



# The CRIMSON HISTORICAL REVIEW

*An Undergraduate Journal of History at the University of Alabama*

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The *Crimson Historical Review* is composed of undergraduate students at the University of Alabama who are passionate about history, academic writing, and publishing. Interested in becoming a staff member? Undergraduate students at the University of Alabama are invited to contact [crimsonhistorical@ua.edu](mailto:crimsonhistorical@ua.edu). The *CHR* is not operated by the University of Alabama. The opinions and views within this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the University of Alabama and its staff.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Chaudhry Hameed**, Southern Methodist University: a senior graduating in May 2021, with majors in history, English, and human rights, as well as minors in Latin, classical studies, medieval studies, and women's and gender studies. His historical interests are British imperialism and South Asia. After graduation, Chaudhry hopes to attend the University of Texas School of Law and become a lawyer.

**Elizabeth Gerhardt**, The University of Nevada, Las Vegas: a recent graduate from Las Vegas, Nevada, with a major in history and minor in anthropology. Her main areas of historical interest are gender and minority studies, specifically related to how groups and their identities are shaped by their environments and historical contexts. Elizabeth has additional interests in the sphere of public history, with an emphasis in conservation and historic preservation. She plans to pursue graduate studies in archival science.

**Evan Royds**, Rutgers University: a senior from Collingswood, New Jersey, who upon graduating in May 2021 will have completed his degree in history. Evan's academic interests are centered around the history of American protest movements and anti-war activism. After graduating he will be attending graduate school at Rutgers to pursue a career in history and education.

**Riley LoCurto**, The University of Alabama: a member of Phi Beta Kappa and a graduate *summa cum laude* of UA's class of 2021, with a degree in history and minors in German and the Blount Scholars Program. Riley is from Franklin, Tennessee by way of Los Angeles (she understands that does not make much sense), and she feels her historical interests are too broad to become a graduate student just yet. She hopes to one day find gainful employment, but this summer will be working in Glacier National Park and hiking to her heart's content.

**Nikolas Clark**, The University of Alabama: a recent graduate with a degree in history and minors in English literature and anthropology. Originally from Enterprise, Alabama, his historical interests include classical Mediterranean civilization and the history of twentieth-century literary modernism. Nikolas is currently on an impromptu grand tour, where he hopes to nurture a rather fervent devotion to good food and even better stories. In the future, he plans to pursue a career in international diplomacy and humanitarian relief.

# FROM THE EDITORS

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Dear Readers,

Staff at the *Crimson Historical Review* are delighted to introduce the journal's first summer issue. Typically, we publish two editions an academic cycle: one in the fall, and another in the spring. This year, however, a large number of high-quality submissions offered us the opportunity to expand our scholarly scope and to continue in reaching a broad audience.

Indeed, the *CHR* Editorial Board faced some tough choices as it prepared to produce its standard, semesterly issues, and the academic merit of our submission pool—not to mention its unexpected thematic unity—necessitated an alternative publication route. Thus was born our special edition, *20th Century: Global War and Celebrity*. We hope that presenting materials in this fashion will help you to rigorously examine two defining features of this transformational period, and afford you greater context in the interpretation of each individual paper.

Moreover, we—that is, John and Lily—would be remiss not to acknowledge that, with this volume and letter, comes a changing of the guard (of sorts). While neither of us were a part of the founding *CHR* group, we have both recently received senior appointments: John, to Co-Chief Editor, and Lily, to Production Editor. And like the journal's other new leaders—Gavin Jones, incoming Review Board Executive, Caroline Lawrence, our second-ever Chief Copy Editor, and John French, the wearer of too many executive hats to name—we remain committed to shepherding the *Review's* flourishing and growth.

This is a commitment we share with our more veteran personnel, who have capably weathered the changes and chances of this difficult COVID time, and our enthusiastic authors, without whose keen scholarship and graceful patience we would be unable to publish at all (let alone in the manner to which we have become accustomed). We would also like to thank Review Board Executive Logan Goulart, a stalwart of the journal celebrating his final edition, and faculty advisor Dr. Margaret Peacock, the *CHR's* leading light, for their continued support and the firm leadership. We want to finish this letter with our gratitude to Editor-in-Chief Jackson Foster; Jackson has shown us that real leadership does not create more followers, but more leaders.

Please enjoy our inaugural special issue,

Lily Mears, Chief Copy Editor, and John Pace, Production Editor

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The first signature is 'Lily Mears' and the second is 'John Pace'. They are written in black ink on a white background.



# Crimson Historical Review

# EMPIRE OF HONOR: Punjabi Recruitment in the First World War

Chaudhry Hameed

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*This paper focuses on British wartime recruitment efforts in the northwestern Indian state of Punjab between 1914 and 1918. In doing so, it demonstrates that colonial authorities were not only well-versed in local or regional Indian culture but that they were more than adept at exploiting that culture to serve the needs of their empire, particularly the British empire's need to raise military forces for its First World War effort. Specifically, this study argues that British colonial officials, such as Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who served as the Punjab's governor during the First World War, understood the sort of rhetoric and cultural appeals that would motivate common Punjabis to enlist in the British Indian Army. To prove its claim, this study analyzes the recruitment speeches O'Dwyer made during the war as well as the letters actual Punjabi soldiers wrote from the European battlefield.*

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Using the speeches that Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab (1913-1919), delivered at various recruitment durbars in Punjab throughout the First World War (1914-1918), I will demonstrate that the colonial Punjab government primarily employed appeals to *izzat*, which is an Indian sense of reputation or honor, to increase native recruitment for the imperial war effort. Furthermore, by using letters written by Punjabi soldiers on the Western Front, I will argue that these appeals to *izzat* were effective and resonated with Punjabis. Through this kind of analysis, I hope to demonstrate how pervasively in touch the colonial, official mind was with the colonized and that colonial authorities were well-versed in exploiting Indians' desire for *izzat*. That is, the officials understood what struck a chord with the natives and what sort of rhetoric pushed the right buttons in the common Punjabi. Such a study is significant because it attempts to uncover and recognize the humanity and sacrifice of a community of soldiers who have been largely forgotten in popular narratives of the First World War.

Many historians have heretofore made valuable contributions to the study of Punjab's role in and contributions to the First World War. Their histories have dealt with topics and questions such as how recruitment was conducted in Punjab, how Punjabis conceptualized military service, what motivated Punjabis to fight for empire, and, more recently, the emotional world of the Punjabi sepoys. The seminal historical work in the field is arguably *India and World War I*, which includes key pieces by S.D. Pradhan and DeWitt C. Ellinwood that touch on the Punjabi experience during the First World War.<sup>1</sup> Ellinwood, for instance, posits that economic improvement and social mobility drove many Indians to enlist in the Indian Army.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, using actual interviews of Sikh veterans of the First World War, Pradhan argues that their

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<sup>1</sup> DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S.D. Pradhan, eds., *India and World War I* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> DeWitt C. Ellinwood, "The Indian Soldier, the Indian Army, and Change, 1914-1918," in *India and World War I*, 177-212.

reputation as a ‘martial race’ in conjunction with economic factors influenced Sikhs to join the Indian Army during the First World War in such large numbers.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Santanu Das, who is interested foremost in recovering the emotional aspects of the Indian experience in the First World War, similarly asserts that while an economic factor was central to Indians’ decision to enlist, “one must take into account too nuances related to the more specific socio-cultural story of the region that intersected with issues such as family and community traditions, livelihood, faith and masculinity, among other factors.”<sup>4</sup> David Omissi is another influential historian who presents a political and social history of the colonial Indian Army. In *The Sepoy and the Raj*, Omissi treats the martial-race theory, which skewed recruitment for the Indian Army during the end of the nineteenth century heavily towards Punjabi castes and communities extensively, and he argues that enlistment in Punjab was usually related to economic opportunity.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, oft-cited historian Tan Tai Yong examines how Punjab became known as the “sword arm of the Raj” and came to enjoy a particularly close relationship with the colonial military for almost a century in *The Garrison State: The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947*.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Yong argues that service in the colonial military was appealing for various martial classes across Punjab as an insurance against famine or debt.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Yong examines Sir Michael O’Dwyer’s role in overhauling of the Indian Army’s pre-First World War recruitment policy and engendering a new cooperation between civil and military authorities for the purpose of extracting as many recruits from the province as possible.<sup>8</sup> All these historians have provided invaluable historical insight into the experience of Punjabi sepoys in the First World War and the colonial Punjab government’s recruiting and enlisting strategies.

While some historians like Tan Tai Yong have discussed Lieutenant-Governor Sir Michael O’Dwyer’s zealous First World War recruitment efforts and others such as David Omissi and Santanu Das have usefully treated and critiqued an extant collection of Indian soldiers’ censored mail, none have viewed the official mind and the Punjabi sepoy mind in relation to one another. No historian has connected the recruiting speeches O’Dwyer made during his Punjabi durbars and real Punjabi voices together. In particular, they have not examined the degree to which O’Dwyer’s rhetoric concerning *izzat* was effective or appealing to his Punjabi audience. Stephen P. Cohen and Nick Lloyd are the only historians I found who touch on the content of O’Dwyer’s speeches and the types of appeals he made. However, both Cohen and Lloyd briefly examine only two of O’Dwyer’s speeches, and neither of them analyze the extent to which O’Dwyer’s rhetoric was culturally-sensitive, persuasive, or purposely crafted to exploit the hopes and fears of Punjabis.<sup>9</sup> Historians have not placed or situated O’Dwyer in the larger web of Punjabi society. I aim to fill the gap by putting O’Dwyer in conversation with Punjabi voices, with real participant experience.

<sup>3</sup> S.D. Pradhan, “The Sikh Soldier in the First World War,” in *India and World War I*, 213-226.

<sup>4</sup> Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Sounds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 81.

<sup>5</sup> David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994), 10-43, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Yong, *The Garrison State*, 79-83.

<sup>8</sup> Yong, *The Garrison State*, 117.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, “The Military Enters Indian Thought,” in *War and Society in Colonial India*, 2nd ed., ed. Kaushik Roy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 173; Nick Lloyd, “The View from Government House: Sir Michael O’Dwyer’s War,” in *India and World War I: A Centennial Assessment*, ed. Roger D. Long and Ian Talbot (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 49.

## EMPIRE OF HONOR

A presentation of a few key statistics as well as some brief context regarding Indian military recruitment during the colonial era is in order to both highlight the sheer number of Punjabis who served in the First World War and to understand these Punjabis' socioeconomic background. A total of 1,440,437 Indians were recruited for the British Empire's war effort between August 1914 and December 1919.<sup>10</sup> Over a million of these men—1,096,013—served overseas in various major and minor theaters of war, such as France, East Africa, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Gallipoli, Salonika, Palestine, Aden, and the Persian Gulf.<sup>11</sup> Of the total number of Indians recruited, 480,000 men, of whom 408,000 served as combatants, came from Punjab.<sup>12</sup> By the war's end, Punjab had provided over forty percent of the total number of Indian combatants and nearly one third of all Indian recruits.<sup>13</sup> Most of these Punjabi soldiers were "recruited from the semi-literate peasant-warrior classes of north India in accordance with the 'martial race' theory."<sup>14</sup> Das provides a useful explication of the theory of 'martial races':

According to this construct, only certain ethnic and religious groups—such as the Pathans, Dogras, Jats, Garhwalis, Gurkhas and Sikhs, among others—were deemed fit to fight; incidentally, these were men from rural backgrounds who had traditionally been 'loyal' to the government, as opposed to the politicised Bengali who were branded 'effeminate'. Various strands—from Victorian interest in physiognomy and Darwinism to indigenous notions of caste and political calculation—combined to form this elaborate pseudo-scientific theory. Forged in the aftermath of the Sepoy Uprising of 1857, it was enormously influential and shaped the formation of India's armed forces.<sup>15</sup>

The 'martial race' theory heavily informed which Punjabi communities and tribes before, during, and after the First World War. Nevertheless, due to the massive exigency of manpower during the First World War, the colonial government of Punjab, which was headed then by Sir Michael O'Dwyer, ultimately expanded the traditional Punjabi recruitment base and thus opened the Indian Army up for Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim 'non-martial' tribes and castes that had been previously excluded from military service.<sup>16</sup> O'Dwyer was particularly keen on culling as many Punjabis as possible for the imperial war effort.

Lieutenant-Governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer (1864-1940), who often figures prominently in discussions related to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in April 1919 and the evils of empire, presided over the colonial government of Punjab between 1913 and 1919, a period which roughly includes the outbreak and conclusion of First World War. According to historian Nick Lloyd, Sir Michael O'Dwyer's "elevation to the Lieutenant-Governor was the culmination of a glittering career in the Indian Civil Service."<sup>17</sup> An Irish Catholic, O'Dwyer passed the ICS exam in 1882 and arrived in India in 1885, where he was first posted as a revenue officer in Punjab.<sup>18</sup> Regarding his political philosophy and nature, Lloyd asserts that O'Dwyer "was a man very much in the Punjabi paternalist tradition; a committed believer in the British

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<sup>10</sup> *India's Contribution to the Great War* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1923), 79.

<sup>11</sup> *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War, 1914-1920* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922), 777.

<sup>12</sup> M.S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War* (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, Punjab, 1922), 40.

<sup>13</sup> M.S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Santanu Das, "India and the First World War," in *A Part of History: Aspects of the British Experience of the First World War* (London: Continuum, 2008), 69.

<sup>15</sup> Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture*, 14-15.

<sup>16</sup> O'Dwyer, Michael. *India As I Knew It: 1885-1925* (London: Constable and Company, 1925), 221.

<sup>17</sup> Lloyd, "The View from Government House," 43.

<sup>18</sup> Lloyd, "The View from Government House," 43.

Empire and of the importance of ruling directly, strongly, and, above all, fairly.”<sup>19</sup> O’Dwyer’s conception of imperial duty relied upon his enacting the role of a white father-figure to impulsive brown children, who had to be treated with a firm yet just hand. Still, he did not love all his children equally. In fact, O’Dwyer supposedly “prided himself on looking after the interests of the peasantry and regarded himself, with some relish, as an ‘enemy of the *baniyas*’ (the largely Hindu moneylending class).”<sup>20</sup> That is, he saw himself as the champion of the rural, agricultural classes, which incidentally provided the stock of the Indian Army. During the First World War, O’Dwyer played a key role in engendering a cooperation between Punjab’s civil administration and military authorities for the purpose of extracting as many recruits for the Indian Army from the province as possible.<sup>21</sup>

O’Dwyer’s recruitment efforts are treated extensively in *The Punjab and the War*, which was compiled at the behest of the colonial Punjab government in 1922 by M.S. Leigh, an ICS officer, as an official record of the Punjab’s First World War efforts and contributions. *The Punjab and the War* fits neatly into the genre of military or war history. However, this indirect source is heavily biased towards O’Dwyer, whose role in the erstwhile war is seen as invaluable and crucial. In fact, in the text’s foreword, Sir Edward Douglas Maclagan, Governor of the Punjab (1919-1924), extols his direct predecessor: “Through the inspiring energy of its Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Michael O’Dwyer, and his officers the Province was able to give of its best and to feel that it had in no way spared itself in its great effort.”<sup>22</sup> Later in the history, Leigh also retrospectively praises O’Dwyer for his “wonderful energy and ability” and calls him “the mainspring of the whole Province’s effort.”<sup>23</sup> He goes on to explain that a mainstay of O’Dwyer’s efforts to raise the number of Punjabi recruits after 1916 was his series of *durbars*, which were essentially public receptions, “covering the whole Province, in which O’Dwyer skillfully adjusted his appeal to suit each several audience.”<sup>24</sup> O’Dwyer evidently attempted to cast as wide a net as he could to entice Punjabis of all backgrounds and creeds to enlist.

Leigh aptly summarizes the contents of O’Dwyer’s formal addresses or speeches as well as the kind of appeals made therein to different cities, regions, and communities in Punjab to inspire enlistment:

Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Rohtak, Ludhiana are reminded of their own high reputation, of the valour of their men and the spirit of their women; it is only necessary to urge them to endure to the end. Karnal, Lahore, Gujranwala, Ferozepore are reminded of bygone traditions of bravery; they are urged to emulate the best districts and the neighbouring States. Backward tracts and tribes are contrasted with their more spirited neighbours. The ‘educated’ are implored not to lag behind Bengal. In one case the number of casualties is dwelt on as an incentive to brave avengers; in another their slightness in comparison with the toll of fever and plague is brought out. Battle honours are held out as a bait for some: rewards of pay or land for others.<sup>25</sup>

Over the course of the war, O’Dwyer thus evolved into an expert at delivering recruitment pitches and manipulating his audience’s desire for recognition, communal pride, and honor. As Leigh explains, “Sir Michael indeed ‘became all things to all men.’”<sup>26</sup> At any rate, the full-length speeches from which Leigh pulls from to form

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd, “The View from Government House,” 45.

<sup>20</sup> Lloyd, “The View from Government House,” 45.

<sup>21</sup> Tan Tai Yong, “Garrison Province at Work: Punjab and the First World War,” in *The Garrison State*, 98-140.

<sup>22</sup> E.D. Maclagan, foreword to *The Punjab and the War*

<sup>23</sup> Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, 30.

<sup>25</sup> Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, 30.

this condensed synopsis of O'Dwyer's orations actually survive in a collection published by the colonial Punjab government in 1918.<sup>27</sup> In total, there are twenty-four speeches, of which nineteen were given at durbars between January 1917 and August 1918. I will refer to these selfsame primary sources to investigate the extent to which O'Dwyer's speeches resonated with his Punjabi audiences.

We do not have to rely solely on indirect sources such as Leigh, however, for accurate information on Sir Michael O'Dwyer's recruitment efforts in Punjab during the First World War. In fact, O'Dwyer gives his own account of his recruitment efforts in his autobiography, *India as I Knew It: 1885-1925*, which he wrote upon retirement from politics.<sup>28</sup> While it is primarily intended as a record of his four-decade' service in India, with special attention to his term as Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab (1913-1919), O'Dwyer's book can also be read as a vindication or defense of himself and his administration. Indeed, his legacy started to come under fire in his own lifetime after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in 1919. In his autobiography, O'Dwyer hence underscores the contributions he made in strengthening British rule in Punjab, saving Punjab from multiple conspiracies, and securing Punjabi recruits for the British Empire's First World War effort.

In regard to the latter, O'Dwyer argues that "no effort was spared [by his administration] to bring home to the [Punjabi] people that the War was *their* War, one for the defense of their hearths and homes."<sup>29</sup> Additionally, he cites that under his supervision "the whole machinery of the Province was concentrated on providing men for the Army."<sup>30</sup> In terms of his personal contributions, O'Dwyer explains:

The strongest appeal to a Punjabi is one to his *izzat* (honour) or that of his tribe, caste, or community, and the most effective way in which such an appeal can be made is in the public Durbars, which are a traditional feature of Oriental administration. Hence from the beginning of the War I revived the system of holding Durbars in every district or group of districts for war propaganda; and from July 1917, I made use of these great assemblies to meet the prominent men of each district, especially the war-workers, to review by tribes, religions, and localities the results already obtained [in recruitment], to arouse officials and non-officials to a sense of the common danger and the need of raising men to protect their hearths and homes, [and] to encourage further effort.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, O'Dwyer evidently felt confident about his knowledge of Punjabi culture and society. He also believed that he knew what kind of rhetoric or appeals the common Punjabi would listen to and heed. O'Dwyer also implies that he has a competent understanding of the complex Punjabi cultural notions, such as *izzat*.

O'Dwyer believed that his recruitment pitches at his many durbars were successful. Summing up his discussion of his war-durbars and the multi-faceted appeals he made, O'Dwyer asserts, "By such measures, it was brought home to the people that Government would reward loyal service with honour and material benefits." Furthermore, O'Dwyer personally felt that his efforts in hosting and speaking at these public audiences were very effective in raising men.<sup>32</sup> He cites Punjabi recruitment figures from 1917, which is when he began his durbar tours in earnest, and 1918 as evidence for his sentiment. O'Dwyer points out that Punjab

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<sup>27</sup> *War Speeches of His Honour Sir Michael O'Dwyer, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab* (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, Punjab, 1918).

<sup>28</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, "The War Effort of the Punjab," in *India As I Knew It*, 213-231.

<sup>29</sup> O'Dwyer, "The War Effort of the Punjab," 216.

<sup>30</sup> O'Dwyer, "The War Effort of the Punjab," 219.

<sup>31</sup> O'Dwyer, "The War Effort of the Punjab," 223-4.

<sup>32</sup> O'Dwyer, "The War Effort of the Punjab," 225.

contributed 95,000 recruits in 1917 whereas 134,000 Punjabi men enlisted in 1918.<sup>33</sup> Of course, he does not explain to what extent *his* own efforts led to this overall increase of almost 40,000 Punjabis.

Before analyzing the substance of Sir Michael O'Dwyer's durbar speeches, it would be useful to briefly outline *izzat*. After all, this concept plays a central role in O'Dwyer's recruitment pitches and appeals. A contemporary of O'Dwyer, Lieutenant-General Sir James Willcocks gives an interesting explication of *izzat* in his post-war account of his experiences on the Western Front between 1914 and 1915, where he served as the commander of the Indian Corps.<sup>34</sup> A career Indian Army officer who had also been born and bred in India, Willcocks evidently felt that he was familiar enough with Indian culture to understand *izzat*. Acting as a translator or cultural informant of sorts, Willcocks writes to his intended audience, which was essentially British, "*Izzat* is a thing little understood by any but Indians, but it is a great driving force; it raises men in the estimation of their fellows, whilst the loss of it debases them."<sup>35</sup> However, we do not have to rely on this poetic yet hazy Anglo-Indian understanding of *izzat*.

Scholars, both Indian and British, can help us further understand *izzat*, a complex concept that eludes any simple, easy, or one-word translation into English. According to Santanu Das, *izzat* is an Urdu word "roughly translated as 'honour', 'prestige' or 'reputation.'"<sup>36</sup> David Omissi adds "standing" and "credit" to his definition of *izzat*.<sup>37</sup> Ravi Ahuja, on the other hand, defines *izzat* as "respect, respectability, honour."<sup>38</sup> Thus, *izzat* represents many things simultaneously. While I do not contend with any of these scholars' definitions of *izzat*, I should like to augment these scholars' broad understanding of the term by adding that we can take *izzat* to also mean fame, eminence, as well as the good name of oneself, one's family, or one's community. These forms of *izzat* are particularly at work in O'Dwyer's speeches.

