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CONTENTS

Editors' Introduction	v
Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera <i>Alison Mueller</i> Cornerstone Essay Award	1
A Portrayal of British Women: <i>The Punch</i>, 1900-1928 <i>Sarah E. Oatman</i>	15
Buck v. Bell and Eugenic Sterilization in the United States <i>Kathryn Phillips</i>	39
Ebony and Irony: African-American Soldiers in the Great War <i>Mary Shanahan</i> Peter Schneider Award	47

Editors' Introduction

Since 1980, the Department of History at the University of California, Riverside, has published *Cornerstone* as a way of showcasing the best research papers written by undergraduate students for courses within the Department of History. These papers are chosen by an editorial committee consisting of five graduate students from within the Department of History, supported by members of the faculty and staff. In addition to selecting pieces for publication within the journal, the committee decides on two awards. The Cornerstone Essay Award is conferred to the best essay of the year within the collection. The Peter Schneider Award is conferred to the best essay that focuses on some aspect of American history. Entries in *Cornerstone* are not limited by any time period or geographic location; the editors instead seek out papers that demonstrate originality, a careful, nuanced handling of evidence that pays specific attention to its historical context, and the ability to construct arguments that connect seemingly small pieces of evidence to broader historical processes.

We receive many submissions every year of a very high caliber. It is always a pleasant challenge to try to narrow down our many excellent options into a list of only four items for publication, and we must therefore decline to include many other worthy submissions. This year was a particularly strong one for submissions, and it is thus our pleasure to announce the following papers which merited inclusion in this year's edition of *Cornerstone*: Alison Mueller's "Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera;" Sarah E. Oatman's "A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928;" Kathryn Phillips' "Buck v. Bell and Eugenic Sterilization in the United States;" and Mary Shanahan's "Ebony and Irony: African-American Soldiers in the Great War."

The first paper in our collection, Alison Mueller's "Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera," is also the winner of this year's Cornerstone Essay Award. This paper represents a perfect blend of narrative history and argumentation, as Mueller moves through London's cholera epidemics of the 19th century, tracing not only how these affected the populace of London and the attempts to prevent cholera outbreaks from occurring, but also how these efforts at ending epidemics led to a radical change in the way cholera itself was understood. To this end, Mueller finely situates Dr. John Snow within the context of medical and biological sciences of his time, when cholera was thought to be a particular quality of

odoriferous air. She likewise situates the more practical side of ending London's cholera epidemics, Joseph Bazalgette's construction of the Main Drainage System, within the always impatient context of public opinion as expressed in satirical magazines such as *Punch*. But the true strength of this paper lies in the connection between these developments in medical thought and engineering, a connection that produced, in 1866, a full understanding of the causes and treatment of cholera, even if Dr. John Snow's ideas were not immediately universally well-received.

Sarah E. Oatman, in her essay "A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch, 1900-1928*," also takes specific evidence (in this case, portrayals of women in *Punch*) and connects it to the historiographical debate over the causes of the passage of the Equal Franchise Act in 1928. Rather than ascribing primacy to either the efforts of suffragettes or the social changes caused by the entry of women into the British workforce due to World War I, she treads a line between the two by using cartoons in the satirical magazine *Punch* to demonstrate that British men were concerned with both the activities of suffragettes, both specific individuals like Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, and with the social upheavals caused by the war. These individuals and events are also situated within other broad political and social movements in Britain at the time, particularly questions over Irish Home Rule and the rise of socialist groups in Britain. This broad context makes it possible to demonstrate how the women's suffrage movement was representative of an era fraught with social tension.

Kathryn Phillips' "Buck v. Bell and Eugenic Sterilization in the United States" also contextualizes the debates over eugenic sterilizations in the United States of the late 20s, demonstrating first and foremost that the decision in the trial in question was not so surprising as it might seem to the modern reader. Eugenic sterilization, before the atrocities committed by the Nazis in the 30s and 40s fully came to light, was a completely mainstream idea. It remained so despite, as Phillips points out, a large and growing body of scientific reasoning that demonstrated the futility of attempting to control populations via eugenic sterilization and called into question all of the foundations for a belief not only in its efficacy but in the underlying assumptions of the importance of inherited characteristics in human development instead of environmental factors. But biases among scientists (Arthur Estabrook, for instance, happily attributed 'backwardness' to a 7-month old infant) and especially among the other men involved (Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., the presiding judge, was the son of a eugenicist) ensured a verdict in favor of eugenic sterilization. Phillips also addresses the consequences of this verdict both in the United States and abroad, where it functioned as further proof of the validity of eugenic sterilization.

