part of her process as cultural translator. Her claims also augment the notion of her “authentic” self and cultural product as she explains the interconnectedness between artist and audience. Serving to reaffirm that her work is a result of a process of dialogue between both actors, her contentions subsequently construct the notion that the cultural project becomes a medium that is “real” because the audience consumes it and must legitimate its authenticity.

The notion of creating a project that will be tested in its authenticity foments a certain artistic responsibility in Parra. In an interview conducted for the Radio Universidad de Concepción, Parra makes some of her most bold claims about the role of her personal voice in constructing the authenticity of the folklore she performs, as she recognizes that her presentation and execution of the project will define the first step in the process of becoming “authentic.” She aligns her authentic self with the authenticity of the folklore she performs, identifying the significance it holds when attempting to represent “realistic” folkloric traditions. Parra remarks that, in performing folklore, she has to “sing this song [herself]…the pain cannot be sung by an academic voice…or by a voice from the conservatory…it must be a long-suffering voice…like mine that has suffered for the past forty years…it has to be done as realistically as possible.” Unlike previous accounts, Parra’s words in this interview strongly assert the authenticity that she supposedly finds within herself. Recognizing the “suffering” that she has endured—which could explain her eventual suicide in 1967—Parra notes that the authenticity she constructs in her mere-self representation, indeed, must have links to the “real.” The convincing or compelling nature of her work would be unable to function in a different cultural context or without an “authentic” mediator. Similar to her claims about her work needing to be “Chilean” enough for the population that would consume it, Parra implies that her cultural production must also come from a place of “authenticity” itself before even being disseminated. Even if “authenticity” functions as the “objectification of a process of representation,” Parra asserts that the voice or act behind materializing this representation must also maintain a certain trueness for the product to be, as she claims, “realistic.” In concluding the interview, Parra shares that “everything that I have heard from them I’ve put in this little chat…trying to give you the most clear, simple visión of the soul and thought of our most authentic singers.” Parra implies, then, that her task as intermediary must represent a committed dissemination of both the discourse and identity of the “authentic singers” that she had studied and worked with during her long process of collecting folklore. Although these “authentic singers” are not named, and the “soul and thought” are not clearly articulated, it can be assumed that Parra is referencing the many campesinos she encountered, and the folklore they passed along to her.

Parra’s self-representations notwithstanding, it is undeniable that her audience believed in the work she was doing, and, in its essence, its cultural authenticity. In Gracias a la vida: Violeta Parra, Testimonio, an anonymous interviewee claims that, in Chile, “there was all that life in the common people and Violeta had the ability to become part of it, love it, and give it back in her songs…that is… she acted

26 Parra, interview.
as a translator, so that we could know ourselves.” 27 Aspiring to be this translator, then, Parra seemingly achieved this goal. She became, according to this interviewee, a representative for a repressed and unknown layer of Chilean identity, one whose “commonality,” as they put it, was a portion of society undocumented and unrecognized in the face of modernity and rapid cultural change.

Parra as “Authentic Mediator” in Cultural Studies

This study of Violeta Parra contributes to recent scholarship that has focused on her identity politics and “project” as a bridge to becoming an authentic “translator” or “mediator” in the cultural field. With an abundance of biographies, testimonial accounts, and semi-ethnographies of distinct moments of her life, Parra has received significant attention as an icon of Latin American popular culture. This lionization, however, has led Parra’s followers—academic, artistic, and otherwise—to neglect framing her cultural project around notions of authenticity or translation, effectively relegating her to a cult of celebrity. Parra has been markedly excluded from critical cultural studies literature, both in Latin American Studies and beyond, which could be a result of either academic disinterest or scholarly obviation of her cultural, social, and political significance. Approaching Parra through an interdisciplinary cultural studies framework, however, allows for new insights on the significance of her body of work—both as a project of folklore and a representation of Chilean identity. Academics like Ericka Kim Verba and the authors of Patricia Vilches’s volume Mapping Violeta Parra’s Cultural Landscapes have attempted to fill this longstanding scholarly void. 28 Vilches’s collection of essays is of particular note, however, as it presents a novel turn in the study of Parra, reframing the scholarly models that have previously, yet narrowly, attempted to explain the social and political phenomena that emerged from the artist’s figure and body of work. Compiled in seven essays on distinct aspects of Parra’s cultural project, Vilches’s volume underscores the salient academic urge to investigate Parra through the lens of interdisciplinary cultural studies, and to study her works as authentic, timeless pieces of cultural production.

Within the volume, Jerónimo Duarte Riascos’s “La Violeta: Making the Transparent Opaque in Violeta Parra’s Work,” is an exceptional example of a critical approach towards framing Parra as an “authentic” interpreter of Chilean folklore. Duarte Riascos decidedly resists compartmentalizing her works into its multiple representations; rather, he synthesizes her cultural production into one single entity, “La violeta.” 29 This “La violeta,” as he defines it, draws together all her life works—her poems, oral testimonies, tapestries, and songs. Duarte Riascos details that Parra “is remembered as authentic, a natural artist, who was simultaneously the ultimate embodiment of an Other as well as that which connected modernity to an essential other that inhabited a distant and idealized past and place…she was both authenticity and a performed bridge to authenticity.” 30 Parra’s dualism, as Duarte Riascos notes, suggests her ability to connote “authenticity” as a cultural mediator above all else. Because she recognizes herself as an appropriate voice to “sing the Chilean song,” her self-proclaimed authenticity actually represented a successful steppingstone in her cultural project, rather than opening up room for the challenging or critiquing of her supposed cultural “trueness.” 31 Duarte Riascos, still, identifies that Parra’s cultural project is not produced by Parra alone, and argues for its multidimensional nature. He contends that “the only way to accept that Parra’s worth resides in her being the goddess of ‘Chileanness’ and Chilean folklore is to argue that the folklore she presents is a sort of conjunctive folklore—more rhizomatic than rooted, composed of strata, of territories.” 32 In this sense, Duarte Riascos’s claims serve to reinforce the notion that Parra acts as a mediator between cultural worlds. The “strata” and “territories” he discusses, then, can be understood as the distinct levels that formulate the “conjunction” that is Parra’s cultural project; not only a product made by Parra as an assertion of her authority on what “Chileanness” is, but rather a mixture of the work she presents herself and subsequent audience interpretation. Parra notes that this authenticity or efficacy of her work depends on fellow Chileans’ interpretations, thus positioning her project not as an objective, omniscient representation of “Chileanness,” but as a subjective process and experience up to critique by those who consume it.