Throughout his speeches at durbars across Punjab between 1917 and 1918, Lieutenant-Governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer manipulated and exploited his audience's sense of *izzat* to get more Punjabis to enlist in the Indian Army. For instance, in his speech at a durbar in Montgomery in January 1917, O'Dwyer exhorts the city of Montgomery as well as the South-West Punjab as a whole to contribute more men to the war effort by appealing particularly to his audience's fear of missing out on *izzat*. He draws stark comparisons between the splendid manpower contributions of the North-West Punjab and the lackluster efforts of the South-West Punjab. At the end of his speech, O'Dwyer warns that time is running out for "the districts of the South-West Punjab to prove their manhood and their loyalty" and "to remove from these districts the reproach of being the only districts in the Punjab that failed to play their

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<sup>33</sup> O'Dwyer, "The War Effort of the Punjab," 225.

<sup>34</sup> The Indian Corps was composed of two divisions of the Indian Army and was dispatched to Marseilles, France in the autumn of 1914. It represented the first ever batch of Indian soldiers to fight European foes on European soil. The Indian Corps was ultimately transferred to Mesopotamia at the end of 1915.

<sup>35</sup> James Willcocks, *With the Indians in France* (London: Constable and Company, 1920), 6.

<sup>36</sup> Santanu Das, "Indians at Home, Mesopotamia and France, 1914-1918: Towards an Intimate History," in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 82.

<sup>37</sup> David Omissi, ed., *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters, 1914-1918* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 12; David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994), 79.

<sup>38</sup> Ravi Ahuja, "The Corrosiveness of Comparison: Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (1915-1919)," in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia*, ed. Heike Liebau, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 134.

part in this great struggle.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, O’Dwyer plays to a sense of regional, collective, and gendered *izzat*, which is supposedly at stake. O’Dwyer likewise employs appeals to a reputational form of *izzat* in his speech at a durbar in Kasur in August 1917. Here, O’Dwyer appeals to the reputations of both the Sikh and Muslim tribes of the Lahore District: he asks the Sikh whether they will “let it be said that prosperity has deadened their military spirit and sapped their courage,” and he similarly asks the Muslims whether they will “allow it to be said hereafter that they took no part in defending their country.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, in his speech at a durbar at Jhelum in November 1917, O’Dwyer again manipulates his audience’s fear of missing out on *izzat* to encourage recruitment: he warns that “the clan, the family or the individuals who could have helped in one form or another but failed to do so will never cease to regret that they stood aloof when opportunities of service and honour presented themselves.”<sup>41</sup>

Whereas O’Dwyer presents enlisting in the army as the vehicle by which *izzat* is maintained, if not gained, *not* enlisting in the army is the means by which the *izzat* one’s community has already accumulated is lost. For example, in his speech at a durbar in Gujranwala in August 1917, O’Dwyer warns the men of Gujranwala that they are not doing enough in raising men for the army and will therefore suffer for it in more ways than one. He threatens Gujranwala with an imminent loss of *izzat* and tries to shame the city to into a proper sense of duty. O’Dwyer declares:

Your neighbours in Gujrat, Amritsar and Gurdaspur will point the finger of scorn at Gujranwala, and say, ‘that is the district which stood aloof in the great war when we gave our manhood in tens of thousands to fight for the *Sarkar*.’ It will be said that you were either too cowardly or too well off to do your duty. If those things are said, and they certainly will be said, what *izzat* will you have with Government or your neighbors? You have still a chance—a last chance—of making good the lost ground, of coming into line with your neighbors and of redeeming the good name of your clan, your race and your district.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, according to O’Dwyer, a community that collectively fails to heed the call of duty risks derisive scorn from its neighbors and also ambivalence from the government, and it also risks an irrecoverable loss in *izzat* in the eyes of both.

In contrast to his recruitment speeches from 1917, O’Dwyer’s speeches from 1918 focus more on the potential increase in one’s *izzat* through military service. For instance, at a durbar in Jullundur in January 1918, O’Dwyer ends his speech by stating that “those who come forward in this great crisis” will have “their descendants...always point with pride to the fact that they played a man’s part on the right side in the decision of the greatest issues with which the human race has ever been faced.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, O’Dwyer manipulates his audience to associate *izzat* with a positive legacy in the eyes of posterity. Additionally, in his speech at a durbar in Dera Ghazi Khan in February 1918, O’Dwyer claims that “the man who does his duty well and has ability, can rise to the commissioned ranks and establish his own *izzat* and that of his family for good.”<sup>44</sup> Hence, O’Dwyer depicts military service as a once-in-

<sup>39</sup> Michael O’Dwyer, “Speech Delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor at a Darbar Held at Montgomery on the 17th January 1917” in *War Speeches*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Michael O’Dwyer, “Speech Delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor at a Darbar Held at Kasur on the 6th August 1917,” in *War Speeches*, 56.

<sup>41</sup> Michael O’Dwyer, “Speech Delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor at a Darbar Held at Jhelum on the 1st November 1917” in *War Speeches*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> Michael O’Dwyer, “Speech Delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor at a Darbar Held at Gujranwala on the 8th August 1917,” in *War Speeches*, 62.

<sup>43</sup> Michael O’Dwyer, “Speech Delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor at a Darbar Held at Jullundur on the 28th January 1918,” in *War Speeches*, 87.

<sup>44</sup> Michael O’Dwyer, “Speech Delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor at a Darbar Held at Dera Ghazi Khan on the 18th February 1918,” in *War Speeches*, 112.

a-lifetime *izzat* jackpot. Furthermore, in his speech at a darbar held at Gujranwala in August 1918, O'Dwyer asserts that "those who do their part in bringing this great struggle to a triumphant close can ever hold their heads high, confident that they have brought honor to themselves, their families, their tribes and their race or religion."<sup>45</sup> Therefore, O'Dwyer promises that enlisting will result in one gaining *izzat* for every aspect of one's identity or every kind of group one associates with.

O'Dwyer believed that the war provided Punjabis "an opportunity which will never recur to do *khidmat* and thereby raise their *izzat*," and Punjabi soldiers in fact do express in their letters the capacity of military service to bring *izzat*.<sup>46</sup> Hence, O'Dwyer's incessant appeals to *izzat* actually resonated with Punjabis. For example, in an Urdu letter dated May 22, 1916, Gholam Mustafa, a Punjabi Muslim of the Sialkot Cavalry Brigade's Machine Gun Squadron, writes from France to his friend Mahomed Akbar Khan in Bombay, India primarily to tell Khan that he is glad to hear of Khan's decision to enlist. However, he warns Khan to "stiffen [his] heart first...for unless one's heart is in one's work one cannot perform it properly."<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, he ends his letter by proudly asserting that while he and the other Indian sepoy in France "are required to do things of which [they] had never dreamed in [their] whole lives," they "meet trials and misfortunes with so much tact and perseverance that fame is secured thereby to the whole of Hindustan and to [their] illustrious Government."<sup>48</sup> Thus, for Mustafa, one benefit of service in the army is bringing fame to both his own countrymen and to his colonial government. Mustafa conceptualizes sepoy like himself as the instrument by which prestige and honor—*izzat*—can come to India. Furthermore, in an Urdu letter dated June 5, 1917, Jemadar Sultan Khan, a thirty-four-year-old Punjabi Muslim serving with the 18<sup>th</sup> Lancers in France, urges Malik Fateh Mahomed Khan in Shahpur District, Punjab to "raise the name of the Buranas...by getting the *lumberdars* to enlist men of Burana village as Buranas."<sup>49</sup> He exhorts his addressee to "emphasize...that [their] caste has got to win a name by serving Government."<sup>50</sup> Khan complains that while he is an officer, few respect him because his clan, the Buranas, does not have a history or tradition of serving in the army.<sup>51</sup> He wistfully remarks, "We get our livelihood here all right, but what about our *izzat*?"<sup>52</sup>

Sultan Khan also points out a few examples of other clans and castes that have successfully gained *izzat*, or good name, by serving in the army in large numbers. Khan ends his letter by explicitly stating what he believes is a primary aim in enlisting: "The whole object of military service is to raise the reputation of one's caste, and that is what we have to do."<sup>53</sup> Hence, to sepoy from lower-status backgrounds, service in the military is reconfigured as the vehicle whereby one's social group can acquire an increase in social status and standing. Additionally, in an Urdu letter dated September 17, 1916, Fazullah Khan, a Punjabi Muslim, writes from the Adjutant-General's office in Rouen, France to his kinsman Chandhir Ghulam Sarwar Khan in Gujrat District, Punjab. Fazullah Khan's statements demonstrate that proving one's loyalty to the

<sup>45</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, "Speech Delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor at a Darbar Held at Gujranwala on the 3rd August 1918," in *War Speeches*, 137.

<sup>46</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, "Speech Delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor at a Darbar Held at Gurdaspur on the 2nd February 1918," in *War Speeches*, 99.

<sup>47</sup> Gholam Mustafa, letter to Mahomed Akbar Khan, May 22, 1916, in *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 188.

<sup>48</sup> Mustafa, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 188.

<sup>49</sup> Jemadar Sultan Khan, letter to Malik Fateh Mahomed Khan, June 5, 1917, in *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 296.

<sup>50</sup> Khan, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 296.

<sup>51</sup> Khan, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 295-6.

<sup>52</sup> Khan, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 296

<sup>53</sup> Khan, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 296

government and gaining repute for one's clan are ample reasons to sign up and fight. He relates his willingness and readiness "to lay down [his] for Government" if necessary, and he declares that "now is the time to show one's loyalty."<sup>54</sup> In addition, he reminds his addressee to try to raise a cavalry regiment of their fellow Gujars "because only in the Army is any *izzat* to be acquired."<sup>55</sup> He warns him if more Gujars do not enlist then their "caste will be despised" and their "caste will be disgraced."<sup>56</sup> Overall, his letter reads just like any number of O'Dwyer's recruitment speeches that emphasize the potential increase and loss in communal *izzat* that accrues from military service or the lack thereof. Nonetheless, the similarity between the way Punjabi soldiers themselves think about *izzat* in their letters and the way O'Dwyer speaks about *izzat* in his durbar recruitment speeches points to the pervasive nature of British officials' knowledge of Indian culture, which the British officials maneuvered to work for empire rather than against it.

It is evident that colonial officials like O'Dwyer had an insidiously intimate knowledge of Punjabi culture, which they exploited to serve the interests of empire. After all, O'Dwyer's rhetoric on *izzat* is uncannily familiar Punjabi soldiers' own discourse regarding *izzat*. Hence, O'Dwyer tapped into, appropriated, and ultimately manipulated Punjabi cultural notions, namely *izzat*, to extract as many recruits as possible for the British Empire's war effort across the Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. This study demonstrates that the distance or divide between the official mind and the colonized mind thus not so great after all. In other words, the chasm of cultural ignorance was bridged. However, this was not a bridge of multiculturalism, British respect for Indian culture, or British admiration for Indian difference. Rather, it was a one-way bridge of exploitation crafted by the British, who sought to understand Indian culture only for the empire's own needs. A further direction for research is examining to what extent other appeals O'Dwyer made in his durbar recruitment speeches, such as promises of tangible benefits and potential future rewards or special consideration from the government, resonated with Punjabis. Additionally, the question of whether Punjabi patriotism during the First World War was genuine—if patriotic feelings were based in Punjabis' belief in the inherent goodness of empire—or artificial—if outwardly patriotic sentiments among Punjabis were the result of faith in O'Dwyer's appeals and the desire for material gain—presents another rich area for a larger, postcolonial-historical study.

A secondary motive or purpose of an essay like this is to raise much-needed awareness of forgotten, subaltern historical actors. While the number of Indians, particularly Punjabis, who fought for the British Empire between 1914 and 1918 is undoubtedly staggering, Indian soldiers' participation in the First World War is a marginalized history at best. Das argues that the Indian soldiers who served "have been doubly marginalized: by Indian nationalist history which has largely focused on the heroes of the Independence movement and by the grand narrative of the war which still remains largely Eurocentric."<sup>57</sup> In a similar vein, even Sashi Tharoor, a non-scholar yet important interpreter of Indian history, recognizes the importance of India's contribution to the First World War. Tharoor writes that Indian troops "were destined to remain largely unknown once the war was over: neglected by the British,

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<sup>54</sup> Fazullah Khan, letter to Chandhir Ghulam Sarwar Khan, September 17, 1916, in *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 236.

<sup>55</sup> Khan, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 236.

<sup>56</sup> Khan, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 235-6.

<sup>57</sup> Santanu Das, "Imperialism, Nationalism, and the First World War in India," in *Finding Common Ground: New Directions in First World War Studies*, ed. Jennifer D. Keene and Michael S. Neiberg (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 68.

for whom they fought, and ignored by their own country, from which they came.”<sup>58</sup> Regarding their marginalization, Tharoor insightfully explains that “part of the reason is that they were not fighting for India. None of the soldiers was a conscript: soldiering was their profession. They served the very British empire that was oppressing their own people back home.”<sup>59</sup> More than a century after the First World War, the existence of these colonial troops is still subject to widespread historical amnesia: regarding the depiction and inclusion of a Sikh soldier in Sam Mendes’ award-winning First World War film *1917* (2019), a British actor infamously complained that the filmmakers were ‘forcing diversity’ on audiences.<sup>60</sup> More work needs to be done to honor the legacy and increase awareness of empire’s forgotten children.

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<sup>58</sup> Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2016), 75.

<sup>59</sup> Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*, 75.

<sup>60</sup> “Laurence Fox Apologises to Sikhs for ‘Clumsy’ *1917* Comments,” *BBC*, January 24, 2020.

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# AVOIDING DETECTION: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive

Elizabeth Gerhardt

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*Until 2018, women in the British military have been barred from serving in combat roles. However, clandestine warfare offered women opportunities they would not have been granted if it were not for the nature of their work. During the Second World War, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) employed women as special agents for the purpose of infiltrating Nazi-occupied regions. This paper uses memoirs, biographies, oral histories, and SOE documents to compare the experiences of two female agents, Pearl Witherington and Eileene “Didi” Nearne, to evince the notion that their dedication to the war effort predominated the perception of their gender held by both themselves and their male colleagues.*

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After France’s defeat in June of 1940, the success of Nazi forces weighed heavily on the Allies. European leaders were desperate to disrupt the oppressive Nazi regime, and they increasingly sought alternative forms of warfare to achieve this goal. Rather than relying on aerial and naval offensives alone, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill proposed infiltrating Nazi-occupied areas covertly, which could serve to apply economic and psychological pressure from the inside and supplement other offensive operations. Thus Britain, among other European powers, employed irregular warfare in addition to traditional warfare. Britain’s Special Operation Executive (SOE) was created precisely for this purpose. The SOE had sections in various countries throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, but the focus of this research paper is on the largest section, the French Section (F Section).<sup>1</sup>

Irregular warfare provided women with opportunities not conventionally granted to them at this time. Women in Britain, as well as much of western Europe, were restricted from serving in military positions on the front lines despite receiving training in hand-to-hand combat and the use of firearms. Irregular warfare offered these women upward mobility that would have otherwise been near impossible. The fact that irregular warfare was conducted by clandestine organizations allowed women the opportunity to take on responsibilities and job assignments not often granted to women during World War II.

Using the experiences of two women that benefited from work in irregular warfare, this paper compares the lives of female SOE agents of the F Section, Pearl Witherington and Eileene “Didi” Nearne. This comparison demonstrates how the use of irregular warfare granted these women the opportunity to serve in roles they were traditionally restricted from serving in at this point in history. Additionally, it addresses the question of the extent to which these women were personally affected by their gender in their experiences as special agents. The evidence used to support these claims relies largely on the memoirs, biographies, and personal accounts of these women to offer a glimpse into their perspectives. Correspondence and personnel files

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<sup>1</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 1.

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from the SOE, oral histories, and various other government documents are also utilized to provide context for these women's experiences.

Given the classified nature of the SOE, much of the scholarship before the 1990s and early 2000s, when most of the records were declassified, lacks a complete picture. Published in 1983, *Britain and the European Resistance 1940-1945* by David Stafford was one of the first pieces of scholarship published about the SOE. It provides a foundational background of the SOE, including some of the first documents to be declassified.<sup>2</sup> Marcel Ruby's book *F Section, SOE: The Buckmaster Networks*, which was published five years after Stafford's book in 1988, provides a specific look into the F Section using the first-hand accounts of its personnel. Ruby also lends space to the discussion of women's involvement in SOE operations.<sup>3</sup>

Within the past two decades, more and more scholarship has been published regarding the women in the F Section of the SOE. *The Women Who Lived for Danger* by Marcus Binney was published in 2005 focuses exclusively on the female agents in the F Section. By 2005, many of the documents about the SOE had been declassified, allowing Binney to further explore women's involvement. This book is useful in providing the narrative accounts of ten women involved in the F Section.<sup>4</sup> In Sarah Helm's 2005 book *A Life in Secrets: Vera Atkins and the Missing Agents of WWII*, Helm further explores the involvement of women in the F Section through the life of Vera Atkins, an intelligence officer who worked under Maurice Buckmaster.<sup>5</sup> In her article "Playing the Daft Lassie with Them': Gender, Captivity and the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War," Juliette Pattinson focuses on the analysis of the gendered experiences of these women special agents while in captivity compared to their male counterparts.<sup>6</sup> In Elizabeth Kate Vigurs's article "The Women Agents of the Special Operations Executive F Section: Wartime Realities and Post War Representations," Kate provides an analysis of the public's perception of women agents following the war and how they were affected.<sup>7</sup> Published in 2017, Gordon Thomas and Greg Lewis's book *Shadow Warriors of World II: The Daring Women of the OSS and SOE* compare the experiences of various female Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and SOE agents to detail the contributions made by female undercover agents during World War II.<sup>8</sup> The present paper contributes to previous scholarship in that it compares two female agents in order to establish the importance these women attached to their own gender during their time working for the SOE. While their gender did indeed affect their experiences as undercover agents, and especially their lives following the war, the dedication these women had toward defeating Nazi powers held more importance, as demonstrated by their personal attitudes toward gender in addition to the support they received from their male colleagues.

Until recent decades, World War II scholarship has largely omitted the discussion of women's involvement in combat roles. Given the gender roles ingrained

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<sup>2</sup> David Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance, 1940-1945: A Survey of the Special Operations Executive, with Documents*. (United Kingdom: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Ruby, *F Section, SOE: The Buckmaster Networks*. (London: Leo Cooper Ltd., 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Marcus Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger: The Agents of the Special Operations Executive*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Helm, *A Life in Secrets: Vera Atkins and the Missing Agents of WWII*. (London: Little, Brown, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Juliette Pattinson, "Playing the Daft Lassie with Them': Gender, Captivity and the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War," *European Review of History* 13, no. 2 (2006): 271-92.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Kate Vigurs, "The Women Agents of the Special Operations Executive F Section: Wartime Realities and Post War Representations." PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Thomas and Greg Lewis, *Shadow Warriors of World War II: The Daring Women of the OSS and SOE*. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press Incorporated, 2016).

in society in the twentieth century, women were often barred from serving in combat roles. In countries such as America, Britain, France, and Germany, serving in combat roles was directly linked to men's obligation to protect the women and children of their country. Most often, women were given jobs as nurses or administrative assistants. Otherwise, they were expected to focus their efforts on the home front through work in military supply factories. While women were commonly restricted to these non-combat roles, historians have reported instances in which they were involved on the frontlines. Perhaps the country that best demonstrates this was the Soviet Union. The women of the Soviet Union felt that their womanhood directly correlated with their service in the military and thus, the protection of their motherland.<sup>9</sup> In Britain, leaders within the military felt they could utilize the manpower of women, but military organizations feared the potential public backlash that could come from allowing women to serve in the military. Thus, women were confined to mostly auxiliary roles. Members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force were trained in firearms, yet they were forbidden from ever using these skills.<sup>10</sup> However, the SOE was a unique case. It was able to work around these restrictions given the clandestine nature of the organization.

### Origins of the Special Operations Executive

The SOE was not the first British military organization designed to conduct clandestine operations behind enemy lines. Prior to the formation of the SOE, such operations were designated to the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), also known as M16. The D Section was responsible for operations the SOE would later take on.<sup>11</sup> This section was further divided into two sections: SO-1 and SO-2. While SO-1 was responsible for spreading propaganda, SO-2 was responsible for organizing and executing acts of sabotage. Churchill wished to combine these two sections with the creation of the SOE, though ultimately, SO-1 branched off into its own organization, the Political Warfare Executive.<sup>12</sup> By the summer of 1940, Nazi forces had taken control of much of western Europe. In response, members of the British government considered new strategies for achieving victory.<sup>13</sup> With the Nazi occupation of France in 1942, Britain's use of infiltration by air and sea proved to be nearly impossible. Churchill as well as other government officials believed the best way to defeat the German forces was by infiltrating Nazi-occupied areas to sabotage Germany's efforts and undermine morale. The plan mainly involved placing economic pressure on the Germans from behind enemy lines.<sup>14</sup> This took the form of sabotage and the destruction of important railways and military supply factories in addition to spreading anti-Nazi propaganda.<sup>15</sup> With this in mind, Churchill gave Hugh Dalton, the Minister of Economic Warfare, the instructions to "set Europe ablaze."<sup>16</sup> It was in this context that, on July 22, 1940, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) was formed. As Maurice Buckmaster, head of the SOE's French Section, said in reference

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<sup>9</sup> D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," *The Journal of Military History*, 57, no. 2 (April 1993), 318.

<sup>10</sup> Campbell, "Women in Combat," 318.

<sup>11</sup> Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance, 1940-1945*, 19-20.

<sup>12</sup> Ruby, *F Section, SOE: The Buckmaster Networks*, Loc 190.

<sup>13</sup> Ruby, *F Section*, Loc 190.

<sup>14</sup> Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance, 1940-1945*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> Ruby, *F Section, SOE: The Buckmaster Networks*, Loc 160-165.

<sup>16</sup> Ben Pimlott ed., *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton 1940-1945*, (London: The Trinity Press, 1986), 62.