Our last essay, Mary Shanahan's "Ebony and Irony: African-American Soldiers in the Great War," is also the winner of the Peter Schneider Award. In her paper, she demonstrates that black soldiers serving the United States during World War I faced discrimination both at home and abroad despite their stellar performance. Black soldiers openly wearing uniforms were still subject to harassment in local storefronts and upon their return could expect not parades but lynch mobs. In France, despite the universal commendation of them by French soldiers and their British allies, black soldiers were compelled to remain behind the front in the Services of Supply division (despite this, the first Americans to reach the Rhine were in fact black). Yet rather than passively accepting this seemingly insurmountable discrimination, Shanahan clearly demonstrates that in the eyes of many of these black soldiers, their experiences in World War I only solidified their commitment to fighting for equality upon their return to the United States. As W.E.B. Dubois stated, "We return from fighting. We return fighting." This paper demonstrates a dazzling array of primary source material, extending from traditional historical

sources such as newspapers, memoirs, and letters, to more unique sources such as D.W. Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation*, the lyrics to popular songs of the era, and even documentary material such as applications to military appointments.

While these four students take pride of place in creation of *Cornerstone*, the editors would like to extend our special thanks to others in the Department of History as well. The two most important members of the faculty and staff in the production of *Cornerstone* are Professor Brian D. Lloyd, who has served as the faculty advisor for the journal, and Christina Cuellar, who works with these students as the Department's Undergraduate Advisor and who has been instrumental in organizing the editorial board and having *Cornerstone* published in a physical volume. We would also like to extend our thanks to the following individuals with whom we all work on a daily basis: Prof. James Brennan, the Chair of the Department of History, Prof. Juliette Levy, the department's Graduate Advisor, and Iselda Salgado, the department's Graduate Student Affairs Officer. Without the efforts of these, and the rest of our administrative staff and our faculty advisers, there would be no *Cornerstone*.

As noted, however, the most important thanks must go to our student contributors. It is always an honor to read essays of such high scholarship and to work alongside the students who produced them. *Cornerstone* exists to showcase the best the Department of History has to offer, and it is fitting thus that our gratitude is owed first and foremost to Alison Mueller, Sarah E. Oatman, Kathryn Phillips, and Mary Shanahan.

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Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera

Alison Mueller

An editorial from *The London Times* in 1858, the year of the Great Stink, compares the smell emanating from the Thames River with that of three of the Greek rivers of Hades and the underworld: “Acheron and Styx and Lethe all poured into one volume could not roll such a tide of avenging pestilence. Our indignant British river, furious at being neglected makes its presence felt like a forgotten corpse.”¹ The effluvium of these three rivers of death together would not be as bad as that which the disease ridden Thames was producing. The municipal response to the odors hovering over London proved to be the catalyst which sparked the construction of the world’s first metropolitan sewage system and confirmed the connection between sewage and disease in the scientific community.

The first appearance of cholera in London is recorded as occurring in 1832.² However it continued to ravage the city for the next 35 years, remaining unchecked until the appearance of two heroes: Dr. Jon Snow and Joseph Bazalgette. During this time, the people of Europe saw cholera as an Asiatic disease that had probably been endemic to India long before the first recorded cases in 1817.³ When it arrived in London it became known as a “shock disease,” because “Cholera often struck so fast that patients said it was like being hit with a club.”⁴ This disease was so fast acting that once the first symptoms showed, usually an upset stomach or unusual bowel movement, the victim would be dead within twenty-four to forty-

eight hours⁵ with much pain and suffering as the disease worked its course through the body. According to Sandra Hempel, “Cholera gets its name from the Greek words for ‘bile’- the bitter, brownish fluid secreted by the liver- and ‘to flow;’ in other words, a flow of bile or bilious disease.”⁶ As can be expected, the smell emanating from affected homes or hospitals was terrible and with no end in sight, the city began to panic.

The problem the city was facing was threefold with little promise for a feasible solution. Although there was little in the way of agreement, there were scientists and doctors working on finding the causes of cholera; one such man was Dr. John Snow. He was the first to correlate cholera in London with unsanitary drinking water. However, even with conclusive evidence, his work was ignored until a larger, more dramatic solution was conceived. Once the number of deaths from cholera escalated high enough and the problem became prolific, one engineer, Joseph Bazalgette was appointed by the government in London and presented the modern world with its first metropolitan sewer system to deal with the filth the city produced. The devastation that cholera caused in the city created an atmosphere yearning for change that brought about the building of major city works as well as changes in medical history which eradicated the epidemic disease in London.