Conclusion

Violeta Parra, as “authentic” mediator, revived subaltern popular culture and propelled her cultural project into the mainstream. In doing so, she reshaped notions of national and cultural identity, and forged innovative understandings of “Chileanness” during a cultural moment of intense modernization and political anguish. Parra proved that authentic artistic performance could demonstrate cultural identity without positioning herself outside—or rather, above—the world of the people that helped her to construct this very identity. Parra actively rejected the notion that the artist was an omniscient, more creatively capable representative of social issues or political strife, and, in turn, she created authenticity by embodying the very idea.

In demonstrating an authentic self, Parra constructed a social subjectivity that challenged state hegemony while producing an identity politics that would influence her artistic contemporaries, national leaders—and, most true to her ultimate wish—

28 See Verba’s “Violeta Parra and the Chilean Folk Revival of the 1950s” and “To Paris and Back: Violeta Parra’s Transnational Performance of Authenticity.”
30 Ibid, Locations 968-969.
31 See Entrevista a Violeta Parra en Radio Universidad de Concepción
the Chilean people. Although Parra performed independently during her rise to fame, she is credited as the “mother” of La nueva canción chilena, an artistic and cultural movement that flourished after her death in 1967. La nueva canción took influence from Parra’s body of work but became a deeply political project, known for its outspoken protest-oriented discourse that challenged the Chilean state, while also transforming the Chilean music industry. Parra’s legacy, then, should not be underestimated. A mainstay in Chilean popular culture—and within the canon of Latin American folklore more broadly—Parra would embody the alternative worldviews she expressed throughout her career, and create a dialogue that privileged the recognition and incorporation of cultural otherness as a representation of the authentic nation.

Violeta Parra’s cultural project—in its most successful endeavor—purports the historical past as an essential bastion in understanding the contemporary self and nation. Parra’s extensive body of work—for her contemporaries, spectators, fans, and investigators—remakes popular culture as a medium to better comprehend the construction of identity as it exists in the modern public sphere. Forcing social difference to enter the mainstream, the song of the “other” permits alternative representations of society and its various sectors, and underscores the notion that cultural identity construction must depend on processes of negotiation and interaction with those that are different from us. Parra’s message, then, proves universal. She implies to us—her audience—that we cannot know ourselves until we know everybody else.

Bibliography

Buden, Boris and Nowotny, Stefan. “Cultural Translation: An Introduction to the Problem, and Responses,” Translation Studies 2, no. 2 (2009): 196

33 La nueva canción chilena (the Chilean New Song) started in the 1960s, revamping Parra’s expression of the Chilean “other” as the basis for even more prolific cultural production.
Disrupting Agency Through Transportation: Place and Space in East St. Louis, Illinois

Allie Liss

In 1960, the construction of the interstate bridge across the Mississippi began, instigating a construction process that tore through existing East St. Louis communities and facilitated the white flight and suburban sprawl that left the city decimated. The 2003 expansion of the St. Louis MetroLink line into East St. Louis and other metro east communities, conversely, was aimed at reconnecting East St. Louis with the rest of the St. Louis region in order to provide increased economic opportunity and mobility to the residents east of the river. This paper examines how the 1960 and 2003 transportation infrastructure developments affect both empirical realities and qualitative understandings of place and space. I argue that the decision-making scale and exhibition of agency significantly impacted the ways in which development affected the community. Local level decision making and increased community agency created less disruptive and more connected transportation infrastructure. While the responsible creation of transportation infrastructure provides the opportunity for mobility, infrastructure must be properly used to be useful.

Introduction: The Other Side of the River

Driving west on Interstate 64 from Illinois towards St. Louis, Missouri, you see a breathtaking view of the city skyline, punctuated by an impressive metal arch. Driving in the opposite direction (east on Interstate 64), however, you pass by the Gateway Arch, cross the Poplar Street Bridge over the Mississippi River, and arrive at a tangle of highways connecting and diverging, interspersed throughout islands of dilapidated homes and businesses weaving above and below pedestrian bridges. Interstates 64, 55, and 70 intersect in East St. Louis in a maze of overheads, exit and entrance ramps, and billboards.

Image 1 looks north from the Poplar Street Bridge at downtown St. Louis on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Image 2 also looks north from the Poplar Street Bridge, showing the east bank of the Mississippi River which is part of East St. Louis.
We think of a city as a contiguous unit, but the physical landscape of East St. Louis contradicts this idea. Not only is the city itself cut up into various pieces by all of the physical barriers, it is also geographically cut off from the St. Louis metropolitan area. East St. Louis lies in the floodplain of the Mississippi, at a lower elevation than wealthier surrounding suburbs in a geographic region commonly referred to as the American Bottom.\(^1\) Operating and abandoned industrial plants surround the city on all sides including the shores of the Mississippi across from the Gateway Arch. This physical isolation has been mirrored by social, economic, and political separation. The city is divided by railroad tracks and filled with dead ends and nonsensical traffic patterns. While the Poplar Street Bridge and interstate highways both divide communities and create an avenue to bypass the city, the MetroLink physically connects East St. Louis to the rest of the St. Louis region. The MetroLink follows the path of the highway, nimbly making its way through the city, weaving through abandoned lots, crossing downtown, and meandering along the highway with frequent stops creating a bridge between newly developed housing units and community centers. The MetroLink connects East St. Louis neighborhoods to each other, and to the region at large.