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to Churchill's statement, "we could interpret that in the way that we thought was most effective."<sup>17</sup>

The main office of the SOE was on Baker Street in London,<sup>18</sup> while it used country houses throughout England and Scotland as bases for training its agents.<sup>19</sup> Training included clandestine sabotage by bombing and arson, hand-to-hand combat, parachuting, maintaining alternate identities, spreading propaganda, and skills for relaying intelligence back to British forces.<sup>20</sup> After training, the agents were sent to various sections of the SOE depending on their skills and knowledge of the specific locations where each section was located.

### Women in the F Section

Maurice Buckmaster became head of the F Section in 1941, and in 1942 he began recruiting women onto the force.<sup>21</sup> As more and more men were being captured and forced into German labor camps, the SOE became desperate for new recruits.<sup>22</sup> At this time, Buckmaster and other leaders of the F Section struggled to find agents that could pass as French citizens. The French section needed people who not only spoke French, but also did so with sufficient fluency so as to not raise suspicion about their true origins.<sup>23</sup> This search was further complicated due to French general Charles de Gaulle's refusal to allow the British military to recruit French men, as he feared France might lose its autonomy during the war. Buckmaster remembers de Gaulle as being "most uncooperative in every way."<sup>24</sup> Buckmaster looked to Canadian and British men, but he struggled to find individuals whose French accents did not give away their true origins.<sup>25</sup> It was then that the F Section came to the conclusion that it should seek out women to fill these roles.<sup>26</sup> Women offered certain advantages, as they were less likely to be suspected as spies. Given the gendered stereotypes at the time, their involvement in the military was underestimated by enemy forces. This made it easier for women to travel and lodge without being detected. In the words of Maurice Buckmaster: "Girls could move more easily in France."<sup>27</sup> With this, women became integral to the success of the SOE's mission.

### Pearl Witherington and Eileen "Didi" Nearne

Of the F Section agents serving behind enemy lines, 440 were men and 40 were women.<sup>28</sup> Many of the women did not have prior military backgrounds. Recruitment to the SOE largely depended on the background of the women, as leadership within the SOE sought out those who could, as Marcus Binney explains in his book *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, "pass themselves off as ordinary citizens and ... move safely through the numerous checkpoints and controls operated by both Germans and Vichy authorities."<sup>29</sup> The two main subjects of this paper, Pearl Witherington and

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<sup>17</sup> Maurice Buckmaster (Head of F Section, Special Operations Executive in Great Britain, 1941-1945), Oral History recorded by Conrad Wood, 17 October 1986, 21:09.

<sup>18</sup> Ruby, *F Section, SOE: The Buckmaster Networks*, Loc 194.

<sup>19</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 14-16.

<sup>21</sup> Ruby, *F Section, SOE: The Buckmaster Networks*, Loc 344.

<sup>22</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Maurice Buckmaster Oral History, 30:15.

<sup>25</sup> Ruby, *F Section, SOE: The Buckmaster Networks*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Ruby, *F Section*, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Maurice Buckmaster Oral History, 23:19.

<sup>28</sup> Ruby, *F Section, SOE: The Buckmaster Networks*, Loc 4365.

<sup>29</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 4.

Eileen Nearne, came from similar French backgrounds that greatly aided them in maintaining their false identities and avoiding capture.

Though both of Witherington's parents were British citizens, they were living in Paris when Pearl was born in 1914. Wallace Witherington, her alcoholic father, deserted the family early on, leaving Pearl's mother to support Pearl and her three sisters on her own. Their mother struggled to make ends meet, so Pearl took on an immense amount of responsibility at a young age. Pearl believes this rough upbringing aided in her preparation as a special agent.<sup>30</sup> For a majority of her early life, she lived in France. This gave her a native grasp of conversational French, which would later be beneficial in securing her selection for recruitment to the F Section.<sup>31</sup> Her family escaped to England after the Nazis occupied Paris in 1940. In England, Witherington's sisters joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), while she herself began work as the personal assistant to the director of Allied Air Forces and Foreign Liaison.<sup>32</sup> While working as an assistant, Witherington expressed she could better contribute to the war cause by working behind enemy lines in France than she could by working at a desk in Britain.<sup>33</sup> She was recruited to the SOE in April of 1943.<sup>34</sup>

Eileen "Didi" Nearne had a similar background to Witherington. She was born in England in 1921 as the youngest of four children. When she was two years old, her family moved to Paris. Unlike Witherington, Nearne entered school at a young age and enjoyed reading leisurely throughout her childhood. Having been introduced to French culture and language at a young age, Nearne easily adjusted to her life in Paris.<sup>35</sup> Similar to Witherington, this worked to her advantage later on when being considered for employment in the SOE. After the Nazi occupation of France began, Nearne's family, too, fled Paris. She, along with her three siblings, made their way to England while the rest of her family remained in France.<sup>36</sup> While her eldest sibling, Frederick, joined the Royal Air Force (RAF), she was recruited to the SOE in 1942 along with her older sister Jacqueline and older brother Francis.<sup>37</sup> She was comparatively young, only 21 at the time of her recruitment.

Even with these similar backgrounds, the differences in Nearne and Witherington personalities and the subsequent experiences they had while in occupied France help illustrate that there is difficulty in crafting a single narrative to describe the female experience in the SOE. Rather, the unique experiences of these women indicate that each woman contributed to the war effort in ways that were not attached to their gender. Their focus was aiding in the liberation of France, which both women considered their home.

### **Motivations for Joining the SOE**

The women who were part of the SOE, as well as those involved in French resistance groups, came from a variety of backgrounds. The unifying factor in their motivation to join the fight against German forces was the duty they felt in serving their country and liberating Europe from Nazi occupation. In her memoir, the French resistance fighter and niece of Charles de Gaulle, Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, recalls encountering the variety of women involved in the resistance effort. Though they

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<sup>30</sup> Witherington Cornioley and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Witherington Cornioley and Larroque, *Code Name Pauline*, 5-9.

<sup>32</sup> Witherington and Lorroque, *Code Name Pauline*, 21-26.

<sup>33</sup> Witherington and Lorroque, *Code Name Pauline*, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Witherington and Lorroque, *Code Name Pauline*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Susan Ottoway, *A Cool and Lonely Courage: The Untold Story of Sister Spies in Occupied France*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2013), 9-12.

<sup>36</sup> Ottoway, *A Cool and Lonely Courage*, 9-12.

<sup>37</sup> Ottoway, *A Cool and Lonely Courage*, 34..

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came from a wide range of backgrounds, she asserts that “their common bond was their unanimous refusal to accept the defeat of their country at the hands of the Nazis.”<sup>38</sup> As Binney explains of the women of the SOE in his book, “the quality that unites the women who became agents was a steely determination to play an active role in inflicting real damage on the enemy.”<sup>39</sup> This point is echoed in the motivations behind Witherington’s and Nearne’s involvement.

In Witherington’s case, she credits her “intense anger against all the injustices”<sup>40</sup> as her reason for joining the SOE. She felt the French population was being held hostage by the Nazis. To her, “[t]hat is what a hostage is: some poor defenseless person. And that is something I cannot abide.”<sup>41</sup> Additionally, she knew her grasp of French, especially with her Parisian accent, would give her an advantage. This Parisian accent would aid her in establishing a credible alias as a native of France. Therefore, when she was offered a position in the F Section, she eagerly accepted. Nearne’s journey to recruitment began with her desire to involve herself in war work alongside her siblings, and she attributes her decision to join the SOE to her “patriotic feelings.”<sup>42</sup> She also felt she was fit for employment by the SOE because she “was by nature a solitary person, and that was essential to be able to adapt to that kind of life.”<sup>43</sup> Her desire for solitude later caused friction with her superiors, as this negatively affected her overall evaluations; this quality proved advantageous once she was parachuted into France, as her job as a radio operator required a great deal of isolation.

Just like the men of their countries, these women believed it was their duty to use their strengths and abilities to participate in the war effort. Their desire to involve themselves in dangerous war work was not influenced by their gender. They felt compelled to do what they could to fight against the Nazi occupation of France, regardless of the fact that they were women. Neither of these women wanted to remain stagnant and defenseless while the war ravaged their country.

### Training

The training of the SOE agents was specialized to prepare them for operating in secrecy behind enemy lines. This included psychological assessments as well as training in paramilitary operations, including handling explosives and knife combat.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, they were trained in maintaining alternate identities and establishing safe networks, which involved planning safe travel routes and lodging for fellow agents, within Nazi-occupied France.<sup>45</sup> Those without prior military backgrounds were enrolled in various branches of the military in hopes that, upon capture, they would be labeled as prisoners of war and spared execution.<sup>46</sup> Women were mostly restricted to two jobs: relaying information between Resistance groups as couriers, and operating radios with wireless telegraphy to transmit messages back to Britain. In a few cases, however, some women were assigned to leadership roles.<sup>47</sup>

After recruitment, Witherington was sent to the English countryside for training. While there, she admitted she struggled learning Morse code. Because of

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<sup>38</sup> Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonio, trans. by Richard Seaver. *The Dawn of Hope: A Memoir of Ravensbrück*. (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998), 63.

<sup>39</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Witherington Cornioley and Larroque, *Code Name Pauline*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Witherington and Larroque, *Code Name Pauline*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Caroline Gammel, “Eileen Nearne: British spy gave rare interview,” *The Telegraph*, Nov. 10, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Gammel, “Eileen Nearne.”

<sup>44</sup> Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors of World War II*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 14-21.

<sup>46</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 1.

this, she was assigned a job as a courier.<sup>48</sup> A report inside Witherington's personnel file tracks her evaluations as she progressed through her training. The first few evaluations were positive, describing her as "very intelligent, straightforward, courageous, sensible, and absolutely reliable."<sup>49</sup> However, her superiors still took note of her weaknesses. Despite her reliability, the report also describes her as having "not the personality to act as a leader, nor is she temperamentally suited to work alone."<sup>50</sup> This assessment was contradicted by another instructor, who found her to possess the skills to act as a leader, revealing that the first assessment may have been a result of sexist attitudes held by the instructors.<sup>51</sup> Witherington proved herself more than capable in the field, as she was later promoted to Flight Officer and put in control of her own circuit while in France.<sup>52</sup>

As Binney addresses in *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, "the arrival of beautiful young women was to cause some serious heartache."<sup>53</sup> In a report issued in June of 1944, Witherington is described as "unduly attracted by the opposite sex."<sup>54</sup> At first glance, this would seem unwarranted and could be considered a sexist remark. However, upon further examination, this comment may not have been rooted in sexism, but rather a concern for safety, given that she was romantically involved with a colleague by the name of Henri Cornioley. Such a relationship ran risks behind enemy lines for reasons such as increasing the chances of vital information being found if both agents were captured together as well as exposing their true identities through their displays of affection. However, this explanation does not explain other such negative evaluations in Witherington's personnel file, nor does it excuse the possibility that many of these evaluations were rooted in the sexist beliefs held by Witherington's superiors.

Nearne was originally assigned a job working in the London offices of the SOE as a decoder, but wishing to join her sister in France, she was eventually recruited to the F Section as a radio operator. Unlike Witherington's, Nearne's Finishing Report describes her as "not very intelligent or practical and is lacking in shrewdness and cunning ... In character she is very 'feminine' and immature."<sup>55</sup> In this context, her superiors paint her gender and youth in a negative light. While the report describes her as "lively and amusing" with "considerable charm and social gifts,"<sup>56</sup> her superiors ultimately concluded that "[i]t is doubtful whether this student is suitable for employment in any capacity on account of her lack of experience."<sup>57</sup> Even so, Maurice Buckmaster had the final say for any agents sent into France. Eileen's sister, Jacqueline, had also received a less-than-satisfactory evaluation by her superiors. In both cases, Buckmaster felt these women's skills and ability to blend into French society outweighed the negative evaluations. Therefore, his final decision was to send them into France.<sup>58</sup>

These initial negative assessments give the impression that these women were unfit to work as special agents in occupied France. However, Maurice Buckmaster

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<sup>48</sup> Witherington Cornioley and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, 35.

<sup>49</sup> "Cecile Pearl CORNIOLEY née WITHERINGTON, aka Geneviève TOUZALIN, aka MARIE - born 24 June 1914," Personnel File 1939-1946, UK National Archives, HS 9/35, pp. 127.

<sup>50</sup> Witherington, Personnel File, 127.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors of World War II*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 199.

<sup>53</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 199.

<sup>54</sup> Witherington Personnel File, 127.

<sup>55</sup> "Eileen Mary NEARNE, aka Alice WOOD, aka Jacqueline DUTERTE - born 15.03.1921," Personnel File 1939-1946, UK National Archives, HS 9/1089/2, pp. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Nearne, Personnel File, 31.

<sup>57</sup> Nearne, Personnel File, 31.

<sup>58</sup> Ottoway, *A Cool and Lonely Courage*, 46.

noticed the potential these women possessed. In regard to the critics who believed the SOE had made a mistake in using women, Buckmaster expressed that “[t]hese women did an invaluable job and one for which, whatever people may say, they were admirably suited.”<sup>59</sup> Regardless of the sexism these women faced by some of their instructors, the head of F Section felt their gender had little to do with their qualifications. Buckmaster’s support of these women proves that their contributions to the war effort transcended the limitations attached to their gender during the Second World War.

### Gendered Experiences in the Field

The actions of these women while behind enemy lines further proves that gender was hardly a factor in their commitment to their missions as undercover agents. Nearne and Witherington were quite aware their involvement as women in military combat operations was atypical. Additionally, these women knew they could utilize their gender in avoiding detection by the Gestapo. As Julliette Pattinson explains in her article “Playing the Daft Lassie With Them,” “Women’s endeavors not to reveal themselves as clandestine agents while operational were often accomplished through performances of hyper-femininity.”<sup>60</sup> According to Pattinson, it was not uncommon for the women of the SOE to overplay their femininity, with some agents using their feminine charm to seduce members of the Gestapo in order to avoid detection.<sup>61</sup> Neither Witherington nor Nearne utilized the stereotypes attached to their gender to this degree, though they still employed similar tactics, more so in Nearne’s case, when facing the Gestapo. Thus, the experiences of these women while conducting their missions in occupied France provide a mixed picture. In certain instances, their gender was an impediment to their success while in others, gender proved to be an advantage.

While working as a courier, Witherington was aware of the discrimination she faced as a woman. Even before reaching her destination for her missions in France, she noticed how taboo it was for a woman to be involved in frontline military operations. In one instance, she describes how the men she encountered looked at her as if she were a “strange animal.”<sup>62</sup> Even so, Witherington seemed unphased by such reactions. In Pattinson’s article, she also mentions that not all female agents in the SOE resorted to hyper-femininity. Using the example of fellow agent Yvonne Baseden, she briefly touches on the fact that she “did not consciously exploit forms of femininity for clandestine purposes as some of the other female agents did.”<sup>63</sup> This was also the case for Witherington. Aside from using the gendered occupation of a makeup consultant, she did not use her femininity in the same way as some women in the SOE.<sup>64</sup> In fact, her gender played a miniscule role in her missions.

After the leader of her circuit, Maurice Southgate, was arrested, Witherington was assigned to take over a third of the original circuit under her control. When offering to train members of the French resistance, referred to as the Maquis, in methods of sabotage, she “discovered that Gaspard from Auvergne [a leader of the French resistance] ... was antiwomen.”<sup>65</sup> Contrary to the reactions of the Maquis, Witherington claimed she received no backlash from her own men as a result of her

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<sup>59</sup> Maurice Buckmaster, *They Fought Alone: The True Story of SOE's Agents in Wartime France*. (London: Biteback Publishing, 2014) Loc 3382.

<sup>60</sup> Pattinson, *Playing the Daft Lassie*, 276.

<sup>61</sup> Pattinson, *Playing the Daft Lassie*, 276.

<sup>62</sup> Witherington Cornioley and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, 41.

<sup>63</sup> Pattinson, *Playing the Daft Lassie*, 278.

<sup>64</sup> Witherington Cornioley and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, 58.

<sup>65</sup> Witherington and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, 64.

gender. In fact, they lovingly referred to her as “our mother.”<sup>66</sup> While Marcus Binney describes her promotion as a result of her success in the field, he does not provide the implications of this success.<sup>67</sup> Though she maintained this absence of sexism from her own men, her mention of the sexism amongst the French men of the resistance demonstrates that while their gender was not at the forefront of these two women’s missions, it was still a factor with which they were compelled to contend. Despite this, she still successfully led her flight and members of the Maquis to hold off occupation by German forces.<sup>68</sup> Gender discrimination was present in the field, but the overarching goal of sabotaging the advancement of German soldiers outweighed the importance of gender to both Witherington and those under her command.

Conversely, Nearne did employ hyper-feminine tactics in the field. During an interrogation, Nearne attempted to pass as an innocent girl lacking in intelligence with an apathy toward the work she was assigned with the hope that the Gestapo would release her on the grounds that she was not emotionally invested in her resistance work. According to Susan Ottaway, author of a book about Nearne and her sister, Nearne had told the Gestapo that “I was bored at home and wanted to come to Paris to look for work.”<sup>69</sup> Juliette Pattinson describes this act of “playing the daft lassie” as a contradiction in that “women were undertaking the most gender-destabilizing activities, while seemingly upholding conventional gender norms by feigning vulnerability.”<sup>70</sup> She seemed to convince the Gestapo of her stupidity, and she was sent to a concentration camp as opposed to being executed, the latter being a fate many of the SOE agents faced. According to Nearne’s own account, she was sent to Ravensbrück to work in a factory until she was sent to Markkleeberg, where she was forced to do hard labor for roughly twelve hours a day. It was there that she successfully escaped with two French girls and hid until Americans began entering the city.<sup>71</sup> Nearne exhibited extreme bravery in escaping from the Germans, an attribute that says more about her overall character than the effect of her gender. This escape proved to be of utmost importance, as she was one of very few to survive captivity, and the information she provided aided SOE officer Vera Atkins in tracking down missing agents in years following the end of the war. The experiences indicate that these women knew when to deploy feminine tactics to their advantage, but, overall, their gender was, at best, loosely connected to their success. The bravery and resilience of these women eclipse any consequences of their gender while serving.

### **Discrimination in Military Decorations**

While positioned in occupied France, the women of the SOE were, for the most part, respected and commended by their male colleagues. However, once the war ended, these women faced prejudice from high-ranking military personnel, which is reflected in the decorations they received for their service. Much of the scholarship surrounding the experiences of the female SOE agents dedicates little space to the discussion of the military awards the women received following the war. However, in their book, *Shadow Warriors of World War II*, Gordon Thomas and Greg Lewis do touch on the fact that “the protocol that governed military decorations was not laid out to recognize their contribution.”<sup>72</sup> Witherington was initially recommended for the Military Cross. Her award recommendation stated: “Witherington showed outstanding devotion to

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<sup>66</sup> Witherington and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, 91.

<sup>67</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 199.

<sup>68</sup> Buckmaster, *They Fought Alone*, Loc 3267.

<sup>69</sup> Ottaway, *A Cool and Lonely Courage*, 157

<sup>70</sup> Pattinson, *Playing the Daft Lassie*, 276.

<sup>71</sup> Nearne Personnel File, 16.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors of World War II*, 271.

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duty and accomplished a most important task. Her control over the maquis group to which she was attached ... was accomplished through her remarkable personality, her courage, steadfastness and tact.”<sup>73</sup> However, despite her recommendation for a military decoration, Witherington was awarded a civilian Member of the British Empire (MBE). Thus, the impact of her work and her contribution to the success of Allied forces in France were greatly overshadowed by the fact that she was a woman.

This discrimination becomes more apparent when comparing Witherington’s experiences to that of a male special agent of the SOE, Francis Cammaerts. According to his personnel file, his leadership qualities became apparent during training. His Paramilitary Report described him as “well above average in all subjects” and “highly intelligent, very keen and completely reliable.”<sup>74</sup> Cammaerts was assigned a leadership position after training, partaking in similar responsibilities as Witherington had when she was a Flight Officer. Like Nearne, he was eventually captured and interrogated, but he managed to escape, with the help of a female agent. After the war ended, Cammaerts was awarded four military decorations from three different countries: Distinguished Service Order (Britain), Legion d’honneur (France), Croix de Guerre (France), and Medal of Freedom (America). His award recommendation commended his “outstanding leadership and organizing ability.”<sup>75</sup> The vocabulary used in his award recommendation is similar to what was used to describe Witherington’s valiant efforts as a respected leader, yet Cammaerts received much more recognition for his work. This difference can be traced back to the traditional views of women held by the public as well as opinions of high-ranking military officials. It was easier for Cammaerts to be granted a leadership position, while Witherington, as a woman, had to prove herself worthy.

Witherington went as far as refusing to accept her MBE on the grounds that it carried a civilian classification. In a letter to Vera Atkins, who worked under Buckmaster, she demurred, “I do consider it most unjust to be given a civilian decoration. Our training, which we did with the men, was purely military, and as women we were expected to replace them.”<sup>76</sup> Her mention of women’s replacement of the men in the field is an indication that she knew the civilian classification was on the basis of her gender. In addition to women being officially restricted from receiving military decorations, their participation in irregular warfare complicated the issue, as the line between civilian and military classifications were blurred. However, Witherington became a Flight Officer for her own circuit and, therefore, deserved more than simply an MBE. Witherington’s opinion was that “the rules had to be changed. The type of mission carried out by all the women sent to France was unprecedented in British war history.”<sup>77</sup> Thomas and Lewis assert that the men who recruited these women, including Pearl Witherington, “never planned for them to be ‘civil.’”<sup>78</sup> They further this stance in expressing that “[t]hey were soldiers, taking the fight to the enemy where he least expected it.”<sup>79</sup> Eventually, she was awarded a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) and a Légion d’honneur from France. Not every woman in the SOE received the honors they deserved, but the case of Witherington shows how the opinions of women’s involvement in the military began to shift because of their contributions to the war effort.

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<sup>73</sup> Witherington Personnel File, 152.

<sup>74</sup> “Francis Charles Albert CAMMAERTS aka Charles Robert LAURENT aka ROGER aka JOCKEY,” 1939-1946, UK National Archives, HS 9/258/5, 205.

<sup>75</sup> Cammaerts, Personnel File, 130.

<sup>76</sup> Witherington Personnel File, 155.

<sup>77</sup> Witherington Cornioley and Larroque, *Code Name Pauline*, 109-110.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors of World War II*, 271.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas and Lewis, *Shadow Warriors*, 271.