In this paper, I explore how transportation is inextricably linked to the way individual communities and the cities that encompass them form and change over time. In East St. Louis, Illinois, drastic changes to transportation infrastructure helped facilitate the decline of the city, and have conversely been instrumental to revitalization efforts. I compare the planning and execution of the interstate construction with that of the MetroLink to demonstrate how community agency within the planning process leads to outcomes that both serve their intended purpose and the specific needs of the community. While the new physical structure of the MetroLink proves less disruptive and more accessible to the East St. Louis community, its potential has not been fully realized due to the same social and economic barriers between East St. Louis and the rest of the St. Louis region.

This project is situated at the intersection of three bodies of literature: scholarship specific to the history and development of East St. Louis, scholarship on U.S. transportation infrastructure development, and scholarship on mapping urban decay and deindustrialization. I aim to contextualize infrastructural development within the larger historical narrative of the city. While spatial analysis is not the focus of this paper, it provides important base empirical spatial information, and possibly more importantly, a theoretical lens that foregrounds the importance of geography and space. Direct observation of the way in which community members interact with transportation infrastructure in the city helps create a more community-based lens for the historical analysis. I include relevant excerpts of my field notes that provide a window into my thought process through the duration of my research, my

\(^1\) The American Bottom is an ecological and anthropological label for the floodplain of the Mississippi River from the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers down to the Kaskaskia River. The region is defined by an interrupted landscape and closed communities of extraction, production, and displacement. See http://theamericanbottom.org/ for more information.
conversations with residents, and my observations of the physical landscape.²

I have been volunteering in East St. Louis for over a year, and have developed connections with multiple service providers who assisted in connecting me with a large network of residents. Gaining access and gaining the trust of community members by working with advocacy organizations and service providers is a commonly used technique in subfields of cultural anthropology including medical anthropology, environmental anthropology, and urban anthropology. This does, however, color the observations that were made and perspectives that I received. This analysis chronologically examines the infrastructure development, and equally importantly, the processes, movements, and decisions around it through narratives, documents, and maps in order to understand both how infrastructure has been developed, and the effects that it has had on the city.

**Imagining East St. Louis: Views from Today and the Past**

East St. Louis is an industrial suburb³ situated in the flood plain of the Mississippi River directly east of St. Louis, Missouri. It has a strong negative representation in popular media, and specifically in the imagination of the St. Louis community. In her book *Abandoned in the Heartland: Work, Family, and Living in East St. Louis,* Jennifer Hamer makes a point of addressing the negative associations that those outside of the community have surrounding East St. Louis. She centers her research on amplifying the voices of East St. Louis residents in part to allow residents to combat negative perceptions while still addressing the challenges they face individually and as a community. However, even with careful representation and personal ties to the community, she still found residents wary of her presence and protective of their city. In reflecting on her research, Hamer states: “Most contemporary stories on East St. Louis were about murders, rapes, welfare abuse, or AIDS; the only positive ones seemed to be about the city’s high school football teams or written memories of the city’s rich history. So it was this attitude of abuse and rejection that I was up against.”³ This caution affects the ability of researchers to conduct their work, and even more importantly is emblematic of the larger issues of co-opted agency of East St. Louis as a community. Even today, negative attitudes surrounding East St. Louis persist. Based on recent conversations with East St. Louis residents I find that this harmful association with research and portrayals of the city is still very much present.

**September 10, 2017**

We sat around all of the pushed together tables eating Big Momma’s BBQ on a sunny Saturday afternoon in early September at a lunch table with college freshman from across the country, in one of the small multipurpose rooms of St. Paul Baptist Church. The pastor, a social worker, and a current East St. Louis businesswoman had a conversation with the students over lunch, answering questions and explaining the realities of life in East St. Louis. A student shyly asked for the most important takeaway from the conversation as newly minted residents of the St. Louis region. The businesswoman passionately implored students to see East St. Louis as more than a study subject. The pain in her voice during this exchange directly contradicted the palpable pride in her voice earlier as she described her community.

East St. Louis specific scholarship provides specific insight into the unique history and set of circumstances that characterize the city, but must be understood within the context of the strained relationships between the “ivory tower” and the East St. Louis community. While existing scholarship on East St. Louis provides critical guidance on local history, and ethical considerations, policy-making and community responses around transportation provide an essential window into understanding urban decline and redevelopment east of the Mississippi.

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₂ I conducted formal ethnographic fieldwork in East St. Louis from April of 2017 until December of 2017. While my field notes and direct observations come from this specific period of time, I have been volunteering in East St. Louis since October of 2015, and I have remained involved in the community through the publication of this article.

³ “Industrial suburb” is a term used to describe suburbs where government is designed to be used as a business tool rather than a tool to provide some measure of quality of life to its residents. Industrial suburbs can be found in any pre-World War II industrial center.


Ferry Boats to Railroads: Early History of East St. Louis

The politics of transportation and infrastructure planning have a long history in East St. Louis. In fact, the initial Euro-American settlement in East St. Louis was created in order to serve as a way-point for travel and the basis for a ferry operation across the Mississippi in the late 1700s and early 1800s called Piggot’s Ferry. People began to settle because of the establishment of the Ferry and surrounding business provided by the transport avenue; eventually the settlement of “Illinoistown” was incorporated as the municipality of East St. Louis in 1861. The following decade saw the expansion and establishment of more than ten railroad lines within the city borders as East Coast businesses were eager to tap into the western market. Because of the structural problems posed by the Mississippi, East St. Louis served as the terminus for all of the early eastern railroads.9

April 21, 2017

Every time I drive through East St. Louis I cross railroad tracks. Going to the meat market, or the clinic, or the high school the car clatters over the tracks. They criss-cross the city, most of them overgrown with grass, and rusted beyond repair. Before I began my research, someone told me that I couldn’t talk about transportation in East St. Louis without talking about the railroads. Once I started noticing the tracks I saw them everywhere. The city has grown around and over the tracks, but they remain windows into the past, scars on the landscape.