Nearne was also awarded a civilian MBE as well as a French Croix de Guerre avec Palme bronze medal. Her award recommendation attributed her success in maintaining consistent contact with British forces for five months to “her cool efficiency, perseverance, and willingness to undergo any risk in order to carry out her work.”<sup>80</sup> While Nearne no doubt faced her fair share of obstacles while behind enemy lines, her willingness to partake in such a dangerous job as well as her bravery in escaping a concentration camp earned her two awards for her duty. There is no evidence of Nearne objecting to the awards she received. She may have chosen not to contest the decision to give her a civilian classification since, after the war, she was more concerned with avoiding the public light than receiving public recognition.

In analyzing the distribution of awards for women special agents when compared to their male counterparts, the traditional values of the time period become apparent. While both Nearne and Witherington exhibited a tremendous amount of bravery and perseverance, the roles expected of women at the time prevented them from immediately receiving the praise they deserved. While these women experienced little discrimination from the men with whom they worked alongside, they still faced the constraints of social and institutional gender discrimination. However, Witherington’s insistence and eventual success in receiving a military decoration signals, by the mid-twentieth century, women’s involvement in military operations was becoming more widely accepted, though there are still some remnants of this lingering gender discrimination in modern society.

### Postwar Lives

Many of the women involved in SOE operations became the subjects of media misrepresentation following the war. The media shared many exaggerated stories which romanticized the horrors of working behind enemy lines while failing to address the situations in which these women succeeded and excelled in their missions while avoiding detection. As Elizabeth Kate Vigurs explains, “These stories were dominated by betrayal, interrogation, torture, prisons, concentration camps and executions, which, as demonstrated above was not the case for all women agents, some of whom enjoyed a high degree of success whilst in the field and underwent extraordinary experiences as part of their work.”<sup>81</sup> Witherington’s memoir notes that she “became very distrustful of such endeavors after an author wrote a book that fictionalized her wartime work to make it seem more dramatic than it had been.”<sup>82</sup> Like most of the women involved with the SOE, Witherington rarely talked about her life in occupied France in its entirety until the late 1990s and 2000s. This was due in part to her personal reluctance in sharing her story. However, a majority of the SOE’s documents were not declassified until this same period, so she was unable to speak about the details of her experience until this point. She passed away in 2008 after completing a memoir of her experiences.<sup>83</sup> Though she resented the romanticization of her time in Nazi-occupied France, such exaggerations did not alter her own perception of the real contributions she made to the war effort nor the realities of her time behind enemy lines.

After Nearne returned home from France, she pursued a more private life than Witherington. Aside from a few brief interviews, Nearne chose to avoid the public light. While her fearlessness and determination led to her survival, her time in captivity left a lasting impact on her psychological well-being. Even when speaking

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<sup>80</sup> Nearne Personnel File, 15.

<sup>81</sup> Vigurs, “The Women Agents of the Special Operations Executive F Section,” 107.

<sup>82</sup> Witherington Cornioley and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, Location 87.

<sup>83</sup> Witherington and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, 87.

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with her biographer Susan Ottoway, she requested that her real name remain a secret. It was not until her death in 2010 that the public became fully aware of her involvement with the SOE.<sup>84</sup> Nearne's transition into a quiet life following the war signifies she was not interested in contributing to the public's discourse surrounding women's involvement in the military. Further, this supports the idea that her gender was of little concern to her while working as an undercover agent. Nearne did what was necessary to combat the Nazi occupation of her home country.

### Conclusion

The SOE was officially dismantled in 1946, though the operations of irregular warfare continued under the SIS. The experiences of these women while conducting their missions with the SOE provide evidence that while they faced obstacles due to their gender, their personalities, and more importantly, their actions proved that they were more than capable of participating in military work. The contributions these women made to the war effort transcended the long-standing gender divide that existed, and in some ways, still does exist. The use of irregular warfare was not only advantageous in terms of the use nontraditional strategies to weaken the influence Nazi forces throughout Europe; it also proved advantageous in the expansion of roles of women in World War II. It was not until 2018 that British women were officially free to serve in every type of combat role, but women's involvement in combat roles in the SOE predate the essential role women now play in the military. While there was initial shock by the public upon the discovery of women involved in the SOE, the acceptance of their contribution found confirmation in their later military decorations, as well as in the popular media that sensationalized their stories. The involvement of both Witherington and Nearne in the clandestine operations of the SOE reflected the fact that gender had little influence on the amount of pride and obligation to duty that many Europeans felt while being threatened with domination by Hitler and his Nazi army. When faced with this threat, the bravery and determination of the women of the F Section of the SOE proved that their contributions to their missions were instrumental to the organization's success.

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<sup>84</sup> Ottoway, *A Cool and Lonely Courage*, 8.

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# PROTESTING THE GOOD WAR: Charles Lindbergh, A.J. Muste, and the Second World War

Evan Royds

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*Understudied in the history of American protest and activism, my research advances an understanding of the period of the second World War as a crucial transition in the history of the American anti-war movement. Whereas anti-war activism and protest in the early twentieth century held an ideological foundation in isolationism and/or Christian pacifism, the second World War denigrated both doctrines as unsuitable for the modern world. My research shows the thin veneer of the American wartime moral consensus as it did not prevent the US from committing atrocities of its own. This moral dissonance created an opportunity for a new galvanized anti-war movement, one based in humanitarianism and an emphasis on human rights, that would come to fruition protesting the wars of the latter twentieth century. My paper examines these shifts in relation to two prominent anti-war protestors in the era, who had profoundly different reasonings for protest despite their shared dissent: America First Committee spokesman Charles Lindbergh and the Fellowship of Reconciliation executive director A.J. Muste.*

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In December 1941, after Europe had been in conflict for more than two years, the United States declared war on Japan, Germany, and Italy. United with Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, the Allies defeated the Axis powers three and a half years later in the summer of 1945. Today, the war is widely heralded as the ‘Good War’ in both a repudiation of the horrors of the Nazi regime, but also a testament to the honor and virtue of the ‘Greatest Generation’ of men and women that fought against it, a popular title attributed to the generation by journalist Tom Brokaw in his “The Greatest Generation.”<sup>1</sup> This notion of a ‘Good War’ is a product of our modern understanding of the war, as it was not used in contemporary times, and has been consistently attacked by historians such as Kenneth Rose in “Myth and the Greatest Generation” as a mythologized romanticization of the period. However, while war raged on, not all Americans believed it a just and virtuous conflict. Protests towards joining the war were prominent among two distinct groups— isolationists and pacifists—led by Charles Lindbergh and A.J. Muste, respectively.

Charles Lindbergh was the figurehead of the most influential isolationist organization of the period, The America First Committee (AFC). The AFC was founded by Yale students in 1940 to voice concern over the potential United States involvement in the war. Isolationism was the principal ideology of the AFC, and it found wide support across the country. Not only did the AFC have 800,000 members across sixty-five chapters, but polls show that Americans generally agreed with its message, as they were not keen on another foreign war just two decades after the First World War. At the onset of war, after Poland was quickly conquered by Nazi

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II*. *Myth and the Greatest Generation* (London: Routledge, 2007), 1.

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Germany, seventy-one percent of Americans responded ‘NO’ to the question, “If it appears that Germany is defeating England and France, should the United States declare war on Germany and send our army and navy to Europe to fight?”<sup>2</sup> Isolationism has been a powerful force in the American political tradition. George Washington encouraged non-interventionism in his Farewell Address of 1796. Thomas Jefferson warned his colleagues against entangling alliances with European powers. Even Woodrow Wilson won his election of 1916 with the slogan ‘He kept us out of war.’ Although isolation from European events had long been part of the history of the United States, World War I was a catalyst bringing isolationism to the of American minds in the 1930s.<sup>3</sup>

The AFC was committed to keeping this idea in American political discussion, and Charles Lindbergh gladly served as its spokesperson. Throughout Lindbergh’s life he kept a journal and wrote nightly entries regarding his personal life as well as his thoughts on the state of politics, war, and America’s role in the world. The contents of this journal are published, and this article utilizes these excerpts to examine his perceived experience of the war, both during the period as well as in reflection of his wartime activity years later.<sup>4</sup>

Whereas Lindbergh led the isolationist faction of the anti-war movement, A. J. Muste was the ideological leader of the pacifism wing of the anti-war movement. Just as isolationism has a long history in the American political tradition, pacifism also has roots in the founding of the country. The Quakers, a sect of Protestantism whose followers, including William Penn, were responsible for founding Pennsylvania and played crucial roles in advocating for native rights as well as the abolition of enslaved peoples centuries later.<sup>5</sup> A key tenet of their religious and moral philosophy was nonviolence. Muste himself was a Presbyterian, but he shared with the Quakers a sacred belief in the virtue of pacifism. It was this belief that led Muste to become the executive director of the United States chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR).

The FoR was founded in 1914 to advocate for nonviolence and peaceful solutions to humanity’s grievances with the First World War as its initial focus. The FoR was an adamantly Christian organization and saw their mission of nonviolence and pacifism as a religious duty. Founders Henry Hodgkin and Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze pledged, “We are one in Christ and can never be at war.”<sup>6</sup> Muste firmly believed in this duty as well. He wrote extensively on the topic after his return to pacifism in 1936. In his essay “The True International,” he proclaims, “Today, at the beginning of 1939, I am again a Christian pacifist. Though in my own thinking and feeling there is no separating these two terms.”<sup>7</sup> Being a Christian meant being a pacifist, it was a duty for any truly religious men according to Muste. He saw Christ in every one of his fellow men. Thus violence, and war the supreme violence, was an attack made against God.

This article will not only examine these two figures in relation to the anti-war movement but also in relation to each other. In 1941, Charles Lindbergh and A.J. Muste both thought that joining the war was not justified. Muste, in his Christian

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<sup>2</sup> “How Did Public Opinion About Entering World War II Change Between 1939 and 1941?” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

<sup>3</sup> James M. Volo, *A History of War Resistance in America* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2010), 330.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Augustus Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 74.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Brock and Nigel Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 24.

<sup>7</sup> Nat Hentoff, *Essays of A. J. Muste* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967), 208.

pacifism, believed that no war was ever justified. By contrast, Lindbergh believed that war was important and good, but just that this specific war was not his country's fight.<sup>8</sup> Lindbergh despised pacifist ideology and frequently bemoaned how he was forced to work with pacifists.<sup>9</sup> Muste as well had many moral disagreements with those who saw war as justifiable, which Lindbergh did despite his specific views on the Second World War. Additionally, this article will examine whether Muste had any similar grievances about working with non-pacifist anti-war protestors. Lindbergh and Muste were not the only Americans opposed to war at the time. Public opinion on whether it was just and reasonable to enter the war to aid Britain and France was never unanimous prior to the bombings of Pearl Harbor. To prove this point, this article utilizes Gallup polls conducted during the period as well as data from the Office of Public Opinion Research.<sup>10</sup> These surveys convey the mood of the American public at different stages of the war starting in September 1939 with the Nazi invasion of Poland until the immediate aftermath of the Pearl Harbor bombings in December of 1941. This data is used throughout the paper to locate the two figures' views in relation to the general American opinion at the time, especially as that opinion began to diverge from their own after 1941. Next, the paper will focus on whether for Muste and Lindbergh, the Nazi policy of mass murder during WW II, collectively now known as the Holocaust, justified intervention in the Second World War. The paper will determine this knowledge through data on *The New York Times'* (NYT) coverage of these policies and actions during wartime.<sup>11</sup> I am focusing the examination on the because it was the most prominent paper of the times and set the tone for all smaller papers.

### Dissent

It is unlikely that Charles Lindbergh and A.J. Muste ever met one another. Neither of their writings mentions the other. Despite their united dissent, the two men lived very different lives. Lindbergh was a Colonel in the Air Corps, and Muste a Presbyterian pastor. They disagreed fundamentally on the purpose and nature of war. Lindbergh believed that war would not help his country yet believed that war itself did have a place in society. Muste also believed that this war would not help his country but believed this to be true about every war. Yet they were united through their dissent. Both men agreed that the United States should not go to war in Europe and that the toll that war would have on the country would be absolutely devastating. Although the two would not see themselves as standing united, others would see no difference between the two figures. Both men would face attacks that they were Nazi appeasers. Both would face cultural and political ridicule for displaying supposedly unpatriotic views. Both would be continuously ignored by the Roosevelt administration.

War is rarely unanimous. The tax it takes on a society is immense. Families are uprooted. Economies are devastated. Soldiers are traumatized. More often than not, ordinary men and women bear the brunt of this tax. The American public knew this, and after a year of fighting the first 'war to end all wars,' Americans were not

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<sup>8</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 478.

<sup>9</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 320.

<sup>10</sup> "Americans and The Holocaust," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

<sup>11</sup> Robert M. Shapiro and Marvin L. Kalb, *Why Didn't the Press Shout?: American & International Journalism during the Holocaust: a Collection of Papers Originally Presented at an International Conference* (Jersey City: Yeshiva University Press in association with KTAV Publishing House, 2003).

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keen on fighting a second, with almost forty-eight percent stating that the U.S. should not send troops abroad in September of 1939.<sup>12</sup>

Despite a lack of popular support for a renewed war effort, Muste and Lindbergh each realized the precarious position they occupied in the late 1930s. Both men were weary that the tides could change and growing popular support would only embolden and encourage the Roosevelt administration to officially ask Congress for a war declaration. In preparation, pacifists and isolationists created a united front from 1938-1941. During the pre-war period, Muste encouraged his supporters to stand with other anti-war activists regardless of their underlying ideology. This included far more conservative individuals such as Senator Hamilton Fisk and Charles Lindbergh himself.<sup>13</sup> However, Muste was clear to assure supporters that “the forces with which pacifists collaborated must not be allowed to obscure or hamper [our] own objectives.”<sup>14</sup> Although united, the pacifist movement was keen to make sure their actions aligned with their value of nonviolence, wary that they might be overshadowed by the substantially larger isolationist faction of the anti-war front.

Lindbergh too had reservations about a united front with the pacifists. His connection to the pacifism movement did not come from Muste or the FoR but rather from Fredrick Libby, an executive secretary of the National Council for Prevention of War. Libby and Lindbergh shared similar social circles at the time and the two met incidentally in March of 1940. In his journal Lindbergh wrote of the encounter, “He is apparently rather a pacifist but showed unusual understanding and intelligence (if one can apply the latter term to a pacifist).”<sup>15</sup> Lindbergh did not view pacifism as a virtuous or particularly pragmatic ideology. Despite Lindbergh’s contempt however, the two eventually formed a close relationship and met often throughout the pre-war period, helping both parties engage a larger audience.

Prior to December 1941, the isolationist’s main argument against joining the Allies was that this was a foreign war across oceans, thus America had no sanction to involve itself. The extent to which the US should play a role in the war was debated amongst the movement. In March 1941, President Roosevelt signed the Lend Lease Act, allowing food, oil, and materials to be sold to Allied nations, notably Great Britain which was desperately standing alone against the Nazi occupation of Europe after France fell a year earlier. President Roosevelt advocated for the bill as a defensive measure protecting U.S. interests. When it came to a vote, support fell on party lines with many isolationist Republicans viewing this measure as an overreach by the Roosevelt administration to involve itself on one side of the war. From March until December, the United States was in a quasi-war stance that sought to appease both sides and provide at least minimal support to Britain.

The United Front would not stand long though. Pearl Harbor and the implications of an official war declaration divided the isolationists and the pacifists on strict ideological lines. The bombing of Pearl Harbor challenged both ideologies with tangible trials to the theoretical scenarios that they had been debating. On December 7th, war was brought to the shores of Hawaii. The United States was not committed to war at this point, but sensing that support for the war was rising and increasingly aggravated from United States advancement into the Pacific, the

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<sup>12</sup> “Americans and The Holocaust,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

<sup>13</sup> Jo Ann Ooiman Robinson, *Abraham Went out: A Biography of A.J. Muste* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 89.

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 77.

<sup>15</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 320.

Japanese navy launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>16</sup> The attack destroyed four battleships, three destroyers, 168 aircraft, and resulted in 2,300 American casualties. The next day, December 8th, President Roosevelt issued his Infamy Speech and the United States formally declared war on Japan. American support for the war soared to its highest levels in the aftermath of the attack, and isolationist Americans had no inhibitions about this fact.<sup>17</sup> Only three days later, on December 11th, the AFC dissolved and issued the following statement, “No good purpose can now be served by considering what might have been, had our objectives been attained. We are at war ... the primary objective is not difficult to state. It can be completely defined in one word: Victory.”<sup>18</sup>

Whereas the isolationist movement would direct its focus towards victory, the pacifist movement would turn its focus towards preventing catastrophe. During the course of the war, many pacifists transitioned towards humanitarianism, which accepted the inevitability of violence, but sought to mitigate its worst effects.<sup>19</sup> This included Muste as well. In the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor, Muste was perplexed as to a proper response for pacifists should the United States mainland be bombed. One option that he advocated greatly was encouraging pacifists to acquire first-aid instruction.<sup>20</sup> This was a pragmatic step by Muste to ensure that his values and ideals translated into tangible results. Understandably, first aid was a natural option for pacifists, following in the footsteps of organizations such as the Red Cross, and avoiding the channels and mechanisms of war that Muste wanted his movement to be separate from. Muste’s focus was not solely on the American homefront, though. Aware of the situation in Europe, he pressed the Roosevelt administration to alter its foreign policy to save European Jews from Nazi persecution.

### Knowledge

Contrary to popular belief, reports of the attacks and aggression against European Jews did reach the American public throughout the war. In fact, “The *New York Times* ran stories relating to anti-Jewish mass violence on average every other day. On June 30, 1942, the *Times* reported, “The Germans have massacred more than 1,000,000 Jewish people since the war began in carrying out Adolf Hitler’s proclaimed policy of exterminating the people.”<sup>21</sup> The *Times* was the most read newspaper in the United States throughout the era and the standard bearer for reporting on the war. Thus, this news included in its pages carried a sense of significance. Information on the situation in Europe was not just coming from the press though. Even the American State Department confirmed reports from Europe. In December 1942, Great Britain and the Allies also issued an official declaration condemning the Nazi government which was featured on the front page of the *New York Times*.<sup>22</sup>

However, this information was largely overshadowed by news of the war itself. Reports on the attacks against European Jews were relegated to the inside pages of the paper, rarely displayed on the cover. This key distinction is what led historian

<sup>16</sup> Noam Chomsky, “The Revolutionary Pacifism of A.J. Muste: On the Backgrounds of the Pacific War,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 1:3 (1969): 22-25.

<sup>17</sup> “How Did Public Opinion About Entering World War II Change Between 1939 and 1941?” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

<sup>18</sup> “America First Group to Quit,” *The Telegraph-Herald*. Dubuque, Iowa. United Press International. 1941-12-12. p. 13. Retrieved November 14, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Geyer, and Tooze, *The Cambridge History of the Second World War. Volume 3, Total War: Economy, Society and Culture*, 475.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 88.

<sup>21</sup> Shapiro and Kalb, *Why Didn’t the Press Shout?: American & International Journalism during the Holocaust: a Collection of Papers Originally Presented at an International Conference*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Shapiro and Kalb, *Why Didn’t the Press Shout?*, 45.

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Laurel Leff to conclude that the American public in fact did not ‘know’ about such attacks. Although the average American reading the Times would be privy to information on the genocide as it happened, due to a multitude of factors including skepticism from exaggerated rumors of war crimes during the first World War, distrust, and general inability to comprehend the horror, the American public did not ‘know’ what was happening to the Jewish population in Europe as it was perpetrated by the Nazis.<sup>23</sup>

Muste was distinct from the American public, though, as he was aware of what was being carried out by the Nazi regime. It is important to note here the difference between Muste’s ideology of pacifism with an ideology of passivism, with which he was so often labeled by opponents. Passivism would imply that Muste was in favor of sitting in an apathetic high ground which he certainly did not, in neither words nor actions. Muste was not naive of the horrible toll of this war, especially for civilian non-combatants. This acknowledgement led him to act in ways outside of traditional channels to enact change, primarily through nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience.

Civil disobedience was a crucial component of the pacifist movement during wartime. Because pacifists outside of the US, in occupied territory and/or under authoritarian rule were subjected to execution and such draconian punishment, historians often overlook the situation of pacifists in the world’s liberal democracies.<sup>24</sup> American pacifists were harassed and even jailed under the auspice of interfering in the war effort. Muste, as late as 1946 was still pleading to the Truman administration to release many of his peers.<sup>25</sup>

Another channel that Muste would frequently use was advocacy. However, at no point did Muste ever advocate for war itself, even if this meant that it could end the suffering quickly. In his 1936 essay, “Return to Pacifism,” Muste argued against “the end justifies the means theory,” which introduces “the methods, standards, and motivations of war into the labor movement.”<sup>26</sup> A year later, in 1937, he published another essay, “Sit Downs and Lie Ins” which further advocated against ‘the end justifies the means’ mentality, believing that “[e]vil means can never lead to good ends.”<sup>27</sup> Straddled with this mentality, his task for reducing the suffering of European Jews was a complicated one. How does one intervene in foreign warring powers, without participating to any extent in the war itself?

The solution that Muste found was through immigration and providing aid to the refugee crisis. Throughout the 1930’s and into the war, Jewish refugees attempted to escape Europe through immigration into friendly nations such as Britain, France, and the United States. In the States, there was a strong backlash to increasing levels of immigration, especially Jewish immigration. Ships carrying thousands of Jewish refugees were turned away, most notably the M.S. St. Louis. This was a substantial dilemma, as returning Jewish refugees back to Europe meant certain death for many if not all.<sup>28</sup>

Muste was a vocal advocate for raising the immigration quotas for Jewish refugees from Europe. Pleading with the Roosevelt administration in September 1943, Muste urged that “unless something is done soon, virtually none of the Jewish

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<sup>23</sup>Shapiro and Kalb, *Why Didn't the Press Shout?*, 51-53.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Geyer, J. Adam Tooze, and Devin Pendas, “Against War,” *The Cambridge History of the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 488.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 87.

<sup>26</sup> Nat Hentoff, *Essays of A. J. Muste* (New York, NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967), 200.

<sup>27</sup> Nat Hentoff, *Essays of A. J. Muste*, 206.