The historical position as a transportation conduit both across (to the developing city of St. Louis and western territories) and along (northern territories to Louisiana) the Mississippi and the proximity to coal fields prompted the development of extensive commercial rail networks, spurring further settlement and commercial development. East St. Louis developed into the most important manufacturing center in southern Illinois during the late nineteenth century. The initial establishment of transportation infrastructure, proximity to rich coal fields, and subsequent construction of the Eads Bridge across the Mississippi river lured increasing numbers of businesses to establish themselves in the surrounding areas, most notably the National Stockyards in 1871.

The early twentieth century saw tremendous growth in manufacturing, including the establishment of the Aluminum Ore Company in 1902. The unprecedented growth in industry required an increasingly large workforce. The arrival of black workers from the South in 1916 as part of the Great Migration—recruited by industry officials to serve as strike-breakers—led to a period of racial tension that in the spring of 1917 erupted into what has been commonly referred to as the East St. Louis Race Riots.13 In this paper, however, I follow more recent historical scholarship and refer to this event as the East St. Louis Pogrom, which historians have argued more accurately reflects the terror white citizens of the city inflicted on the African American population and the lack of adequate response and intervention by government officials.14 Hundreds of blacks were murdered, and thousand left homeless, marring the history of race relations in the city, region, and nation as a whole. The racial violence in East St. Louis was the impetus for the silent march in New York City, which is sometimes cited as the beginning of the civil rights movement.15 The city recovered uneasily from the 1917 race riots, and a period of relative stability ensued. This period of sustained economic prosperity led to the growth of local businesses and cultural institutions. Nationally, as well as in the St. Louis region, this sustained economic expansion was the impetus for the creation and expansion of highway systems.

Construction of Highways—Destruction of Communities

These are an example of the highway overpasses that crisscross East St. Louis allowing for the convergence and divergence of multiple national interstate highways.

14 While the events that transpired in East St. Louis in the summer of 1917 have been commonly referred to as the East St. Louis Race Riots for most of the last century, citizens and scholars have continued to push back on this characterization. Race Riot implies that the subjugated class is revolting whereas “Pogrom” or “Massacre” implies violence perpetrated by a more powerful group against the subjugated group. This was explicitly stated and widely conferred on at the 100-year anniversary conference during the summer of 2017. See website for more information https://www.estl1917ccci.org/ 15 “The Forgotten March That Started the National Civil Rights Movement Took Place 100 Years Ago.” Time, July 28, 2017. Accessed March 5, 2018. http://time.com/4828991/east-saint-louis-riots-1917/.
construction of interstates that facilitated the decline and destruction of the city. In order to understand the specific history of East St. Louis highway construction, it is imperative to understand how this narrative fits into the larger national narrative surrounding interstate construction and its broad implications.

The development of the current system of national interstate highways that connect cities and allow for interregional and national travel originated with the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1938. The original plan called for a feasibility study of three north-south, and three east-west superhighways stretching the entire length and width of the continental United States. The resulting report advocated for a far more comprehensive system of interconnected interregional highways. The subsequent Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944 authorized the construction of a system of interstate highways through and between cities across the nation totaling 40,000 miles. The act did not, however, offer any method of payment for the plan. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, influenced by his experiences with the German highway system during World War II, pushed to create sustainable funding and make his namesake interstate system a reality. He marketed the interstates as a way to improve national security and motor vehicle safety, and bring economic prosperity to the United States after the war. With the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 he secured permanent funding through an increased gasoline tax and a 90/10 percent cost share between federal and state governments, catalyzing the development and eventual completion of the newly named “National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.”

The interstate highway system dramatically changed the way that planning was conceived and how cities operated. These new interregional highways with beltways surrounding major metropolitan areas were meant to create avenues to facilitate local traffic flow into and out of cities, while giving regional and transnational traffic the ability to bypass urban centers. While the resulting highway system reflected some of the advantages touted for regional and national travel, planners both failed to predict and explicitly ignored the effect of interstates on urban areas. The cheap, undeveloped land surrounding the beltways became a prime spot for suburban developments with their new access to urban centers. The urban interstates ended up decimating existing neighborhoods and became the source of growing congestion and pollution, which further encouraged people to move out to the newly developing suburbs facilitated by the ring highways.

Importantly, interstate construction reconfigures the community, business, and housing landscapes. Specifically, the construction of an interstate requires a large amount of uninterrupted open space, which at the turn of the century and with a population of nearly one million people, did not exist in the St. Louis metropolitan area. To make transportation useful and accessible, it must be built where people are, and where people want to go. Yet, conversely, most of the time people already live in these areas precisely because of their physical location and accessibility. Ideally, transportation would be accessible without being disruptive, but in the case of the St. Louis interstate exchange, this was not prioritized. In order to build the regional St. Louis interstate highway system, planning officials created space. They made calculated decisions to destroy specific neighborhoods, prioritizing aesthetics and access for the more powerful white populations. These decisions were based on class and power, both of which were determined by race with the African American community holding less political and economic power.

To be sure, interstates were built through the path of least resistance, through communities that did not have the political or social capital to fight it. This did not, however, stop residents from resisting interstate development in their communities, and some groups succeeded. Bi-furcating neighborhoods and displacing residents were not the primary goals of interstate construction; however, planning officials often touted “slum clearance” as an indirect benefit of the interstate construction process. "The bodies and spaces of people of color, historically coded as ‘blight’ in planning discourse, provided an easy target for a federal highway program that usually coordinated its work with private redevelopment schemes and public policies like redlining [the practice of denying housing services, either directly or through selective raising prices, to residents of certain areas based on the racial or ethnic composition of those areas], urban renewal, and slum clearance.”

While transportation infrastructure development in East St. Louis over the last century reflects regionally specific political and social problems, it can also be understood as part of the national narrative of changing urban-suburban landscapes from more concentrated urban centers to sprawling suburbs from the 1950s to the 1970s. At the onset of this population dispersion, East St. Louis tried to meet the needs of increasing traffic between the metro east region and the city of St. Louis as it is and continues to be the primary avenue for transportation between the two areas. The city of East St. Louis opened a toll bridge, The Veterans Memorial Bridge, in 1951 in response to this need for greater traffic capacity to increase access to the employment opportunities and amenities found in St. Louis and ease the burden of traffic across the Mississippi River. In 1952, the city passed an ordinance prohibiting the construction of another bridge within the municipal boundaries of the city until

17 Mark Tranel, St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis (Missouri Historical Society Press, 2007).
18 Tranel, St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis.
19 “The highway revolts” are a term used to encompass the widespread protest and community organization surrounding new highway development after World War II around the world. In the United States specifically, some of these efforts were successful in rerouting or halting urban interstate construction, and led to the creation of planning codes requiring community input and engagement.
22 The Veterans Memorial bridge was later re-named the Martin Luther King bridge, and the new bridge over the river built in 2012 for highway 70 was named the Veterans memorial bridge.
the bonds used to construct the Veterans Memorial Bridge were paid off.\textsuperscript{23}

Around the same time, Missouri and Illinois state transportation officials, in conjunction with the federal government, began the planning process for the regional interstate system. In order to coordinate interstate cooperation among planners and decision-makers in the transportation planning process, the Bi-State Development Agency (BSDA) was established in 1949 through an interstate compact between Missouri and Illinois, ratified by Congress, and signed by the president in 1950. This formal establishment of inter-state cooperation came to the forefront during the planning process for the urban interstates that were planned and created in the following two decades. The later incorporation of the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, which became the regional planning authority, further emphasized the political and economic necessity of interstate cooperation in planning efforts.

A 1958 regional transportation study conducted by a St. Louis engineering firm proposed an interstate bridge location a mile south of downtown St. Louis because of its location near the convergence of existing expressways on the Missouri side of the river, and its potential to prevent congestion by bypassing both downtown areas. St. Louis city officials, however, wanted to integrate the interstate plans into existing postwar urban redevelopment plans for the city centered on the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (JNEM), more commonly known as the Gateway Arch. Highway officials were able to secure an acre and a half of land from the edge of the JNEM site from the National Parks Service for interstate construction. They aimed to construct a highway bridge that would provide a grand entryway to St. Louis. Despite reported evidence to the contrary, they believed that having the highways lead directly to downtown St. Louis would help to revitalize the downtown neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{24} The planners did not concern themselves with the effects on downtown East St. Louis. Ironically, it did the opposite. While highway construction provided much faster transportation to and around cities, it came at a cost. Neighborhoods were destroyed and bifurcated, people lost their homes, and history was destroyed. It determined who was going to be exposed to high levels of pollution, and therefore respiratory illnesses, and where people would decide to live for decades to come. These decisions, in East St. Louis like in the rest of the country, were made at regional, state, and national levels. In fact, East St. Louis planners only heard about the new interstate bridge from a newspaper article just days before the public announcement by regional leaders, the state departments of transportation, and the Federal Highway Authority.\textsuperscript{25}

The construction of the Poplar Street Bridge began in 1959 and was completed in 1967 as a river crossing for Interstates 55 and 70, as well as other local expressways. Even though the planning process had been going on for years, “East St. Louis leaders only learned of the interstate bridge by way of a newspaper article five days prior to the public announcement in downtown St. Louis.”\textsuperscript{26} The construction of the new interstate bridge, and the new road infrastructure for I-55 and I-70, not only threatened a key revenue source for the city of East St. Louis, but also violated the 1952 city ordinance explicitly prohibiting the construction of the new bridge. While the construction of these roads was welcomed by suburban residents due to the improvement to the commute between their homes and jobs and greater access to urban centers, it led to the displacement of East St. Louis residents and the disjointing of their community.

In sum, the Interstate highway system was conceived at a national level. It was brought about by national policymakers and bureaucratic decision-making. While there was definitely input on a state governmental level, and interstate cooperation to achieve the goals, it was most assuredly a top down approach. In the hierarchy of decision making, national agendas took precedence over state agendas, and while cities, because of their strong power base, were able to have some say in the decision making process, they were still for the most part left out of this conversation. This means that the needs of not just the citizens of the cities in question, but also the local planners, were not included in the conversation. Planning officials, by nature, are geared towards making the best decisions for the entire area that they are responsible for. Because local planners are responsible for a smaller swath of area, they cannot ignore the needs of communities at the most local levels. Conversely, state, regional, and national entities are not only able to, but sometimes are instructed to, in order to think of these larger-scale issues.