<sup>28</sup> “Americans and The Holocaust,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

population native to Poland and Germany and who are still there or in any other Axis-held territory will survive the winter.”<sup>29</sup> This message illustrates not just Muste’s active pacifism ideology, but also that Muste was aware of the magnitude of the destruction and was resolutely attempting to minimize the scale of the terror inflicted. Although Muste does not clearly state that the Nazis are what he believes to be the cause of this extermination, this does not diminish his understanding of the Jewish situation in Eastern Europe. Muste singles out Jewish people in this message as a group that is uniquely at risk currently. War, famine, and a lack of shelter could all have been reasons for groups not to survive the winter, but if Muste believed this to be the case, then why would he have singled out the Jewish population. Muste was deeply committed to ending the suffering of all peoples. His concentration on alleviating the suffering of one specific group, in a time when victims of the Nazi regime ranged across Europe from Londoners to Russians, shows that he was acutely aware of the unique Nazi threat posed to the Jewish population of Europe.

### Understanding

In explaining the various ways in which the American public did not ‘know’ about the Holocaust during wartime, skepticism from false reports during the first World War, as well as American antisemitism played a large role in casting doubt on the legitimacy of the claims made in the *New York Times* and other papers. Subsequently, the American public were accustomed to apparent “old stories” of Jewish massacres by the time of the war. Time magazine even referred cynically to the latest “atrocious story” of the week.<sup>30</sup> Lindbergh aligned with this cynicism. As adamant as Muste was in his belief of the reports coming from Europe regarding the genocide, Lindbergh was equally skeptical and unsympathetic.

Lindbergh had a strained relationship with American news media. In fact, a primary reason for him to write his wartime journal was to keep a record of his viewpoints, to counter the “propaganda and extreme bitterness that was so commonly conveyed by the prewar press.”<sup>31</sup> Just a young adult at the age of 25, he was catapulted to fame after winning the \$25,000 Orteig Prize, given to the first nonstop solo flight from New York City to Paris. Five years later, Lindbergh was thrust back into the spotlight when his infant son, Charles Jr., was kidnapped and murdered. The kidnapping was a ransom attempt against Lindbergh, his newfound wealth and notoriety likely making him a target. National coverage of the case and additional threats against his family forced Lindbergh into exile in Europe, creating a distrust and animosity towards the press.<sup>32</sup>

While his encounters with the press years before certainly played a role in his skepticism towards reports about the Holocaust, Lindbergh’s anti-Semitism had a large influence as well. Even before war broke, as early as June 1939, he blamed the European and American Jewish populations for pushing the country towards war.<sup>33</sup> A week prior to the Nazi invasion of Poland, in August of 1939, Lindbergh wrote in his journal, “There is talk of war everywhere. The press is full of it ... [I am] disturbed by the Jewish influence in our press, radio, and motion pictures.”<sup>34</sup>

Lindbergh and many others distrusted the liberal press, especially the *New York Times*, largely out of antisemitism. Every story the *New York Times* carried

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 89.

<sup>30</sup> Shapiro and Kalb, *Why Didn't the Press Shout?: American & International Journalism during the Holocaust: a Collection of Papers Originally Presented at an International Conference*, 44.

<sup>31</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, xvi.

<sup>32</sup> A. Scott Berg, *Lindbergh* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1998), 341-345.

<sup>33</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 218.

<sup>34</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 245.

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about Jewish suffering reinforced this distrust. American antisemitism flourished in the period. Approximately one in four Americans as late as 1944 viewed Jewish people as the greatest threat to America.<sup>35</sup> The *New York Times* was a Jewish owned newspaper and was cognizant of this image. Historian Marvin Kalb questions whether it was this image itself that kept the *New York Times* from fully exploring the genocide, asking “Was it because the *Times* was owned by Jews and they did not want to seem to be “pushing” a Jewish issue?”<sup>36</sup> This self-restraint then would keep the full scale of the horror from being brought to the public, setting a precedent down to other papers across the country, as the *Times*’s coverage set the standard for all other American newspapers.<sup>37</sup> Thus Muste was in a small company acting in the moment to attempt to save European Jewish population from the Holocaust. Lindbergh, by contrast, fell into the majority of Americans that did not ‘know’ about the Holocaust as it was perpetrated.

Lindbergh’s infamous September 1941 Des Moines speech gives insight into his thoughts as well. Speaking at an America First Committee rally in Iowa, Lindbergh argued again that “the three most important groups who have been pressing this country toward war are the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt administration.”<sup>38</sup> Although he received backlash, notably from Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie, the speech was received well by his supporters. This was not just a political play from Lindbergh to appeal to American anti-Semitism, even though he consistently named ‘the Jews’ as a major supporter of the war effort, but a sincere belief he held at the time. A month following his speech, assessing the anti-war movement in his journal, Lindbergh wrote, “Our strength and influence is growing rapidly, but the power of our opposition is great. Their ranks include the American government, the British government, [and] the Jews”<sup>39</sup> In Lindbergh’s mind then, if Jewish people were pushing for war, were they then still innocent non-combatants, or perhaps he instead believed that they were responsible for their own destruction and terror?

Regardless of his position and despite his lack of sympathy for the European Jewish population during the war, Lindbergh was taken aback by his ‘discovery’ of concentration camps during a post-war trip to Europe. I put discovery in quotation marks because like much of the American public, it was only after the war, after relief and reflection that people began to ‘know’ about the Holocaust. This understanding came sooner for Lindbergh though. In June of 1945 while gathering knowledge regarding aircraft technology for the United States government and reuniting with peers from his time in Germany, Lindbergh was driven by American military personnel through Camp Dora, part of the larger Bergen-Belsen camp. He was initially skeptical, “Their clothing was dirty but seemed adequate for the season. From their bodies and faces one would judge that they were not too badly fed. The odor ... could be ascribed to the practice of urinating in the open.”<sup>40</sup>

However, not long into his inspection, Lindbergh would see the gas chambers and incineration rooms. Immediately any skepticism he had ceased to exist in his mind. On the furnaces, he contemplated,

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<sup>35</sup> Robert M. Shapiro and Marvin L. Kalb, *Why Didn't the Press Shout?: American & International Journalism during the Holocaust: a Collection of Papers Originally Presented at an International Conference*, 47.

<sup>36</sup> Robert M. Shapiro and Marvin L. Kalb, *Why Didn't the Press Shout?*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Robert M. Shapiro and Marvin L. Kalb, *Why Didn't the Press Shout?*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> “Lindbergh Accuses Jews of Pushing U.S. to War,” Jewish Virtual Library.

<sup>39</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 545.

<sup>40</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 991

Here was a place where men and life and death had reached the lowest form of degradation. How could any reward in national progress even faintly justify the establishment and operation of such a place? When the value of life and dignity of death are removed, what is left for men? <sup>41</sup>

It was at this moment that Lindbergh truly 'knew' of the Holocaust, writing in his journal, "Of course I knew these things were going on; but it is one thing to have the intellectual knowledge ... and quite another to stand on the scene yourself, seeing, hearing, feeling, with your own senses."<sup>42</sup> As a testament to the shock and grief that he had just encountered, Lindbergh ended his wartime journal three days later. Although the war continued for two more months, Lindbergh did not chronicle his daily thoughts in writing during this time as he had for the past half decade. And despite this shock and pain from understanding the toll of what happened to the Jewish population in Europe, in 1945 Lindbergh and Muste were still in small company among Americans who truly understood what had occurred over the last few years. The war in the Pacific and the defeat of Japan overshadowed any real understanding about the Holocaust in America during the period.

### Agreement

Two months after Lindbergh's experience at Camp Dora, on August 14th, 1945, the *New York Times* triumphantly displayed, in bold type, the headline that Americans had been waiting to read for months, if not years, "JAPAN SURRENDERS, END OF WAR!"<sup>43</sup> Almost immediately Americans celebrated the victory. The next day, the *Times* reported on mass rejoicing in their city, as millions of New Yorkers gathered in Times Square.<sup>44</sup> Thousands of churchmen and women shared in the joy by giving thanks at a special service held at St. Patrick's Cathedral.<sup>45</sup> The shared joy of victory and peace united every New Yorker in the city. That is, every New Yorker except two.

Lindbergh and Muste would not share in the same sense of pride or honor that most Americans enjoyed at the end of the war. Surrender did not mean victory for Muste. The bleak impact of the war remained, and thus he continued to advocate against the Truman administration on behalf of war resisters that were still imprisoned months after war's end.<sup>46</sup> Despite his own personal efforts and those of the FoR, American war resisters stayed imprisoned long after the Japanese surrender.<sup>47</sup> In the coming months, Lindbergh, too, turned his attention to advocacy. His focus was not war resisters, but the atomic bomb and creating an organization that could protect against nuclear fallout. This new power available to warring nations terrified Lindbergh, and he was convinced that if left be, atomic destruction was not a matter of if, but of when.<sup>48</sup> For Lindbergh, among others, the fact that the US had decided to use these weapons supported the idea that nuclear fallout was an imminent possibility.

America's war actions in the Pacific, including the use of nuclear weapons, were a source of great shame and grief amongst both Lindbergh and Muste. A year earlier, in 1944, Lindbergh was requested by US General Douglas McArthur to fly to the Pacific for consultation on aviation technology and strategy for the war effort. Lindbergh naturally obliged but was subsequently horrified by the sights of past battlegrounds between American and Japanese forces. Exploring the island of Biak, a

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<sup>41</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 995

<sup>42</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 996.

<sup>43</sup> "JAPAN SURRENDERS, END OF WAR!" *New York Times*, August 15, 1945.

<sup>44</sup> Burns, "THOUSANDS PRAY AS VICTORY COMES: Japan Surrenders! And Thousands in Times Square Hail the Victory," *New York Times*, August 15, 1945.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Feinberg, "All City 'Lets Go,'" *New York Times*, August 15, 1945.

<sup>46</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 87.

<sup>47</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 87.

<sup>48</sup> Berg, *Lindbergh*, 473-474.

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former Japanese stronghold, Lindbergh was provided “with the most grotesque images of war that he had ever seen, images that would haunt him forever.”<sup>49</sup> Mangled bodies littered the coral reefs, corpses were thrown in with garbage, and American soldiers smashed the skulls of Japanese soldiers, pillaging their remains looking for golden teeth. “I have never felt more ashamed of my people,” Lindbergh wrote in his journal that night.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, even before the Japanese surrender, both men equated United States actions in the Pacific with Nazi atrocities in Europe. Just days before the Japanese surrender on August 14th, Muste and millions of other Americans learned that the US had utilized nuclear weapons against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Although accustomed to the horrors of war, Muste was in disbelief when news reached him that President Truman had authorized the attack. Upon hearing the reports while lecturing in Calgary, Muste was “stunned, tempted to go back to New York, but at a loss as to what to do or say when [he] got there.”<sup>51</sup> Muste also noted the hypocrisy between American ideals and their actual war decisions. Muste decried, “It was the United States, ‘Christian America’ which perpetuated the atrocities. It was we and not the Nazi swine as they were called, the Fascist devils, the Japanese militarists, or the Russian communists.”<sup>52</sup> Here we can understand how American victory for Muste was inconsequential. When this war would end, it would be but a victory of one warring power against another. V-J Day was not the triumph of democracy or justice, but a triumph of the war machine and the forces that advocated for it. Whereas Muste was felt more affected by the nuclear bombings, Lindbergh felt the most shame due to United States conduct on the Pacific front amongst American towards the Japanese.

This realization from Lindbergh represents his peering through the veneer of the mid-century American moral liberalism. Although the wartime ‘good war’ consensus elevated the conflict against the Axis powers as a moral imperative, a profound and entrenched racism disrupted this thin veneer and drove the American wartime atrocities in the Pacific. This hypocrisy was noted as early as 1946 when American historian Allan Nevins penned, “Probably in all our history, no foe has been so detested than the Japanese ... Emotions forgotten since our most savage Indian wars were reawakened.”<sup>53</sup>

While in Germany, a year after his experience at Biak in the Pacific theater, reflecting on the horror of Camp Dora, Lindbergh recalled these same images from the Pacific, mangled corpses, and the defilement of Japanese bodies, and the great impression of shame that he felt there. He did not see a major difference between the Nazi crimes and the America’s own in the Pacific. He writes, “It seemed impossible that men—civilized men—could degenerate to such a level ... we who claimed to stand for something different. We, who claimed that the German was defiling humanity in his treatment of the Jew, were doing the same thing in our treatment of the Jap.”<sup>54</sup> This comparison shows the scale of his horror, as he was writing within days of his visit to the camp, aware of the atrocities of the Nazis.

Despite their disagreement up until this moment, Lindbergh arrived at the same ideological ground that Muste had started the period in, a disgust for, a hatred of, and even a repudiation of war itself. Lindbergh and Muste, two men united in their dissent against the war, now at this moment stood united in their agreement that this

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<sup>49</sup> Berg, *Lindbergh*, 452.

<sup>50</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 882.

<sup>51</sup> Johnson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 90.

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 90.

<sup>53</sup> Allan Nevins, “How We Felt About the War” in Jack Goodman, ed., *While You Were Gone: A Report on wartime life in the United States (1946: Simon and Schuster)*, 13.

<sup>54</sup> Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 996.

war was by no means a ‘Good War’ as it is known today. Both men viewed the United States as not a hero, but just another co-conspirator of war. However equally ashamed and vocal about their indignation as the two men were, it was Lindbergh who faced the most backlash in the aftermath of the bombings. Carrying pain in his heart at America’s wartime actions, Lindbergh returned to New York in June of 1945, ashamed, horrified, and traumatized by the visions of the war that he had recently encountered.

### Shame

Lindbergh had no time to grieve, though, as news of the Japanese surrender reached the United States shortly thereafter. Immediately upon his return, the American public “delighted in rubbing Lindbergh’s nose in news clippings—old ones full of his defeatist predictions,” as well as “new ones detailing Nazi atrocities.”<sup>55</sup> A long column was published in *Harpers* magazine by American historian Bernard DeVoto reminding readers that

It didn’t seem to matter to Charles A. Lindbergh that the Jew were being exterminated. The Jews didn’t seem to matter nor the Poles nor the Czechs nor the Greeks. The destruction of France didn’t seem to matter, nor the invasion of Russia, nor Holland, Belgium, Norway, Denmark. Massacre, the bombing of Coventry or Warsaw or Rotterdam didn’t seem to matter, the enslavement of millions, the starvation of millions, the slaughter of millions.<sup>56</sup>

To a certain extent, we can see how a good war consensus was beginning to emerge in the period. Although those exact words were not used, the moral clarity with which DeVoto dispatches the anti-war crowd, carries the same notions. However, the basis for this moral clarity is not the same as the one with which modern observers would classify the war. As evidenced by the column, throughout and before the war, Jewish people were a victim of the Nazi regime, but not the prime victim.<sup>57</sup> This may seem like a minor difference, but the implications are important. It serves to relegate the Holocaust to a status occupied by more unremarkable aspects of war. It was but another horrible yet somewhat expectable product of war, on the same terms with invasions, bombings, and destructions. Reading this column, one would think the Jewish population was exterminated to the same extent as the ‘Poles, Czechs, and Greeks.’ Even when the word ‘massacre’ is used by DeVoto it refers to bombings that claimed hundreds of casualties as opposed to the millions of Jewish casualties that were also inflicted by the Nazis.

However better understood by war’s end, the Holocaust, as we know it in the 21st century, did not factor largely into American’s understanding of the conflict they had just endured. Holocaust in our contemporary popular dialogue has a singular meaning, referring to a specific event in history. It did not gain this meaning until the 1970’s and 80’s.<sup>58</sup> This use of the word Holocaust did not exist in the early years after war’s end. Holocaust as referred to by those living in the period was merely a synonym of destruction or massacre. The massacre of the European Jewish population was but one example of Nazi terror, not the prime example of the regime’s cruelty, nor did it play largely into Americans’ conceptualization of the conflict they had just endured.<sup>59</sup>

Although World War II is often discussed through a Eurocentric lens with the Holocaust as a key event, for Americans during the war and in its immediate aftermath, the Pacific Theatre played a much more prominent role in conceptualizing

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<sup>55</sup> Berg, *Lindbergh*, 470.

<sup>56</sup> Berg, *Lindbergh*, 470.

<sup>57</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 26.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 21.

<sup>59</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 65.

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the conflict.<sup>60</sup> Many Americans, as observed by playwright Arthur Miller, believed Adolf Hitler was only our enemy because he was allied with Japan.<sup>61</sup> It was the Japanese who attacked the American Homefront, not the Nazis. Japan was the first foreign power to wage a substantial attack on American soil since the Mexican American War almost a century earlier. The fear, fury, and vengeance in the hearts of Americans after the attack was intensified due to this fact. In American minds, the prime atrocity perpetrated by the Axis powers was Pearl Harbor, not Auschwitz.<sup>62</sup> The war in its understanding for Americans in the 1940s was not Eurocentric, but rather centered around the Pacific.

To an extent, Lindbergh and Muste held this understanding as well. In Lindbergh's writings, the coral caves of Biak are spoken of as an equal to Camp Dora in terms of the scale of the cruelty.<sup>63</sup> As for Muste, the extermination of the Jewish population played minimally in his life after the war, rarely mentioned throughout his post-war writings. It adopts a space as just another atrocity brought on by war. The use of nuclear bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, both massacres which occurred on the Pacific front, not the European, were much more foundational in Muste's shame and grievance towards the war than any event in Europe.<sup>64</sup> Most Americans looked with satisfaction towards the fight waged against Japan, yet Lindbergh and Muste could not share in this pride. Beginning the era as reluctant allies, united in dissent against a potential war, the two men stood in agreement. Although their beliefs would shift and their circumstances would change, the two men would stand in agreement at war's end again, dissent no longer the primary unifying force, but shame.

### Reflection

Anti-war protests before and during the Second World War represent a crucial turning point for the history of the American anti-war movement in the twentieth century. Whereas isolationism provided the strongest base of sentiment against foreign intervention before 1942, it became a weakened force throughout and after American involvement in the war. The bombings of Pearl Harbor showed Americans that they were no longer isolated from the rest of the world, and the threat of nuclear fallout refuted the notion that American neutrality could shield them from foreign threats and conflicts. Isolationism largely fell out of the public discourse until just recently emerging as a response to the perceived threat of globalism.<sup>65</sup>

Charles Lindbergh epitomized this evolution of thought. Although at the start of the war, he firmly believed that war had a necessary place in human relations, the unique horror he felt he witnessed in the Second World War quashed these thoughts. Lindbergh increasingly became weary towards the future of war and dedicated his energy and knowledge to projects and efforts that he believed essential to preventing future war, such as Strategic Air Command (SAC).<sup>66</sup> Strategic Air Command was a combined Department of Defense and Air Force command responsible for maintaining the United States' nuclear arsenal and estimating potential international nuclear threats.

During the latter half of the twentieth century though, as isolationism faltered, humanitarianism and an emphasis on human rights led the anti-war movement.

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<sup>60</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 26.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Fussell, *Wartime*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 137-38.

<sup>62</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 26.

<sup>63</sup> Berg, *Lindbergh*, 469.

<sup>64</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste*, 93-95.

<sup>65</sup> Ron Elving, "Pat Buchanan On 'America First' Under Trump," *NPR* (NPR, January 22, 2017).

<sup>66</sup> Berg, *Lindbergh*, 476.

Although humanitarianism had not yet emerged as a coherent ideology in the 1940s, pacifism utilized a similar moral framework. During the period, pacifism shifted from an ideology of passive resistance to conflict towards an active minimization of harm.

A.J. Muste witnessed not only this shift in his personal ideology, but he also continued to lead the anti-war movement for twenty-two years after 1945. During the Second World War, Muste came to see civil disobedience as the best method to enact his goals, maintain his values, and bring attention to his movement. Muste remained resolutely committed to nonviolence for the rest of his life, both at home and abroad. He protested the Korean War in the 1950s and was one of the crucial minds behind the mass demonstrations against the Vietnam War until his death, dying from old age soon after meeting with Ho Chi Minh in 1967.

Until his death, Muste attempted to relieve suffering across the world, but he never neglected the conflict and pain of his fellow Americans. Muste advised Martin Luther King, Bayard Rustin, and many other members of the Civil Rights Movement on both his ideology and on methods of nonviolent demonstration. Alluding to this mentorship that Muste had on the movement, Rustin noted, “[D]uring all my work with Martin King ... I never made a difficult decision without talking the problem over with A.J. first.”<sup>67</sup>

The mass genocide of the European Jewish population had an impact on isolationism, pacifism, and the ways in which these two central figures in those movements viewed war and their relationship to it. However, the Holocaust as we know it today did not have the same profound effect on the American public during and immediately after the war. It would take time for Americans to come to terms with the unique horror of the war. Eventually this understanding would emerge, and with it, a mythologizing of the virtue of the ‘Greatest Generation,’ who rose and defeated this uniquely evil force.<sup>68</sup> However, without the knowledge and understanding of the atrocities of the Second World War at the time, can we aptly subscribe such virtue to them? Additionally, while Americans have come to terms with the horrors committed by their enemies during the Second World War, the atrocities committed by the United States remain largely unrecognized by the American public. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain to this day the only two uses of nuclear weapons against an enemy, let alone the use against civilians of said enemy. This then begs the following question. Who should be sanctified for their actions during the war, the men who fought the ‘Good War’ or the men who protested the ‘Good War’?

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<sup>67</sup> Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 118.

<sup>68</sup> Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation*, xix.

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# THE BLONDE BOMBSHELL BILLBOARD QUEEN: Famous for Being Famous Before the Internet

Riley LoCurto

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*Who is Angelyne? Journalists, scholars, and residents of LA County have been asking this question for forty years—with the answer only revealed in 2017. Before that, she was known as a local celebrity, a onetime constant presence on billboards in Los Angeles, the owner of a pink corvette, a “proto-influencer,” a blonde bombshell, and most of all, an enigma. She put her first billboard up on the Sunset Strip in 1984, and quickly became an object of speculation. What was it that she did? Why did she have massive billboards with only her portrait, her name, and a phone number? In a world where more and more people can be “famous for being famous,” Angelyne could represent the first influencer, a bridge between two worlds of fame, or at least a certain side of Los Angeles. Whether you never heard of her or were a Los Angeles resident who was plagued by her image, she’s probably your favorite celebrity’s favorite celebrity.*

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In 1984, a woman named Angelyne purchased a billboard on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, California. For many years, Angelyne was almost entirely a mystery. Was she a struggling singer attempting to drum up interest? Did she have movie star aspirations? Over the years, Angelyne claimed many different origin stories; she was from Idaho, or maybe she was from Los Angeles. She wanted to be a singer, or maybe she simply believed that her personality was magic and needed to be shared with the world.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the eighties and nineties, Angelyne’s billboards were ubiquitous. They all shared a simple and provocative message: Angelyne. Call this number for more information because a star had arrived. Angelyne attracted fame and interest with little more than her face and name and became known thereafter as the “Billboard Queen.”<sup>2</sup> Since her first billboard appeared, Angelyne has acquired a local celebrity status in Los Angeles.