\textbf{May 27, 2017}

\textbf{In-between speakers at the ESTL 1917 CCCI Conference – The City that Survives: Commemorating the Past, Preparing for the Future (a combination of an academic conference, art showcase, and community gathering that was as unique as it was empowering) I began talking to an older gentleman at the table next to mine. He had grown up in the city, and still lived nearby. He asked me why I was at the conference, and I told him that I was doing research about how the highway and MetroLink construction affected the city. His face lit up, then saddened as he described his childhood friends and how they used to play in the neighborhood and walk to school together. When they began constructing the highway, he couldn’t walk to school, and he lost touch with his friends on the other side because he had no way of crossing the new highway to see them. The statistics and history books are meaningful, but this story, and all of the ones like it, make the destruction of community undeniably real.}

The development of the interstate system not only destroyed physical structures, it destroyed communities. In the St. Louis region, this meant the decimation of Mill Creek Valley and the communities between the east riverfront and downtown East


\textsuperscript{24} Tranell, St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis.


St. Louis.27 While this paper focuses on the effects specific to the East St. Louis area, this destruction and decimation happened on a national scale. The interstate highway program completely changed the way that cities operate internally, and in relation to one another. By the time highway construction was complete, it had cut through the city of East St. Louis, and taken away a huge source of income for both the residents and the city of East St. Louis. It also allowed for all of the wealthier, primarily white East St. Louis residents to move farther out to the newly developed suburbs around the ring highways, as it drastically cut transportation times from those areas.

The effects of interstate construction incited a national grassroots activist movement that fought against the discriminatory practices and loosely veiled statements of city improvement. It was broadly termed “Highway Revolt.” The movement was closely tied to both the civil rights movement and second wave feminist protest. Both the successful and unsuccessful highway protests led to procedural change — within national, state, and local departments of transportation — which now requires that all 10-year transportation plans include input from the community.28 These movements also led to a cultural shift surrounding planning and transportation development. While this administratively and bureaucratically addresses the lack of community input, procedural requirements do not necessarily equate to community voice.

### Decline and Redevelopment: Reclaiming Community Agency

The post-highway construction period in East St. Louis, primarily during the 1980s and 1990s, was marked by a massive population decline, a loss in municipal services, government corruption, and environmental and physical degradation.29 The highways facilitated this population decline, allowing newly minted suburbanites to travel from their manicured subdivisions to St. Louis City without ever leaving the interstate to see the destruction and degradation that highway construction and industrial disinvestment created in East St. Louis. From 1940 to 1970, St. Clair County in Illinois as a whole experienced massive population increase from 166,899 to 285,176, in 30 years. During this same period of time East St. Louis experienced significant population decline and transitioned from a majority white to a majority black city. The city lost more than half of its retail base and experienced increasing crime rates.30 This all coincided with the election of the first black mayor of the city, James Williams, and the institution of an increasing number of black political officials, something that while not uncommon in the collective history of industrial suburbs is always quickly pointed out and used as a scapegoat for industrial decline by conservative political officials.31

Between 1970 and 1980 the assessed value of the City fell from $169 million to just $38 million, leading to a dramatic decline in tax revenue available for public services and planning. East St. Louis spiraled into economic decline, to a point where they mortgaged city hall and could not pay for municipal trash pick-up.32 As compared to interstate construction, this time period in East St. Louis history is marked not only by a lack of new development, but also steep decline of existing infrastructure. As the city cut services, potholes developed in roads, streetlights fell into disrepair, and trash piled up in backyards and vacant lots. The city, and its agencies, were plagued by corruption and mismanagement, and because of the population decline and reduction in business there wasn’t enough public funding to support basic city functions including the police and fire departments let alone to support public infrastructure. During the 1980s circumstances grew increasingly dire, as over half the population left the city of deteriorating infrastructure, minimal services, and increasing crime rates, further perpetuating the cycle of diminishing revenue and diminishing services.33

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27 Tranel, St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis.
28 Avila, The Folklore of the Freeway.

31 Theising, Made in USA.
32 Ibid
33 Reardon, “Enhancing the Capacity of Community-Based Organizations in East St. Louis.”
This downward economic spiral led state and federal politicians and policymakers to take decision-making power away from local officials in an effort to stabilize the city. The state of Illinois passed the Financially Distressed Cities Act in 1990, which gave the state control of the budget and operations of the city of East St. Louis. During this same time period the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) took over control of the public housing authority in East St. Louis, and officially named it “the most distressed small city in America.” Similarly the Illinois Department of Education exhibited increasing control over School District 189 decision-making processes. The state also granted East St. Louis one of the few riverboat casino licenses in order to provide the city a larger commercial tax base and new job opportunities.

Federal and state oversight and investment primarily defines the time period in between transportation infrastructure development in the city. Local authorities were once again superseded by state and national officials, leaving local leaders and communities powerless in their own community governing organizations. It would not be until the fall of 2013 that East St. Louis would shake the label of a “distressed” city, and until the fall of 2017 that the city regained full control of its public housing authority.

Regionally, while the suburbs of St. Louis County, St. Charles County, and St. Clair County had stable populations, the urban center of St. Louis continued to experience decline and disinvestment during the 1980s and early 1990s. Following national trends aimed at inner city revitalization during this time period, the Bi-State Development Agency, based on a planning study conducted by the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, created a light-rail line to complement its existing bus-based public transit system. The original MetroLink line, opened in 1993, ended in East St. Louis at the 5th and Missouri station. The MetroLink did not expand farther out into St. Clair County in Illinois until 2001, with the exclusion of the East Riverfront station, which was added with the construction of the Casino Queen in 1994. The eventual expansion, also approved in 1994 with the St. Clair County Transit District, added an additional three stations in East St. Louis, and extended all the way out to Southwest Illinois College, opening in the spring of 2001, with a final expansion out to Shiloh-Scott in 2003.