Angelyne’s true identity was a mystery until recently. In 2017, *The Hollywood Reporter* revealed that Angelyne was born in Poland as Ronia Tamar Goldberg in 1950. Later Renee Tami Goldberg, Angelyne was the daughter of Holocaust survivors.<sup>3</sup> The family moved to Israel and then to Los Angeles in 1959, where she went to high school in the San Fernando Valley and was briefly married until her divorce in 1969.<sup>4</sup> By 1984, she had renamed herself Angelyne, bought her first billboard on the Sunset Strip, and officially entered the public eye.<sup>5</sup>

Given the limited scope of her fame and her geographic specificity, there is

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<sup>1</sup> Ajay Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me: WHAT’S THE STORY BEHIND THE BILLBOARD? SHARE THE PAIN OF ONE WHO TRIED TO FIND OUT,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Apr. 23, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Patti Hartigan, “LA’s Royal Highness, the Billboard Queen: [City Edition],” *Boston Globe* (Boston, MA), Aug. 01, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Baum, “The Mystery of L.A. Billboard Diva Angelyne’s Real Identity Is Finally Solved,” *Hollywood Reporter* (Los Angeles, CA), Aug. 2, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Baum, “The Mystery of L.A. Billboard Diva.”

<sup>5</sup> Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me.”

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limited scholarship on Angelyne. Joshua Gamson briefly mentioned her in the introduction to his book *Claims to Fame*, primarily as a framing device for larger questions about the nature of celebrity.<sup>6</sup> What does it mean to be a celebrity and how it is executed? In *Celebrity and Power*, P. David Marshall tracked the term celebrity to have a current meaning that is aligned with a certain inauthenticity.<sup>7</sup> Christine Geraghty, in “Re-Examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance,” emphasized the difference between a celebrity and a professional or performer; a celebrity is someone whose fame “rests overwhelmingly on what happens outside the sphere of their work and who is famous for having a lifestyle.”<sup>8</sup>

It is generally agreed that stars and celebrities are commodities, and that they represent and can be perceived as the ultimate individuals. Richard Dyer stated these ideas and argued that stars were an active part of their transformation into commodities.<sup>9</sup> Viewing the star or celebrity as a commodity also leads to an emphasis on celebrity as an investment, which was explored by Gamson in his analysis of the inner workings of the star-making process.<sup>10</sup> The larger critique of the entertainment industry in this vein springs from Adorno and Horkheimer, who criticized the “culture industry” for its “stunting” of the imagination.<sup>11</sup> To this end, the topic of celebrities that are “famous for being famous” has become increasingly relevant in the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> Angelyne acts as a prototype for this type of fame as she created notoriety from nothing in a way few other individuals have. She is also a celebrity intimately linked with the city of Los Angeles, attaining a level of local celebrity rather than national or international fame. In his landmark book *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis tracks the development of the Los Angeles. The city’s intellectuals traditionally view Los Angeles as bereft, with Hollywood and the “Culture Industry” attracting artists but



Figure 1: McCurry, Steve. *ANGELYNE aspiring personality on Sunset Strip*. 1992, Photography, Los Angeles, CA. Angelyne posing in front of her own billboard in 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 2-4.

<sup>7</sup> P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Geraghty, “Re-Examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance,” in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. by Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 99.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Syer, “Heavenly Bodies,” in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. by Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 86-87.

<sup>10</sup> Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, 45.

<sup>11</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. by Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 34.

<sup>12</sup> Susan J. Douglas and Andrea McDonnell, *Celebrity: A History of Fame* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 240.

wasting their talents in the grind of “pure capitalism.”<sup>13</sup> Los Angeles, then, becomes “a city of seduction and defeat.”<sup>14</sup> Much of the coverage of Angelyne ties her specifically to these common myths about Los Angeles and its culture.

In Figure One, eight years after her first billboard, Angelyne poses in front of another in 1992.<sup>15</sup> We can see Angelyne posing for the camera in a similarly exaggerated manner, wearing what appears to be the same glasses. This billboard is among her tamer images, but all the hallmarks of Angelyne’s image are here: perfectly coiffed blonde-bombshell hair, a provocative pose that emphasizes her sexuality, and a simple message: “Angelyne.” The features of this billboard are her face and her name, and that proved to be enough to gain fame.

Angelyne transcends the normal limits of celebrity and embodies a unique version of celebrity. Through newspaper articles, interviews, and Angelyne’s own website, this essay will investigate the development of her fame and how her celebrity has been built and interpreted by the media, as well as her own view of her celebrity. Angelyne became “famous for being famous” by independently creating publicity through billboards and press coverage, performing this type of celebrity before it was as commonplace as it is today. She provides a view of local celebrity, tied to not only a geographical location but to its culture and mythology. Angelyne created her own specific celebrity through self-made publicity and a persona rooted in a specific place, becoming a prototype for the increasingly important “famous for being famous” model of celebrity.

### **Angelyne as Related to Los Angeles**

Angelyne is strongly associated with Los Angeles and is represented as not just a figure driving around in a Corvette, but as a metaphor for life in Los Angeles and a symbol for the myth of the city.<sup>16</sup> It is surely not a coincidence that Angelyne shares her name with the city that she is so tied to. In *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis describes the “L.A. School” of thinkers in the 1980s, and characterize the city as “a place where anything is possible, nothing is safe and durable enough to believe in ... and the automatic ingenuity of capital ceaselessly throws up new forms and spectacles.”<sup>17</sup> The idea of L.A. being a destination for hopeful dreamers to “make it” is commonplace, but what Davis describes here is the underlying darkness that often comes with it, the way this propensity to be remade leads to a feeling of inauthenticity. In a city where the old is constantly making way for the new, nothing can be relied upon. This translates to the need for new faces and new celebrities who will almost inevitably either fail to reach their goals or be cast off once the novelty is gone. It is reflected in the coverage of Angelyne by characterizing her as a symbol of the city’s worst and least savory instincts. While this is just one school of thought, it was prevalent at the time of Angelyne’s rise to notoriety. These myths about the nature of Los Angeles color the way she was spoken about in the press and her status as a figure tied to the specific culture of Los Angeles.

The myth of “making it” in Los Angeles is a long shot, and Angelyne can be read as a darker symbol, one that shows the failure and desperation that such dreams often entail. In the *Los Angeles Times*, Al Martinez describes her as a typical example of the type of person attracted to Los Angeles. She is a cipher for all the hopefuls who come to Los Angeles in a misguided way: “Angelyne, therefore, is a perfect metaphor

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<sup>13</sup> Mark Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2018), 14.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, *City of Quartz*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> John Barr. *Angelyne’s New Billboard*, July 1987, Photography, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>16</sup> Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me.”

<sup>17</sup> Davis, *City of Quartz*, 85.

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for those who strive with limited talent and staggering ingenuity to be seen.”<sup>18</sup> She is described as “sad, desperate,” and a “caricature, rather than a real person.”<sup>19</sup> This writer characterizes her not as a full person but as an inauthentic character, and the article has a distinctly melancholy tone. She is at once representative of the culture of Los Angeles and an empty vessel; the author notes that she will not give her real name but finding out the truth about Angelyne lacks importance. She is a character, and that character is an example of the cycle of life in Los Angeles.

Writers from outside the city also viewed Angelyne as a representative of Los Angeles. In the *New York Times*, Angelyne was described as “the city’s eccentricities” turned flesh, “The fame-hungry, appearance-obsessed, publicity-driven spirit of Los Angeles is embodied in Angelyne, the billboard queen.”<sup>20</sup> Written from an outside perspective, this article sought quotes from Angelenos for their perspective on Angelyne. Robinson Devor, who created a short film about Angelyne, mentioned that she reminds Angelenos of what they are all trying to achieve, “We’re all out there to hustle ... and get people curious about us, and that can be a very unsavory task. And that it was this town is all about.”<sup>21</sup> He conveys that she accomplished the same goal as many in Los Angeles, but in a way that is perhaps more direct and therefore more uncomfortable to acknowledge. She is described by the Angeleno novelist Bruce Wagner as a “phantom pursuer” of fame, the “currency of the city.”<sup>22</sup> In each of these quotes, there is an acknowledgement that Angelyne represents something. Whether or not she is liked, she is always a figure who fits into the Los Angeles landscape. Her presence is logical and understandable. In any other city, she might be an outlier. While she is still an oddity, in Los Angeles she is an oddity that is only an exaggerated form of the stereotypical Los Angeles mythology.

Angelyne was quickly understood to be a part of the fabric of the city. Her billboards were featured in many films, and she was well known in Los Angeles.<sup>23</sup> She also appeared in a few films, almost always in some cameo form of herself.<sup>24</sup> One film in which she played herself was *Earth Girls Are Easy*. When asked why he wanted Angelyne in the film, director Julien Temple said, “This is very much a film about L.A. ... and I think she is one of the strange marvels of L.A. ... I think she’s a kind of like the patron saint of a certain side of L.A. ... I don’t think someone like Angelyne could exist anywhere but here.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, she is so much a part of the city that a film taking place in Los Angeles in the nineteen-eighties could include her as a marker of time and place, giving a sense of authenticity in all her inauthenticity. She is incredibly specific and recognizable to Los Angeles, not just in her celebrity, but as a symbol of the city. A *Boston Globe* article, to explain Angelyne to a non-Angeleno audience, said, “Angelyne has created a myth in a city that constantly reinvents itself ... Everything is for sale. Nothing is permanent.”<sup>26</sup> She is directly tied to the history of Los Angeles, and therefore the nature of the city itself. Her propensity to create her own mythology is just an extension of a city that does the same thing.

Angelyne had become a fixture in Los Angeles, not just of the newspapers but in daily life. Because of this, her position of celebrity was limited to the city and her fellow Angelenos. Anecdotes about Angelyne sightings abounded. There were

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<sup>18</sup> Al Martinez, “A Fantasy Named Angelyne Wants Attention,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 8, 1990.

<sup>19</sup> Martinez, “A Fantasy Named Angelyne.”

<sup>20</sup> Carey Goldberg, “Roadside Icon Promotes Herself and City’s Image,” *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Goldberg, “Roadside Icon Promotes Herself and City’s Image.”

<sup>22</sup> Goldberg, “Roadside Icon Promotes Herself and City’s Image.”

<sup>23</sup> Goldberg, “Roadside Icon Promotes Herself and City’s Image.”

<sup>24</sup> Martinez, “A Fantasy Named Angelyne.”

<sup>25</sup> Schwartz, “Temple of Hope.”

<sup>26</sup> Hartigan, “LA’s Royal Highness.”

midnight run-ins in the produce section of a local L.A. grocery store, with Angelyne as “the star I most looked forward to, er, bumping into.”<sup>27</sup> Even in this small and sweet anecdote, there is the common through line of objectification contained in much of the journalism about Angelyne. Perhaps the true mark of universal fame was attracting the ire of Los Angeles parents, who claimed her billboards were “corrupting children” and attempted to remove one of her billboards across from a school.<sup>28</sup> In 1995 the *Los Angeles Times* included the fifteenth anniversary of her first billboard in an article titled “Anniversaries of America,” claiming that “they are as much a part of the L.A. skyline as mountains and smog.”<sup>29</sup> She became a part of the landscape of Los Angeles in the everyday experiences of locals.

In his 1995 profile of Angelyne, Ajay Sahgal began his inquiry with this: “I have lived in Los Angeles all my life, I have seen Angelyne billboards almost every day for ten years and I have no idea who this woman is.”<sup>30</sup> In response to this profile, numerous readers sent in their own Angelyne anecdotes. This is interesting for a few reasons, not least of all the anecdotes themselves. The response shows, in a limited capacity, the place that Angelyne held in the minds of Angelenos. These demonstrate the type of knowledge that Angelenos had about her, and the feelings that they had towards her, in a very direct way. One reader responded that the author found out “what most sensible, thinking L.A.-area residents suspected all along: that Angelyne is simply [a] self-made, typically L.A. character seeking desperately to be a celebrity.”<sup>31</sup> Another reader spotted her “driving through Modesto in a white T-Bird—followed by Richard Dreyfuss.”<sup>32</sup> A five-year old saw her picture and declared she needed a bigger bra; one reader bemoaned, “How dare Sahgal insult a living Hollywood landmark!”; another noted that she must be older than she claims.<sup>33</sup> The most succinct explanation is that “Angelyne is just Angelyne.”<sup>34</sup> Each of these anecdotes demonstrates the fact that for Angelenos, Angelyne was just a part of the life of the city; not necessarily for good or for ill. Whether or not she was truly representative of Los Angeles is unimportant to these stories. What matters is that she was well known to the residents of Los Angeles and that she was written about in a very specific way. These writers mostly treat Angelyne with a bit of ridicule along with a degree of affection. While not absent of criticism, these responses generally show an acceptance of Angelyne on the part of the city’s residents. She had risen to fame in Los Angeles, and she now belonged to them. Her unique position of local celebrity was complicated by the city she lived in and its unique character. She and Los Angeles were able to feed into each other and their respective mythologies.

### Angelyne’s Portrayal in the Media

Accepted to be a woman who is “famous for being famous,” Angelyne marketed herself into her own celebrity. This was reflected throughout the news coverage that she gained in the eighties and nineties, which contained a trend of newspaper articles explaining who she was to an unfamiliar audience. She was described as “famous for

<sup>27</sup> Rip Sense, “A Place Where Everyone Knew Your Name,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 2, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> “Parents Say Billboard for Angelyne Bedevils Students,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 10, 1994.

<sup>29</sup> Irene Lacher, “Anniversaries of Americana: What do Harley-Davidsons, Frederick’s of Hollywood, Angelyne and Supermarkets have in Common? It’s Not What You Might Think. They’re All Celebrating Birthdays in ‘96,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 29, 1995.

<sup>30</sup> Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me.”

<sup>31</sup> Dakota Sands, letter to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 11, 1995.

<sup>32</sup> Scott Hemmelgarn, letter to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 11, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> Dianne Kramer, letter to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 11, 1995; Damon Devine, letter to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 11, 1995; Gabe Mooradian, letter to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 11, 1995.

<sup>34</sup> Sandra G. Medof, letter to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 11, 1995.

being famous” in 1989 for the readers of the *Baltimore Sun*, where she was also characterized as a “torpedo-busted cotton-candy blonde with no obvious skills.”<sup>35</sup> Much of the coverage she received had a dismissive edge that bordered on derogatory, while other coverage was cruel in its characterization of her. One journalist remarked that she should be placed in the “pantheon of L.A. circus freaks,” another called her “a clown still performing long after the circus has closed.”<sup>36</sup> The commonality of almost all press coverage of Angelyne was that she was almost never taken seriously, even when she was not the butt of the joke.

Journalists and reporters often portrayed Angelyne as a character, both playing into the things she said about herself but also spinning their own tales. She was portrayed as a character rather than a real person, usually reliant on her sex symbol image.<sup>37</sup> Journalists’ refusal to take Angelyne seriously led to nonsensical analysis such as this: “Her vapid psychobabble is too sincere to be anything more than a carefully contrived joke.”<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, Angelyne is sincere, on the other, she is the mastermind of a long-con persona. Some journalists could not decide between these conflicting ideas. Her promiscuous billboards seem to have opened the door for her to be reduced to that aspect of her persona. Thus, she is described as a “Hollywood sex kitten with a Betty Boop cant” and an “X-rated Barbie Doll.”<sup>39</sup> Angelyne consciously played into these stereotypes and adopted “Love Goddess of the Future” into part of her persona, perhaps as a way to gain control over this facet of her image.<sup>40</sup> While Angelyne did put that image of herself out in her billboards, in these quotes the journalists use the way she presents herself as an invitation to objectify and deride her. In the examples of letters written about Angelyne, there is ridicule that goes along with affection.<sup>41</sup> In the press coverage of Angelyne in the eighties and nineties, the same affection is not present.

### Angelyne, by Angelyne

Over time, Angelyne developed calling cards, such as the blond hair and the pink corvette. These characteristics, and the oft-repeated rumors that surrounded them, were cultivated by Angelyne, and reported on breathlessly. At one point, Angelyne was reported to own five pink convertibles for cruising around Hollywood or to paid engagements.<sup>42</sup> The mythology of Angelyne was often exaggerated, sometimes by Angelyne herself or those who work with her. Such rumors include communicating with Marilyn Monroe through a medium, having a number of different screenplays in development, and claiming she has always wished to be a genetic scientist.<sup>43</sup> In Figure Two, Angelyne is on the Sunset Strip, wearing an outfit typical for her, both in life and on her billboards.<sup>44</sup> This demonstrates that the image Angelyne created for herself through her clothing, hair, car, and makeup was not limited to the billboards; it was how she presented herself to the world on any given day.

<sup>35</sup> “PEOPLE, ETC.,” *Sun* (Baltimore), Jul. 16, 1989.

<sup>36</sup> Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me”; Martinez, “A Fantasy Named Angelyne.”

<sup>37</sup> Martinez, “A Fantasy Named Angelyne.”

<sup>38</sup> Peter Hilmore, “Sweet Nothings from Stuck-Up Angelyne,” *Observer* (London), Dec. 8, 1996.

<sup>39</sup> Martinez, “A Fantasy Named Angelyne”; Karina Mackenzie, “Hot Pink Fame: L.A.’s Angelyne is Famous for being Famous. [Final Edition],” *Edmonton Journal* (Alberta), Jan. 25, 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Lacher, “Anniversaries of Americana.”

<sup>41</sup> “Letter to the Editor 1—no Title.”; “LETTERS.”

<sup>42</sup> The Social Climes Staff, “For \$8,000, the Least She could do is be Friendly,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 16, 1995.

<sup>43</sup> Lacher, “Anniversaries of Americana”; Schwartz, “Temple of Hope”; Martinez, “A Fantasy Named Angelyne.”

<sup>44</sup> Steve McCurry, *ANGELYNE aspiring personality on Sunset Strip*, 1992, Photography, Los Angeles, CA.

Angelyne was notoriously mysterious when it comes to interviews, and what she does reveal was often very similar across the board. She developed her own mythology that has changed in content over time, as reflected in the interviews she conducted. In 1984, the year her first billboard on the Sunset Strip appeared, she claimed it was to get attention for her music career or to gain movie parts.<sup>45</sup> It is noted that billboards on Sunset Strip are often an accomplishment for artists, and Angelyne claimed at this time to want the attention of the industry. She remarked that it is working well, and that “I’m more famous now than I was two months ago.”<sup>46</sup> While



Figure 2: McCurry, Steve. *ANGELYNE aspiring personality on Sunset Strip*. 1992, Photography, Los Angeles, CA. Angelyne posing on top of her pink corvette on Sunset Boulevard.

she does focus on her own fame, there is an element of the billboards being part of a larger goal of gaining recognition in the music and film industries. In 1987, Angelyne still promoted her music in interviews, though these were primarily focused on the billboards and a painting she commissioned on a building near Hollywood and Vine.<sup>47</sup> While she spoke about her billboards and the mural, she still plugged her music career, although she did repeat that she “can feel [herself] getting more and more famous every day!”<sup>48</sup> Angelyne represented herself differently through the years. In the beginning of her rise to fame, she kept at least some of the focus on her music career and her desire to be noticed in that regard, but over time, the quotes that she gave to journalists changed towards promoting only herself as a personality.

Eventually, Angelyne fully embraced her notoriety as the “Billboard Queen” rather than focus on her career aspirations, although she had always defined what she is famous for in her own terms. In 1996, she answered the question of what exactly she does with, “It’s over ten years of being famous and I still haven’t come up with an answer, I’m telling you. How about this one? ‘I don’t do; I am.’”<sup>49</sup> Although she was still releasing music, she had stopped referring to herself as primarily a singer.<sup>50</sup> She began to characterize herself as being “famous for the magic that I possess.”<sup>51</sup> This shift marks an embrace of the “famous for being famous” tag, demonstrating her adaptation to the nature of her own fame. The changing explanation for her fame also feeds into the more disingenuous aspects of Angelyne’s mythmaking. She presents her fame as a result of always only wanting fame—“I just didn’t feel normal until I

<sup>45</sup> Rogers Worthington, “Nation/world: Hot Billboard on Sunset Strip is a Ticket to Fame and Fortune Assignment: Hollywood.” *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 17, 1984.

<sup>46</sup> Worthington, “Nation/world: Hot Billboard.”

<sup>47</sup> Cathleen Decker, “Uh, that’s Hollywood: This Would-Be Star Pictures Herself with a Larger-than-Life Image,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1987.

<sup>48</sup> Decker, “Uh, that’s Hollywood.”

<sup>49</sup> Goldberg, “Roadside Icon Promotes Herself and City’s Image.”

<sup>50</sup> Goldberg, “Roadside Icon Promotes Herself and City’s Image.”

<sup>51</sup> Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me.”; “PEOPLE, ETC”; Lacher, “Anniversaries of Americana.”

## THE BLONDE BOMBSHELL BILLBOARD QUEEN

became famous”—rather than a byproduct of higher career aspirations.<sup>52</sup> Between 1984 and the 1990s, Angelyne had seemingly abandoned the idea of gaining recognition for doing anything else. Although she was still releasing music, her focus had shifted, and she had embraced her unique form of celebrity.

Throughout her time as the “Billboard Queen,” Angelyne maintained distance between herself and the press with the help of her supposed staff. The task of putting off reporters and providing quotes illustrating her influence was almost always performed by Scott Hennig, alternatively called her manager or the president of her fan club. Angelyne and Hennig have made various claims about the size of Angelyne’s staff, sometimes twelve people, other times twenty-three. In almost every article where such claims occur, the writer notes that Hennig was typically the only person to answer the phone.<sup>53</sup> She avoided giving face to face interviews, as Hennig claimed that she was too busy and instead furnished quotes and clippings about the grand and global nature of her fame.<sup>54</sup> Hennig acted as her mouthpiece and as a gatekeeper to reporters attempting to write articles about her, giving the same information to everyone and emphasizing how in demand of a celebrity she was. Giving reporters this run-around enhanced Angelyne’s mystery and ultimately became part of her persona as an oddity.

Still, Angelyne and her various mouthpieces always present her as a genuine person rather than a persona or character that she could slip in and out of. Hennig claimed that Angelyne is “conscious about this whole business of being a celebrity, and she takes it seriously,” and made a distinction between her and figures such as Elvira and Pee Wee Herman. For Angelyne, “She’s Angelyne 24 hours a day. It’s not like some costume she puts on.”<sup>55</sup> Her investor, Hugo Maisnik, quoted her as saying “I’ve lived to be Angelyne this long, I act like Angelyne.”<sup>56</sup> Whether it was true or not, Angelyne and her representation sought to present her not as a character or an act, but as an authentic and full person. This is reflected in her relationship with her fans, who Hennig maintained understood Angelyne’s authenticity.<sup>57</sup> In fact, in the *Hollywood Reporter* story revealing her true identity, Angelyne did not confirm the details and remained cagey; she did not issue a full denial but remained elusive about her real identity.<sup>58</sup> Though Angelyne was often referred to as a character, persona, or caricature, she has never presented herself this way. She has claimed Angelyne as her true identity and has used Hennig and the scant quotes that she did give to emphasize this. According to Angelyne, there is no hidden identity, and she had no interest in acting as anything but herself.

While Angelyne did not give in-person interviews and intentionally made it difficult to speak with her, there are indications that she read her own coverage and responded to it, mostly in other quotes about her fame. In one specific instance, Hennig directly responded to a profile of Angelyne that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1995. A major theme of that profile was the author’s attempts to speak with Angelyne in person, but they were put off by Hennig. In a group of letters to the *Los Angeles Times* published in response to that article, Hennig claimed that the author was “on a mission” to date Angelyne and was unable to accept that she wasn’t interested; then claimed that the problem with Hollywood “is not its entertainers but

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<sup>52</sup> Hartigan, “L.A.’s Royal Highness.”

<sup>53</sup> Hartigan, “L.A.’s Royal Highness.”; Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me.”; Hilmore, “Sweet Nothings from Stuck-Up Angelyne.”

<sup>54</sup> Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me.”

<sup>55</sup> Hartigan, “L.A.’s Royal Highness.”

<sup>56</sup> *Angelyne*, (1995, World Artists Home Video).

<sup>57</sup> *Angelyne*, (1995, World Artists Home Video).

<sup>58</sup> Baum, “The Mystery of L.A. Billboard Diva.”

the promoters and publicity people they have to deal with on a daily basis.”<sup>59</sup> This quote has a pronounced adversarial tone in comparison to other quotes from Angelyne and Hennig, and is emblematic of much of the Angelyne myth making process. She felt misrepresented by the press and did not want to give them ease of access. Additionally, she maintained that claims about her are exaggerated and that the statements she has made were purposefully outrageous. Perhaps Hennig and Angelyne meant this earnestly, but, either way, it established the heightened sensitivities of Angelyne.

With Hennig as her primary mouthpiece to the press, and by allowing others to speak on her behalf, Angelyne created a sense of mystery. By letting reporters acquire most of their information from Hennig, she was able to pass along information like clippings of stories, statistics about her billboards in the U.S. and abroad, her fan club, and the opportunities she may or may not have.<sup>60</sup> This method was used to great effect in the 1995 documentary about Angelyne that features interviews with Hennig, Maisnik, Angelyne, and other figures in her sphere.<sup>61</sup> The documentary, in black and white, primarily featured interviews about Angelyne interspersed with clips of her or short interview segments with Angelyne herself. Her own interviews in the film are more cerebral and focused on showcasing her personality, while those with Hennig and Maisnik focus on her persona and the business aspects of Angelyne as a brand.<sup>62</sup> Maisnik presented Angelyne as a forward-thinking trailblazer and as a human completely different to the norm, while Hennig espoused the breadth of her fanbase and the ability of her celebrity to “enlighten the world through the persona of sex-goddess.”<sup>63</sup> These quotes and ideas are bold statements, and they come off as more authentic because they come from the mouth of Angelyne’s acolytes rather than from her own lips. In the documentary, Angelyne is pictured at the pool, dancing around, and sitting in bed making quips.<sup>64</sup> The film contrasts the literal Angelyne, presented as simply being herself, with the adoring statements of her supporters in a way that adds to her mystique. She became someone who has earned the respect and praise of others who are able to articulate *why* they are under her spell; all Angelyne must do is simply appear and confirm that she is deserving of the mystery and star treatment that she receives.

In 1997, Angelyne created her own website as an even more direct way to communicate her identity. In this medium, she could remain unfiltered from the opinions of reporters.<sup>65</sup> The website, which was completely designed in bright pink, features links to her “Driving Tours,” her biography, and a FAQ.<sup>66</sup> Some sections are written in the first person, while others are in the third person. The sections written in the first person include the specific mannerisms of her speech, such as “Ta Ta!”, “OOOOOH!”, innuendos, and copious amounts of exclamation points.<sup>67</sup> Her biography states that Angelyne “symbolizes, and keeps alive the glorious essence that is Hollywood,” while emphasizing the amount of advertisements she has appeared on internationally.<sup>68</sup> In regards to her image, she is “seductive and sensual without being

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<sup>59</sup> Scott A. Hennig, letter to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 11, 1995.

<sup>60</sup> Sahgal, “Angel ... so L.A. & Me”; Hartigan, “L.A.’s Royal Highness.”

<sup>61</sup> *Angelyne*, directed by Robinson Devor and Michael Guccione (1995, World Artists Home Video); Steve Harvey, “Only in L.A.: Angelyne Moves! Angelyne Speaks!” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 18, 1995.

<sup>62</sup> *Angelyne*, (1995, World Artists Home Video).

<sup>63</sup> *Angelyne*, (1995, World Artists Home Video).

<sup>64</sup> *Angelyne*, (1995, World Artists Home Video).

<sup>65</sup> Angelyne, Angelyne.com, April 9 1997.

<sup>66</sup> “Angelyne’s Treasure Chest.” Angelyne.com. Apr. 9, 1997.

<sup>67</sup> “Angelyne’s Treasure Chest.”

<sup>68</sup> “Angelyne’s Treasure Chest.”

campy or burlesque.”<sup>69</sup> She characterizes her advertisements as being her “agent,” presenting herself as an independent figure who is extremely sought after. The FAQ is fashioned as an interview, stating that “THEY ALWAYS SEEM TO ASK THE SAME QUESTIONS ... MAYBE NOW ALL THOSE REPORTERS, JOURNALISTS AND INTERVIEWERS CAN COME UP WITH SOME NEW QUESTIONS.”<sup>70</sup> The answers to these questions are similar to those that she has given to reporters, but the framing indicates her frustration with the press in a direct way. Despite this, the website does have a tongue-in-cheek tone. This tone has allowed her to offer her own view on herself and her fame, and to beat back against the way the press has written about her. Angelyne clearly does not agree with the characterization many of the articles about her have produced, and this website has allowed her to present her own narrative.

In addition to biographical information, FAQ, and contact information, Angelyne’s website offers a tour of Hollywood hosted by Angelyne herself. Along with the videos, there are pages written in the style of her diary about the different stops on the tour.<sup>71</sup> In each of these diary descriptions, the focus is clearly on Angelyne rather than the stop along the tour.<sup>72</sup> The Hollywood Sign becomes “one of the most recognizable signs in the world, next to mine, of course!”<sup>73</sup> By creating a website that is written almost entirely in her own voice, Angelyne decided to communicate directly with her fans in a way she never was able to before. Up until this point, Angelyne was only accessible by chance, by booking an appearance, or by the view of her billboards.<sup>74</sup> This was a new endeavor for her, and it shows that she was trying to adapt her fame to be somewhat accessible. The tour guides were free and offered an experience to “ride along with Angelyne in Hollywood” whether participants were able to see her in person or not. The fact that she offered tours in Hollywood illustrates Angelyne’s allegiance to her home, and the way that she views herself as specifically associated with Hollywood to the point that she has become an expert on it. Because she is so enmeshed with the Hollywood landscape, she has been able to present the experience of driving through Hollywood with her as one worth having.

### Angelyne in Context

The media has categorized Angelyne in many ways since the beginning of her stardom, but one of the most persistent comparisons is to Jayne Mansfield. The director Julien Temple described Angelyne as an “heir” to Jayne Mansfield.<sup>75</sup> At the premiere for *Earth Girls Are Easy*, Angelyne’s look for the evening was described as “a Martian imitation of Jayne Mansfield.”<sup>76</sup> One journalist characterized her as cultivating “a vision of glamour that died with Jayne Mansfield.”<sup>77</sup> Another article described her as “living out her Jayne Mansfield caricature 24 hours a day.”<sup>78</sup> Why was this the figure who seemed to be the obvious comparison, while Angelyne compared herself to Marilyn Monroe or to Barbie?<sup>79</sup> Mansfield, a glamour girl and blonde bombshell of the fifties and sixties, was a star known for her pursuit of

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<sup>69</sup> “Angelyne’s Treasure Chest.”

<sup>70</sup> “Angelyne’s Treasure Chest.”

<sup>71</sup> “Dear Diary,” *Angelyne.com*. Apr. 9, 1997.

<sup>72</sup> “Dear Diary.”

<sup>73</sup> “Dear Diary.”

<sup>74</sup> The Social Climes Staff, “For \$8,000.”

<sup>75</sup> Schwartz, “Temple of Hope.”

<sup>76</sup> Kevin Allman, “INTO THE NIGHT,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1989.

<sup>77</sup> Hartigan, “LA’s Royal Highness.”

<sup>78</sup> Goldberg, “Roadside Icon Promotes Herself and City’s Image.”

<sup>79</sup> Hartigan, “L.A.’s Royal Highness.”

publicity and lesser-remembered movie career.<sup>80</sup> She was not coy about her goals of stardom and fame, and shared other similarities with Angelyne: a love of pink, a pink sports car of her own, and an association with Angelyne's prime territory, Sunset Boulevard, which Mansfield once walked a tiger on a ribbon down.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps the biggest similarity between them is the fact that their publicity blitzes predated career success, strategically launched preemptively to studio or record label support.<sup>82</sup>

Angelyne's path to fame is less atypical than it first appears. In the 1980s, getting a billboard on the Sunset Strip was not an unorthodox way to promote oneself as a performer, particularly as a recording artist.<sup>83</sup> Billboards on Sunset Boulevard were used to promote individuals regularly, most often for book, films, and music. Recording artists often required their labels to put up a promotional billboard in their contracts.<sup>84</sup> Ann-Margret, another star who emerged with the help of press agents, had a billboard on the Sunset Strip before any of her movie roles or music had been released.<sup>85</sup> Her management saw an opportunity to market her as the "female Elvis Presley," and soon she was a bona fide star; they continued to market her aggressively, separately from her film roles and as a star unto herself.<sup>86</sup> The idea of independently purchasing a billboard and chasing publicity in a larger pursuit of fame and opportunity was thus not entirely unorthodox. In an article from 1984, the year of Angelyne's first billboard, the quotes she gave and the tone of the coverage in the *Chicago Tribune* were similar to those of Jayne Mansfield in 1957, when Mansfield's first starring role had not yet been released. They were both strategic in how they described their fame; Mansfield stated that she needed to get all the men and women "stirred up," and Angelyne asserted that she was fielding offers and waiting for the right part.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps the reason why Angelyne's pursuit of fame in such a bold manner has been the subject of slightly shocked remarks in the press was simply because she was not as successful at it as the others; she did not go on to have the career of an Ann-Margret or even of Jayne Mansfield. These two had the backing of professional press agents, while Angelyne had a less experienced investor.<sup>88</sup>

Angelyne was also not the first person to be called "famous for being famous." One of the early examples in the press of that kind of celebrity is Zsa Zsa Gabor; an actress more famous for her own persona and many marriages than her film career.<sup>89</sup> This was not a label given to her later on, but one that she had already been given by 1989, by which time Angelyne was given this moniker as well.<sup>90</sup> In light of other figures, what exactly sets Angelyne apart as a prototype of the "famous for being famous" celebrity? Mansfield and Gabor were both characterized by their publicity, persona, and fame, as they were perceived as disproportionate to the success of their acting careers.<sup>91</sup> Angelyne, Gabor, and Mansfield thus all fall into the category of celebrity whose fame is dependent on their public persona rather than any of their work.<sup>92</sup> The difference is that Mansfield and Gabor did ostensibly have acting and

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<sup>80</sup> "Jayne Mansfield Dies in New Orleans Car Crash," *New York Times*, Jun. 30, 1967.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Donovan, "She Will Do Anything for Publicity," *Saturday Evening Post*, Jun. 1, 1957, 99.

<sup>82</sup> Donovan, "She Will Do Anything for Publicity."

<sup>83</sup> Worthington, "Nation/world: Hot Billboard."

<sup>84</sup> Worthington, "Nation/world: Hot Billboard."

<sup>85</sup> Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, 46.

<sup>86</sup> David H. Kelsey, "Meet Ann-Margret: Hard Work, Ambition Propel a Young Actress to the Top in Hollywood," *Wall Street Journal*, Apr. 07, 1964.

<sup>87</sup> Donovan, "She Will Do Anything for Publicity.," Worthington, "Nation/world: Hot Billboard."

<sup>88</sup> Kelsey, "Meet Ann-Margret"; Donovan, "She Will Do Anything for Publicity."

<sup>89</sup> Alessandra Stanley, "Polisher of Her Own Star," *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Nikki Finke, "Famous for being Famous," *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 12, 1989; "PEOPLE, ETC."

<sup>91</sup> "Jayne Mansfield Dies in New Orleans,," Stanley, "Polisher of Her Own Star."

<sup>92</sup> Geraghty, "Re-Examining Stardom."

movie stardom as their careers; despite how successful or unsuccessful they were, one could point to the fact they were in movies as a contributing factor to their fame.<sup>93</sup> In contrast, Angelyne only appeared in movies as herself and accepted the “famous for being famous” label very early on.<sup>94</sup>

Today, “famous for being famous” has reached new heights. Throughout the early 2000s, Paris Hilton was renowned for this type of fame.<sup>95</sup> The Kardashians, perhaps the most dominant celebrities of the past decade, are also often described this way.<sup>96</sup> Angelyne predated them all, and her model of celebrity is a prototype for the type of fame these other celebrities have acquired. There is still a distinction between them, however. Hilton and the Kardashians have spun their fame into entrepreneurship, while Angelyne has remained content where she is.<sup>97</sup> Hilton now maintains that the image of her as a blond ditz was a character, while Kim Kardashian West is pursuing a law degree.<sup>98</sup> Angelyne states that she has refused her own reality shows, rejecting the idea of all-access celebrity as “boring and gauche.”<sup>99</sup> This too, sets Angelyne apart from other celebrities who are famous for nothing. She has not converted her fame into anything other than continued celebrity, and apparently has no interest in doing so.<sup>100</sup> Because of this, Angelyne is perhaps one of the purest expressions of the type of fame she occupies. She is not coasting off prior fame and she will not turn notoriety into business success or another career path; she is simply continuing to be Angelyne. She has never promoted anything except herself and has always been honest about that fact.<sup>101</sup> Her embrace of the “famous for being famous” moniker set the stage for the acceptance of this type of fame. She was never embarrassed of that title, although it has often come with negative connotations.

### Angelyne: The End

Angelyne is still alive and up to her old tricks. She can still be spotted in Hollywood in her pink Corvette, and is still selling only herself.<sup>102</sup> Today she is heralded as a “first generation influencer,” and counts Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian West as fans.<sup>103</sup> There are countless celebrities today that are famous for being famous who are more well known for their personalities than for their work, and the invention of the Instagram influencer has created scores of individuals whose celebrity relies solely on self-image. The comparison to Angelyne is natural but not completely accurate. Angelyne thrives on mystery, while influencers and reality stars aim to provide relatability and constant access. Angelyne tightly controls her own image in a more obvious way than modern influencers, who create the illusion of complete openness.

She is still interpreted as a symbol of Los Angeles, perhaps disproving the theory that in Los Angeles nothing is certain; it seems there will always be Angelyne.<sup>104</sup> Angelyne’s original route to fame demonstrates an understanding of

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<sup>93</sup> “Jayne Mansfield Dies in New Orleans,” Stanley, “Polisher of Her Own Star.”

<sup>94</sup> “PEOPLE, ETC.”

<sup>95</sup> Ilana Kaplan, “Who is Paris Hilton, really?” *New York Times*, Sep. 11, 2020, Late Edition (East Coast).

<sup>96</sup> Amy Chozick, “The Keys to The Kardashian Kingdom,” *New York Times*, Mar. 31, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> Kaplan, “Who is Paris Hilton, really?”; Chozick, “The Kardashian Kingdom”; Gary Baum, “L.A. Billboard Diva Angelyne Bemoans Kardashian, Hilton and ‘Boring, Gauche’ Celeb Culture,” *Hollywood Reporter* (Los Angeles, CA), Aug. 6, 2015.

<sup>98</sup> Lisa Respers France, “Paris Hilton Reckons with Her Legacy—and so should we,” *CNN Commentary*, Sep. 10, 2020; Elizabeth A. Harris, “Prisoners Freed. Beauty Sold,” *New York Times*, Apr. 5, 2020.

<sup>99</sup> Baum, “L.A. Billboard Diva.”

<sup>100</sup> Baum, “L.A. Billboard Diva.”

<sup>101</sup> David L. Ulin, “Angelyne and Los Angeles—a Self-made Duo,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 20, 2019.

<sup>102</sup> Ulin, “Angelyne and Los Angeles.”

<sup>103</sup> Ulin, “Angelyne and Los Angeles.”; Baum, “L.A. Billboard Diva.”

<sup>104</sup> Ulin, “Angelyne and Los Angeles.”

personal branding and marketing of the self, but it was not unheard of. She created a recognizable image and has maintained it, demonstrating acumen in the art of image creation. Celebrity culture is dependent on personal branding and creating an image of the star, enabling celebrities to be recognizable and giving them a public narrative. Her embrace of the “famous for being famous” label was ahead of her time, placing her as the forebearer not only to the individual celebrities that came after her but as an entire genre of celebrity that has exploded in the forty-six years since her first billboard appeared. She believed, even in the nineties, that “everyone will be a star in the future” and that her role was to guide people in that direction.<sup>105</sup>

Whether extremely prescient or just lucky in her guess, at least one thing that Angelyne predicted came to pass. Angelyne as a case study fits into the field of celebrity as one example of fame evolving in real time. Our understanding of celebrity is under constant expansion, whether through types of celebrity or debate over when the celebrity sphere begins.<sup>106</sup> Fame changes with the times, as people have new avenues towards notoriety. Angelyne’s fame has existed in a very specific window of time and demonstrates the changing attitudes towards her specific type of fame. She was too early to become a modern-day influencer and embraced the “famous for nothing” notoriety, while maintaining mystery and an old school philosophy of celebrity.<sup>107</sup> Her persona and her bald-faced pursuit of publicity for herself created a mythology wrapped up in the city of Los Angeles and the larger trends of celebrity going into the twentieth century, creating a blueprint for those that came after her.

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<sup>105</sup> Angelyne, (1995, World Artists Home Video).

<sup>106</sup> Nicola Vinovrški, “Casanova: A Case Study of Celebrity in 18th Century Europe.” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung. Supplement*, no. 32 (2019): 99-120, doi: 10.2307/26836213; Nicola Vinovrški & Robert van Krieken, “New Directions in the History of Celebrity: Case Studies and Critical Perspectives,” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung. Supplement*, no. 32 (2019): 7-16.

<sup>107</sup> Martinez, “A Fantasy Named Angelyne.’

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# GIANT OF THE JAZZ AGE: The Literary Celebrity of F. Scott Fitzgerald

Nik Clark

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*An indelible symbol of the early twentieth century, F. Scott Fitzgerald meticulously connected himself to the excess and debauchery of the Jazz Age. With the publication of his first novel, This Side of Paradise, Fitzgerald thrust himself into the world of literary celebrity. His poignant satire and tragic dramatization defined a generation, imbuing the disillusioned masses with a new raison d'être. By carefully curating his own promotional media narrative, Scott was able to fasten himself to Lost Generation youth culture and the privileged sphere of elite American academia. Moreover, he used professional esteem to bolster his role as an arbiter of Jazz Age social conventions. Through a comprehensive analysis of his personal musings, this essay will reveal how Fitzgerald employed his celebrity to fashion an enduring literary identity.*

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“It was always the becoming he dreamed of, never the being.”<sup>1</sup> At the time that F. Scott Fitzgerald penned this line, he was but a mystery to a public that would soon stoke his authorial flame through ardent idolization of both his person and his writing. An immutable symbol of the Jazz Age, F. Scott Fitzgerald immortalized the glamour, animation, and tragedy of 1920s America. Fitzgerald’s literary celebrity was unprecedented, enveloping both himself and his writing. As Matthew Bruccoli noted in his biography of Fitzgerald, “I feel that Scott’s greatest contribution was the dramatization of a heart-broken and despairing era, giving it a new *raison d’être* in the sense of tragic courage with which he endowed it.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, Fitzgerald was both a composer and a product of his generation. With the publication of *This Side of Paradise* at the onset of his career in 1920, he irrevocably connected himself to the hedonistic culture of the Jazz Age youth. His writing sought to analyze, dramatize, and satirize his own life, as well as comment on the various social phenomena of the early twentieth century. Speculating on concepts like feminism, marriage, debauchery, and youth culture, Fitzgerald hoped to enshrine the period with his own cultural arbitration. Even after death, his authorial reputation remained a product of those efforts to define his generation, which were ultimately reflected in the lives of his literary characters.

Leading contemporary scholarship surrounding the life and literary celebrity of Fitzgerald begins with the posthumous publication of his biographies. The first, published by Andrew Mizener in 1951, renewed public interest in Fitzgerald following his death but received negative attention due to its short-sighted analysis and distorted anecdotes presenting the author’s life and relationships.<sup>3</sup> While Andrew

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<sup>1</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew J. Bruccoli and Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), xix.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Mizener, *The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951).