The BSDA proposed a plan for the MetroLink expansion that followed Interstate 64 on its southern edge through the city of East St. Louis, with park and ride stations along the way. Like their historical counterparts during the construction of the Poplar Street Bridge, the residents of one East St. Louis neighborhood, Emerson Park, first learned of this expansion through an article in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Unlike their historical counterparts, however, the earlier stage in the planning process and the newly created grassroots community organizing infrastructure and community-academic partnerships allowed them to directly address the harms of the plan. This grassroots community organizing structure took the form of the Emerson Park Development Corporation (EPDC), which was formed by a group of concerned citizens from East St. Louis, and was officially incorporated in 1989. Along with job training and youth programs, generating and advocating for a new MetroLink expansion plan that directly serves the citizens of the Emerson Park neighborhood is one of the most significant things EPDC has done.

The BSDA route proposal did not coordinate with existing neighborhood development projects and cut off access for Emerson Park residents, whose neighborhood lies just north of the interstate. It was explicitly designed for commuters to have easy access from the interstate rather than serving the specific transportation needs of the community. Interstate 64 separated the proposed station in Emerson Park from the heart of its neighborhood, limiting access for a majority of the population. However, unlike the mid-century highway construction, this time East St. Louis residents were able to successfully change the route plans to better serve the needs of the community. They did so as part of a broader international movement in urban and transit planning termed transit-oriented development, which purposefully uses public transportation systems as a center for economic and community investment. Supported by students, faculty, and staff through the East St. Louis Action Research Project at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), organizers at the Emerson Park Development Corporation lobbied BSDA, the Illinois and Missouri State Governments, and the Federal Government in order to institute their own route proposal, which they referred to as the “laser line.”

Architects and planners at UIUC used their expertise and data analytics capabilities to work with community members to create a fiscally viable, accessible, and integrated route plan that directly served the needs of residents. Their plan put a station north of 64 with direct access to the Emerson Park neighborhood, and also secured housing and commercial investments for the area. Whereas BSDA touted access based on location, EPDC in conjunction with the East St. Louis Action Research Project, took a more holistic and grassroots approach. The newly proposed Emerson Park Station was integrated into already existing neighborhood development projects.

35 Reardon, “Enhancing the Capacity of Community-Based Organizations in East St. Louis.”
39 “The Remaking of Emerson Park: Neighborhood Revitalization, Community Activism, and the Emerson Park Development Corporation, 1985-2002” (Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign: 2002) 40 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) refers to a specific type of community development that aims to create sustainable pedestrian friendly urban communities centered on transportation systems. For further information on TOD broadly see http://www.tod.org/, and for further information on St. Louis specific TOD see http://www.onestl.org/resources/reports/transit-oriented-development
41 The Remaking of Emerson Park: Neighborhood Revitalization, Community Activism, and the Emerson Park Development Corporation, 1985-2002” (Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign: 2002)
and created greater access for residents to the rest of the St. Louis region for jobs and other services. EPDC and ESLARP used investment in transportation infrastructure as a way to generate further infrastructure investments like the cross-highway pedestrian bridges and street improvements, and new housing and commercial developments. They developed a viable alternative plan that centered the needs of the community rather than commuters. Equitable and integrated transportation infrastructure is absolutely essential to creating and maintaining viable and interconnected communities, cities, and regions. More broadly, community agency and input in the planning process helps to ensure a people-centered focus to infrastructure development. The MetroLink exists in its current form particularly because of the way that the highways have been built. A wider view of the MetroLink expansion route shows that for a large portion of the route in the city of East St. Louis, the MetroLink follows the path created by the land cleared for highway construction, as the construction of interstates requires a large corridor of cleared space.43

This is the Emerson Park MetroLink stop. You can see the newer housing and commercial development that stemmed from the MetroLink expansion in the background of the picture.

The new plan recognized the ability for transportation access to greatly increase access to economic hubs in the region, providing access to higher-paying jobs, educational opportunities, and city resources including healthcare facilities, cultural institutions, and a broader array of retail options. This also greatly improved the connections between East St. Louis and the rest of the St. Louis region. Whereas the highways were created to bypass the city, to purposefully disconnect it from the region, the new MetroLink plan was created specifically to rebuild those lost connections, allowing residents to access more places within the region.

However, by going north of Highway 64 it simultaneously provided less access to the neighborhoods to the east of the 5th and Missouri stop and south of highway 64. For example, even though they have constructed pedestrian bridges above, and pathways below, the highway, the highway and MetroLink still separate the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Community Center from residents of the Fairlawn and Claremont neighborhoods. Additionally, some scholars and residents have remarked that although more accessible, some of the particular design elements of the new MetroLink stations still restrict access for residents living in some communities. The large park and ride lot greatly increases the walking distance to the stop for many area residents. Also, the sidewalks cut off before the parking lot, making it difficult for people in wheelchairs or pushing strollers to directly access the stop from all angles on foot.44 While the neighborhood of Emerson Park specifically, and East St. Louis more broadly, has seen a great deal of positive development inclusive of and stemming from the MetroLink expansion, the city is plagued by this potential.

The Emerson Park neighborhood has seen an increase in educational attainment, income, and employment since the construction of the MetroLink extension and the accompanying investments in the 9th Street corridor. Although these metrics have improved, they remain less than adequate.45 Transportation is a necessary conduit to facilitate change. However, white flight was not caused by transportation development; rather, the development of transportation exacerbated it. Similarly, the development of community-centered public transportation is essential to neighborhood improvement, but it’s not a panacea. Continued community improvement will require more investment, improvement to the education system, increases in public safety, and more. While the process of improving the city has already begun, the movement for citizen-centered design and development is still ongoing.

November 11, 2017

Yesterday I was talking to a local shopkeeper, who also happened to have a degree in urban planning, what he thought about the MetroLink. A lot of the newspaper articles, academic articles, and academic’s accounts tout it as a success of activism and shining example of community-centered development. He said that while he agreed that the community activism was inspiring, and the MetroLink theoretically provided increased accessibility, he didn’t think it was the big success that people outside East St. Louis were led to believe. The MetroLink doesn’t run frequently, is fairly expensive, and doesn’t go a whole lot of places. He says that it’s a great start, but people have to stop thinking of it as finished, and start thinking about how to build on their success.