Turnbull published an updated analysis of Fitzgerald in 1962, the preeminent source of study on the author remains the work of Matthew Bruccoli, first published in 1981.<sup>4</sup> The thorough and comprehensive scope of Bruccoli's biography paints the most objective portrait of Fitzgerald's life and career yet, as evidenced by its inclusion of more primary sources than any previous. These works provide a valuable cross-sectional analysis of Fitzgerald's life and literary career; this paper will utilize the aforementioned biographies alongside a critical analysis of his personal musings to demonstrate how Fitzgerald constructed his literary identity and acquired authorial acclaim.

In addition to situating itself among existing scholarship about Fitzgerald's professional life, this paper positions itself within the more contemporary field of literary celebrity. Formative authors in this sphere include Joe Moran, Loren Glass, and Aaron Jaffe, all of whom employ literary celebrity as an interpretative lens to connect literature with broad sociocultural phenomena.<sup>5</sup> Glass and Jaffe argue that literary celebrities exist where their popular media presence may not be 'literary' at all, while Moran's analysis argues that literary celebrity both affirms authorial identity and harms individualism. Drawing on the notion that celebrity authors have autonomy, Moran challenges the idea that identity and celebrity are merely imposed on an author. Furthermore, Timothy Galow—modernist literary scholar and associate professor of English—argues that the development of authorial celebrity at the beginning of the twentieth-century is a complex phenomenon that involves a range of elements, including authorial behavior, production, promotion, and public reception.<sup>6</sup> It is alongside Moran and Galow's frameworks that this paper will examine the role of celebrity autonomy, social arbitration, and promotional negotiation in Fitzgerald's professional life to understand how he constructed and managed his own literary celebrity in early twentieth-century America. Moreover, this distinct lens will elucidate valuable insight into the nature of authorial maneuvering and its role in the perpetuation of Modernist literary success.

F. Scott Fitzgerald was largely an autobiographical writer, with both his prose and correspondence demonstrating extensive self-awareness and a desire to cultivate his own personality. Working within early twentieth-century American society and his own associated professional literary esteem, he manipulated his image by carefully curating the promotional media narrative surrounding him. This paper explores several ways in which Fitzgerald navigated his own celebrity in the context of the Jazz Age. To begin, it will focus on his identification with the Lost Generation's youth culture, as Fitzgerald specifically emphasized his connection to collegiate academia and the privileged youth who attended elite American universities as he established himself as their chronicler and symbolic figurehead. Furthermore, it will investigate Fitzgerald's professional esteem to examine how he fashioned himself a cultural expert, using literary celebrity to navigate the challenges of social arbitration. Finally, it will look at his literary celebrity in the 1930s, analyzing the importance of audience, attention, and cultural relevance to show how Fitzgerald navigated a slump in stardom at the end of his career. To evidence these claims, this paper will employ a series of Fitzgerald's autobiographical meditations in the form of personal essays, interviews,

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Scribner, 1962); Bruccoli, *Epic Grandeur*.

<sup>5</sup> Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); Loren Glass, *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity: Stein, Fitzgerald, and the Modern(Ist) Art of Self-Fashioning* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Timothy W. Galow, "Literary Modernism in the Age of Celebrity," *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 2 (April 2010): 313-29.

and correspondence. While published posthumously, many of these sources use original manuscripts and typescripts, lending them Fitzgerald's characteristic style and intimacy. Through a comprehensive analysis of his personal musings, this paper will unravel themes of youthful ambition, professional esteem, and cultural longevity to reveal how Fitzgerald employed his celebrity to fashion an enduring literary identity.

### **The Lost Generation: Identifying with Youth Culture**

F. Scott Fitzgerald consistently emphasized his connection to youth culture to portray himself as a symbol of 'The Lost Generation.' He propagated the belief that he wrote for the youth of his generation, which led to his proclamation as their chronicler and figurehead. As he iterates in an interview with Heywood Broun from the *New York Tribune*, "The wise writer, I think, writes for the youth of his own generation, the critics of the next, and the schoolmasters of ever afterward."<sup>7</sup> This interview took place in 1920, after the publication of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, and it accurately depicts the way in which Fitzgerald negotiated his own promotional media. He used specific language that conferred his own inclusion in the subset of both "wise writers" and "the youth of his generation." In doing so, Fitzgerald implanted the idea of a social dichotomy that he was both a member of and symbol for the Jazz Age youth into public discourse. Advertisements, interviews, and even his own essays herald Fitzgerald as both a writer and a representation of the heedless young characters that populated his early works, further highlighting his young age, impulsive lifestyle, and authorial talent.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the reflection of these notions in both his autobiographical essays and interviews of which he was the subject reveal a pattern of autonomous promotional fashioning. This is most notably evidenced at the onset of the Heywood Broun piece, where he mentioned that the interview was "sent to us by Scribner's," Fitzgerald's publisher.<sup>9</sup> In their own propaganda, Scribner's advertised him as the youngest writer for whom they had ever published a novel.<sup>10</sup> This collaboration between author and publisher helped Fitzgerald to effectively synthesize a compelling narrative of his life and career. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that Scott's influence extended beyond his fictional prose, encompassing the promotional mechanisms behind his own journalistic persona to cultivate the image of a talented and youthful Jazz Age literary icon.

Likewise, Fitzgerald aided his conflation with youth culture and the development of his literary persona by affirming his connection to elite collegiate academia, the subject matter of his novel *This Side of Paradise*. In writing about the early twentieth-century's collegiate youth with the authority of recent experience, Fitzgerald's work mirrors the interests of a privileged young group whose schooling and professional aspirations distinguished them from other social classes. Galow notes of the era that college was quickly becoming an important part of life for white middle-class Americans, with a new class of professional-managerial 'brain' workers emerging.<sup>10</sup> For the members of this privileged group, elite universities provided a basis for shared experiences and culture; for his own part, Fitzgerald was determined to strengthen the bond between his name and the youth culture at Princeton University, despite his failure to graduate. Long after his time at Princeton, interviews, such as that conducted by Gilmore Millen in 1927, still propagated Fitzgerald's affiliation

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman, eds., *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Galow, "Literary Modernism," 313-29.

<sup>9</sup> Bruccoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 123.

with the university. Millen began the interview by introducing “F. Scott Fitzgerald, who left Princeton when he was twenty-one and wrote a book that made every critic in the country hail him as the interpreter of the youth of the Jazz Age.”<sup>11</sup> The nature of this promotional sentiment was quite paradoxical, as it did not condemn Fitzgerald for his inability to graduate but instead likened his departure from Princeton to the monumental success that followed, thereby inferring that Fitzgerald’s professional aspirations were achieved because of his time at the university. This inference ties in with Galow’s observation about the evolving nature of the college-educated working class, as Fitzgerald once again appears in a social dichotomy where he is a product of and symbol for the new class of brain workers. Moreover, at the end of the interview, Millen refers to Fitzgerald as “this affable young Princetonian, who writes about jazz and flappers, and reads and thinks more seriously than most older writers.” Despite having already noted that Fitzgerald left the university, Millen still confers the term “Princetonian” upon the author as a fundamental part of his identity. By the same token, Fitzgerald is described as “affable” and “young,” a characterization that, at the age of thirty-one, had not strayed from the public narrative that surrounded him in his early twenties, thereby affirming and maintaining Fitzgerald’s symbolic connection with the Jazz Age youth even as his own youth faded.

Fitzgerald’s association with Princeton and the young academic elite would present him with the ability to occupy another paradoxical public role as both a representation and an arbiter of youth culture and its associated moral constitution. In some of his earlier publicity material, Fitzgerald used his position within the college-bred social stratum to speculate on the character of the Jazz Age generation. Such supposition is evident in an interview conducted by Marguerite Mooers Marshall and the *New York Evening World* from 1922, in which Fitzgerald was asked about the audacious nature of young married couples. He noted that “The younger generation has been changing all thru the last twenty years ... I put the change up to literature ... All, or nearly all, the famous men and women of history—the kind who left a lasting mark—were, let us say, of broad moral views. Our generation has absorbed all this.”<sup>12</sup> By beginning his response with “the younger generation” and ending it with “our generation,” Fitzgerald meticulously employed language that would appeal to the ethos of the contemporary youth, thereby establishing himself within the very community that he analyzed. As Galow observes, it was Fitzgerald’s personal affiliation with Princeton that granted him the credibility to represent the youth and provide value to “outsiders.”<sup>15</sup> To those within the established subculture of white middle-class Americans, Fitzgerald was a prominent figurehead and a symbol of their shared experience; to those on the periphery, he was a credible spokesman who offered a means of understanding collegiate academia and the contemporary youth. This social dichotomy and self-awareness demonstrate that Fitzgerald’s literary identity was accompanied by a certain level of celebrity autonomy and promotional negotiation.

Similar to his rhetorical maneuvering, Fitzgerald judiciously cultivated his style and personal appearance to truly solidify his identity as the emblem of the early twentieth-century youth elite. As Thomas Alexander Boyd observed in 1922, “His were the features that the average American mind never fails to associate with beauty. But there was a quality in the eye with which the average mind is unfamiliar.”<sup>13</sup> Given that Fitzgerald’s features were presented as such, it is important to consider the standard of male attractiveness in the period, which was not universal and

<sup>11</sup> Bruccoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 82.

<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald, Bruccoli and Baughman, *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Bruccoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 14.

demonstrated a clear racial bias. The facets of beauty that Fitzgerald represented are expounded upon in an article from *Motion Picture Magazine* in 1927, where Margaret Reid mentions that Scott has “Prince-of-Wales hair and eyes that are, I am sure, green. His features are chiseled finely. His mouth draws your attention. It is sensitive, taut, and faintly contemptuous, and even in the flashing smile does not lose the indication of intense pride.”<sup>14</sup> Fitzgerald’s own beauty primarily centered around his facial features, where the physiognomy of his mouth paralleled his distinguished, highbrow, and intellectual persona.<sup>15</sup> For Scott, it was especially prudent to maintain a congenial relationship between his sumptuous visage and his public role as a token of elite American academia, as their concurrence bolstered his efforts to craft a persistent literary identity. While conventionally alluring, Fitzgerald was also deemed by Boyd to possess a unique quality that sets him apart in the mind’s eye. This delineation was most prominent when Scott was compared to his authorial contemporaries by individuals such as Reid, who remarked that, “By all literary standards, he should have been a middle-aged gentleman with too much waistline, too little hair, and steel-rimmed spectacles.”<sup>16</sup> By comparing Fitzgerald’s physical beauty to the predominant male authorial stereotype, his promotional media reinforced the idea that he presented a distinct literary archetype, characterized by an erudite disposition and debonair countenance that effectively paralleled the Lost Generation’s collegiate youth.

Correspondingly, his good looks proved to proliferate the celebrity status that would later allow him to fashion a stylized identity. An anecdote from Brucoli’s biography describes how Fitzgerald’s romanticized physical allure further bolstered his public esteem: “Fitzgerald’s appearance accelerated his elevation to celebrity status. His striking good looks combined with his youth and brilliance to complete the image of the novelist as a romantic figure.”<sup>17</sup> Depictions of his physical appeal once again propagated the notion of Fitzgerald as a young, talented, nonpareil literary icon. As with the gamut of promotional media surrounding his charm, this was a product of personal maneuvering, and Scott certainly made a conscious effort to look and dress the part of a handsome young scholar. Brucoli noted that “he dressed well in Brooks Brothers collegiate style ... It was frequently remarked that Fitzgerald looked like a figure in a collar ad.”<sup>18</sup> In assuming the attire of a Princetonian academic throughout his career, Fitzgerald was able to mold and maintain his polished erudite persona.

As is evident in both photographs and interviews, Fitzgerald employed this sartorial code alongside his youthful features to harness the physical side of his celebrity and manipulate his authorial identity. The effect of this conscientious self-presentation was particularly profound amongst the press, as Fitzgerald was described in a demigod-like fashion, inextricably linking his image to the glamorous privileged youth culture he presents in *This Side of Paradise*. This impact is particularly evident in a 1921 excerpt from the *St. Paul Daily News*, where Boyd proclaims: “The agreeable countenance of a young person who cheerfully regards himself as the center of everything, Scott Fitzgerald is not unlike Amory Blaine, the romantic egotist. His eyes are blue and domineering; nose is Grecian and pleasantly snippy; mouth ‘spoiled and alluring’ like one of his own yellow-haired heroines.”<sup>19</sup> Fitzgerald no longer merely chronicled the early twentieth-century’s impetuous youth but had instead literally and figuratively fashioned himself into their charming hero as his writing,

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<sup>14</sup> Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 91.

<sup>15</sup> Fitzgerald, Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 90.

<sup>17</sup> Brucoli, *Epic of Grandeur*, 119.

<sup>18</sup> Brucoli, *Epic of Grandeur*, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 8.

appearance, and public persona became decisively interconnected. While Scott shaped his celebrity identity in the likeness of his foolhardy young protagonists, he simultaneously became a symbol of his time, irrevocably fastened to the culture of the Jazz Age for those same ideals he was satirizing in his work.

### **Professional Esteem: Identified by Expertise**

Fitzgerald used his authorial acclaim and professional esteem to fashion himself an expert on the morality and culture of Jazz Age society in addition to painting himself as an authority on the youth culture of his time. As an accomplished social satirist and spokesman for his generation, middle-class Americans looked to Fitzgerald for commentary on the reckless and impulsive nature of the Lost Generation youth. Fitzgerald's personal commentary following the release of his second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*, which focuses on themes of youth, marriage, and pleasure, ultimately reveals the way in which he perceived prosperous newly married couples in the early twentieth century to be doomed. When asked by Marguerite Marshall of the *New York Evening World* what was wrong with young married couples in the 1920s, Fitzgerald replied:

First of all, I think it's the way everybody is drinking ... There's the philosophy of ever so many young people to-day. They don't believe in the old standards and authorities, and they're not intelligent enough, many of them, to put a code of morals and conduct in place of the sanctions that have been destroyed for them. They drift. Their attitude toward life might be summed up: This is all. Then what does it matter? We don't care! Let's go!<sup>20</sup>

His literary celebrity granted him authorial autonomy, permitting him to convey his social expertise and condemn the very ideals that he and his generation symbolized. Moreover, as an acclaimed author of such youthful proportions, Fitzgerald existed in a sphere where he could also criticize older generations. In his short essay, *What I Think and Feel at 25*, Fitzgerald proclaims: "I do not like old people. They are always talking about their 'experience' and very few of them have any. In fact, most of them go on making the same mistakes at fifty and believing in the same whitelist of approved twenty-carat lies that they did at seventeen."<sup>21</sup> In essence, Fitzgerald's literary celebrity and professional esteem granted him the ability to become a social arbiter and contribute to the profound Modernist cultural dialogue of the early twentieth-century.

Comparatively, Fitzgerald made additional efforts to classify himself as a highbrow intellectual by simultaneously dramatizing and downplaying his own craft. Galow mentions that "as Fitzgerald's antics kept his face in the newspapers and reinforced his image as a debauched young man, many of the articles written by and about him reiterated other aspects of his persona. Fitzgerald himself was quite fond of emphasizing how effortlessly he produced his popular stories."<sup>22</sup> When asked how long it took to write *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald responded: "To write it—three months, to conceive it—three minutes. To collect the data in it—all my life."<sup>23</sup> Several other interviews contain similar sentiments, leading scholars like Ruth Prigozy to read the repetition and pattern of language as evidence of Fitzgerald's authority over his own publicity.<sup>24</sup> Drastic hyperbolization proved to be an effective use of his celebrity in the media, earning him positive remarks from typically ruthless critics and cementing his intellectual legacy.

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<sup>20</sup> Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Short Autobiography*, ed. James L. W. West III (New York: Scribner, 2011), 21.

<sup>22</sup> Galow, "Literary Modernism."

<sup>23</sup> Fitzgerald, *A Short Autobiography*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 124.

Perhaps the best example of Fitzgerald's self-dramatization comes from an interview that he composed about himself in the spring of 1920. When asked about his next literary endeavors following the publication of his first novel, he responded: "I'll be darned if I know. The scope and depth and breadth of my writings lie in the laps of the gods ... Knowledge must cry out to be known—cry out that only I can know it, and then I'll swim it into safety as I've swum in many things."<sup>25</sup> He exaggerated his literary faculty, likening his own writing to a prophetic experience in a successful attempt to appear effortlessly talented.

In addition to romanticizing his own social expertise and literary prowess, Fitzgerald's arrogance illustrates that his celebrity also strategically situated the appearance of a superior intellect within the framework of his authorial identity. In a letter to a boyhood friend from St. Paul, Minnesota, an exasperated Fitzgerald writes: "It seems to me I've let myself be dominated by 'authorities' for too long—the headmaster of Newman, S.P.A, Princeton, my regiment, my business boss—who knew no more than me, in fact I should say these 5 were all distinctly my mental inferiors. And that's all that counts!"<sup>26</sup> It is evident that his significant literary success altered the way he viewed his own intellect; however, Fitzgerald's donnish arrogance did not diminish his self-awareness. In 1935, he wrote a letter of correspondence to Margaret Case Harriman, candidly iterating: "Almost everything I write in novels goes, for better or worse, into the subconscious of the reader. People have told me years later things like 'The Story of Benjamin Button' in the form of an anecdote, having long forgotten who wrote it. This is probably the most egotistic thing about my writing I've ever put into script or even said."<sup>27</sup> Fitzgerald believed himself to be a truly prolific writer, and it was through his celebrity and arrogant rhetoric that he fashioned the notion of intellectual superiority into an integral element of his literary identity.

### Identity Crisis: Navigating a Slump in Stardom

Throughout the 1930s, Fitzgerald's public visibility declined alongside his rate of publication, altering both his literary identity and the ways in which he could use his celebrity to maintain sociocultural relevance. In this era, he most notably suffered a warped sense of personal identification. As Andrew Turnbull reiterates of Scott's confession to his typist, Laura Guthrie: "I have no patience and when I want something I *want* it. I break people. I am part of the break-up of the times."<sup>28</sup> Fitzgerald effectively likened his identity to that of the Great Depression, believing that he played a fundamental role in the collapse of his own career as well as the social collapse of the 1930s. In a similar vein, Galow argues that Scott reconstructed the divide between his past and present identities, reflecting nostalgically on his earlier, perceivedly ideal self and negatively on his current self.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, Fitzgerald's meticulously curated persona was in utter disarray, prompting him to reassess his cultural and professional eminence.

Under such inimical circumstances, Fitzgerald sought to reflect on the collapse of his Jazz Age literary identity to find solace and reimagine his authorial

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<sup>25</sup> Fitzgerald, *A Short Autobiography*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (New York: Scribner's, 1994), 45.

<sup>27</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Andrew Turnbull (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 527.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 265, quoted in T. Galow, *Writing Celebrity: Stein, Fitzgerald, and the Modern(Ist) Art of Self-Fashioning* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 133.

<sup>29</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 144.

legacy. This notion is most poignantly evidenced in *The Crack Up*, a series of essays and letters originally posthumously published as a collection in 1945. At the onset of the series, he remarked: “Of course all life is a process of breaking down . . . you realize with finality that in some regard you will never be as good a man again.”<sup>30</sup> With three of the collection’s most prominent essays being published in *Esquire* during his lifetime, Fitzgerald often targeted a primarily male audience, appealing to a common fear within the male psyche in order to effectively convey the despairing situation he found himself in. The “good man” he spoke of was thus a representation of his past literary identity, when he was characterized by his acclaim and position at the head of the Jazz Age cultural marketplace—both of which were in steep decline in the 1930s. In observing this decline as a “finality,” Fitzgerald confirmed that he was indeed a product of the Jazz Age, evidenced by the fact that his image no longer resonated as it did throughout the twenties.

Moreover, Fitzgerald worried that he would not be able to maintain the social obligations required to maintain his celebrity status. As he observed of his time spent in profound introspection, “I realized that in those two years . . . I had weaned myself from all the things I used to love—that every act of life from the morning tooth-brush to the friend at dinner had become an effort . . . I saw that even my love for those closest to me was become only an attempt to love, that my casual relations . . . were only what I remembered I *should* do.”<sup>31</sup> He was burdened by the obligatory maintenance of celebrity and acclaimed authorship, which led to his diminished social and literary relevance; however, this is not to say that Fitzgerald was wholeheartedly uninterested in writing for public consumption. In fact, as Galow reflects, he frequently expressed the desire to reshape his literary identity absent the publicity of his notable past.<sup>32</sup> With that in mind, Scott negotiated with Arnold Gingrich, the editor at *Esquire*, to publish his work under the pseudonym Paul Elgin.<sup>33</sup> By tying his work to a different name, Fitzgerald freed himself of the confines of literary celebrity and instead sought authenticity in front of an unbiased audience.

Ultimately, F. Scott Fitzgerald was a paradox. Through literary celebrity, he fashioned himself an immutable symbol of the Jazz Age and its associated excess. His writing and social maneuvering instilled the early twentieth century with a new *raison d’être*. Fitzgerald inextricably linked himself to the Lost Generation’s youth culture and became a symbolic figurehead for highbrow American academia. He presented a means of understanding the heedless young progressives, leading to his role as a cultural interpreter. As a largely autonomous author, Fitzgerald also developed a proclivity for promotional negotiation, frequently using the media’s propaganda to portray his image in the likeness of his ambitious and alluring protagonists. In the same fashion, he wielded professional esteem as a tool for social and moral arbitration. Finally, in the latter half of his career, Fitzgerald reflected on the burden of maintaining such monumental celebrity, wishing instead to reshape his audience and identity. He likened his own failures and the decline of his social relevance to the tragic collapse of society during the Great Depression but utilized his developed celebrity to manufacture a new and enduring literary identity. Building upon the framework of Modernist literary history, this paper provides a base with which to connect further research on the social complexity of early twentieth-century authorial maneuvering. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s profound legacy is a means of understanding how renowned authors negotiate their celebrity and perpetuate their literary success. Using

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<sup>30</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions, 2009), 125.

<sup>31</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, 131-132.

<sup>32</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 131.

<sup>33</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 132.

## GIANT OF THE JAZZ AGE

a similar kaleidoscopic lens, scholars can examine the role of celebrity autonomy, social arbitration, and promotional negotiation in the lives of other prominent Modernist writers to broaden the field of literary celebrity.

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