Conclusion

Transportation forms the arteries of a city. The most effective transportation infrastructure fades seamlessly into the landscape of a city, facilitating smooth transitions between spaces and places. Ineffective and poorly executed infrastructure,
However, generates physical and cultural barriers that create lasting scars on the physical landscape and in the collective experiences of community members, further reinforcing class and racial divides. In East St. Louis, a city founded explicitly because of its potential as a transportation center, this dynamic has played out specifically in the construction and usage of the interstate system and MetroLink system. However, the MetroLink facilitates connection with the rest of the region and the highway facilitates passage through the city, not into it.

Residents, academics, and city-specific planning officials were intentionally barred from involvement during the planning process for interstate and bridge construction, which, in conjunction with faulty national policy, led to the creation of divisive and disruptive transportation infrastructure. Conversely, for the St. Clair County MetroLink expansion project, Emerson Park residents partnered with the East St. Louis Action Research Project under the leadership of organizers from the Emerson Park Development Corporation to plan a new MetroLink route, the “laser line”, that served the needs of the community by securing economic investments to complement new infrastructure, and ensuring that their voices and consequently the needs of residents were heard and acted upon during the planning process. The stark contrast of the exclusionary process and devastating results of interstate development with the community-centered process and positive – minimally disruptive – results of the MetroLink expansion makes clear the need for community voice in transportation infrastructure development specifically and community development more broadly.

It is impossible to adequately understand a city without understanding the history, characterization, and usage of transportation infrastructure. Specific understandings of transportation infrastructure and the cities they fit into are essential to the improvement of urban areas. While scholars and planning officials admit that no single approach, no single infrastructure project can adequately address the complex social, economic, political, and environmental problems, a city cannot begin to address these issues without focusing on transportation infrastructure: an essential component of any viable development plan. Thanks to both the national protest movements surrounding interstate construction and the local work of the Emerson Park Development Corporation, planners have increasingly adopted a community-centered approach to transportation infrastructure specifically, and urban planning more broadly.

In this paper I use the history, usage, and characterization of transportation as an avenue to understand how East St. Louis has changed over time, and furthermore how other industrial suburbs and Rust Belt cities have done the same. East St. Louis was developed primarily to serve the needs of industry and secondarily to serve the needs of the regional population. The local community was explicitly left out of this process. By exploring this history, I show the incredible positive impact that citizen-led and citizen-centered development can have both on physical landscapes and communities more broadly.

Bibliography


Contributor Bios

Patrick Goff, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, is graduating with a degree in Germanic Languages and Literatures with a minor in General Economics. His primary research interests are 20th Century German media and culture, audio technologies, and radio drama. He is especially interested in how cultural attitudes about the radio are reflected in the literary works produced for it. Patrick hopes to continue studying German and radio at the graduate level in the future, although he plans to enter the workforce after graduation. His project would not have been possible without the guidance and support of his mentor, Professor Caroline Kita, and the Merle Kling Undergraduate Honors Fellowship.

Hilah Kohen, from Iowa City, Iowa, is graduating with a degree in Comparative Literature and a minor in Russian Language and Literature. As a researcher and translator, she strives to decenter the histories of individual languages and states. Hilah’s current projects include a translation of Marina Tsvetaeva’s narrative poem Tsiar-Deretsa into English; an exploration of Vladimir Vysotsky’s songs in Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish translations; and readings in post-Soviet anticolonial fiction. After a short time in the worlds of teaching and translation, she plans to enter a doctoral program in Comparative Literature or Slavic Studies. Hilah has received generous support as a Kling Fellow from Vincent Sherry, Nicole Srobozny, Anca Parvulescu, the 2018 Kling cohort, everyone involved in the Center for the Humanities, and the many colleagues and archival staff members who made her research in Russia and the United Kingdom possible. Hilah’s research was also supported by a Study Abroad Grant from the Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs at Middlebury College and by a Bemis and Eisner Research Scholarship from Washington University.

Allie Liss, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is graduating with a degree in Anthropology and a Certificate in Geographic Information Systems. During her undergraduate studies, she has explored a wide array of interests including spatial analysis, urban development, structural violence, gender based violence, and public health. This, in combination with volunteer experience and involvement in the East St. Louis community, allowed her to develop an interdisciplinary project using spatial analysis, ethnographic observations, and historical context to investigate community activism surrounding transportation infrastructure development. Allie hopes to continue her work bridging academic research and community activism by pursuing a graduate degree in public health. She would like to thank Dr. Shanti Parikh for her mentorship and encouragement throughout the project, and the Kling Fellowship for their endless guidance and continual support.

Sophie Lombardo, from Vernon Hills, Illinois, is graduating with a degree in History and a minor in Writing. Her research centers on questions of transitional justice and Holocaust studies. In her time at Washington University, her dual interests in history and international human rights have led her all over the world, from the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie to the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo. This summer, she will be traveling to Poland as a fellow at the Auschwitz Jewish Center. She would like to thank her mentor Dr. Anika Walke, without whom this project would not have been possible. Lastly, she is grateful to the Merle Kling Fellowship for providing her with the opportunity to conduct research with a supportive community of talented scholars.

Nathaniel Young, from Los Angeles, California, is graduating with degrees in Latin American Studies and Spanish. His academic interests lie in Latin American popular culture, nationalism, political resistance, and social movements. Nathaniel plans on returning to the region in some capacity post-graduation to keep improving his language skills and possibly teach English. Nathaniel is deeply grateful to his mentor, Dr. Ignacio Sánchez Prado, for four years of life-changing mentorship and advising, and for guiding him through the past two years in the Kling Fellowship. He would also like to thank his family and friends who have helped him grow throughout his academic career.