The three troubles that London was dealing with were related to the overpopulation as a result of the Industrial Revolution. With new jobs becoming

available in the urban setting, a substantial portion of English society was relocating to make their living in the city. This caused the sewage system already in place to become overloaded and unable to deal with the influx of human runoff that was produced. The next problem was the fact that there was no consensus amongst scientific and political professionals as to how to deal with the problem of cholera or the overloaded sewage system. It was in the midst of this disagreement that Dr. John Snow presented his first findings on the idea that the mixture of drinking water and sewage in the city wells transmitted cholera rather than the popular notion of the time, which postulated that the noxious fumes surrounding the Thames caused the epidemic. Eventually, the amount of deaths arising from cholera, and particularly the smell produced by the backup of sewage in the city, prompted the government to take action. They first created the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers to construct an entirely new system of sewerage to deal with the backup. Unfortunately this commission lacked the leadership and cohesiveness needed to be able to accomplish their goals. The one thing this group had in their favor was the membership of one engineer who began his plans to overhaul the entire city's system. That man was Joseph Bazalgette. The Metropolitan Board of Works, of which Bazalgette was also a member, eventually replaced the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers. After years of dealing with the problem of disagreement and overall lack of action, the occurrence of the "Big Stink" in 1858, the proliferation of the smell of refuse arising from the Thames and its overrun sewers, caused the government to seek immediate action. This resulted in the construction of Bazalgette's underground Main Drainage System, which remedied the problem of excessive sewage and still happens to be in use to this day.

Problems Leading to Change.

In the nineteenth century, three major problems plagued the city of London in regards to the treatment and eradication of cholera. The first was the sheer mass of people who were relocating into the city itself. The second problem was the dire condition of the old sewage system that was in place, which resulted in a disagreement on how to remedy the predicament. The last was the scientific debate which inquired where the disease originated: the water or the air. The fact that professionals and ordinary citizens alike could not agree on how to deal with these problems allowed cholera to spread rampant throughout the city with very little to stop it.

London was the center of industrialization around the world. With the inundation of available jobs in the city resulting from the industrial boom, there was an even greater migration of working class citizens. As quoted in a satirical report by *Punch*, "Now, though it is true that there are in some places as many as thirty people in one apartment, I do not think their case very distressing, because, at all events, they have the advantage of society, which could not be the case if they were residing in separate apartments."⁷ This satirical outlook on the overcrowding is followed by the description of mansions which were "inhabited by one or two people and a few servants." While making a joke about the amounts of people living in poor conditions in the city, this article emphasizes the cramped living spaces of London's newly burgeoning population.

The city administration of London tried their best to curb the movement into the city by enacting laws which banned the building of houses in the city, but this did little to attenuate the problem. Just as in any other large city, the sudden influx of new residents created new dilemmas which the

Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera

city was ill-equipped to handle. In the case of cholera in London, the problem was the amount of sewage produced on a daily basis. The invention and wide spread use of the water closet, which came into use more and more throughout the nineteenth century, further exacerbated the difficulty of sewerage. This is evident in the “Sales by Auction” section of *The Times* as early as 1794, where standard homes are listed for sale and include a water closet as an amenity. The advertisement states, “To be SOLD, an eligible roomy Family HOUSE...The House contains, on the Ground Floor, an Entrance Hall, large Dining- parlour, Butler’s room, Store-room, Housekeeper’s room, and water closet.”⁸ This is similar to a housing ad today where every home has at least one flushing toilet. With more and more homes and apartments utilizing the water closet, which were becoming connected directly to the sewers, the growing population meant an upsurge in waste as well. By 1858, when London was faced with its worst case of toxic air, “every house in the metropolitan area now emptied its sewage into certain main drains, which discharged their contents into the Thames.”⁹ The widespread use of the water closet was one of the leading causes of the abundance of sewage the city was dealing with on a daily basis. London needed it to be drained somewhere other than the central river where the drinking water for the city was pumped as well.

Due to the fact that England was one of the first to face urbanization as a result of entering the industrial age, the city was therefore faced with the problem of too much sewage and not enough sewers. As Paul Dobraszczyk states in his book, *Into the Belly of the Beast: Exploring London’s Victorian Sewers*, “London’s many rivers – tributaries of the Thames such as Fleet, Westbourne, and Tyburn – had, up until the beginning of the 19th century, provided a

ready means of draining rainwater within the built-up area.”¹⁰ However, with the large amounts of people moving to the city, the old sewage systems did not function properly. As early as 1815, Londoners recognized the need for updated sewage systems. As one writer signed XY said, “yet a plentiful supply of water for domestic purposes is but one degree less necessary, or less salutary, than the sewage of an overgrown metropolis.”¹¹ This article was written in regards to the upkeep needed not only for the sewers, but as a result of their substandard condition involved the pavement and roads as well. With such large numbers of people, the city was quickly drowning in its own excrement, finding it harder to keep up with the necessary renovations.

A report written in 1853 on the Victoria Street sewer states “in many parts the foundations have become so defective...that the sewer is only prevented from collapsing and becoming a total wreck by timbering and planking.”¹² The author, James Simpson, goes on to say “the continual ebb and flow of the tidal water from and into the strats [*sic*] containing the sewers, particularly into those parts excavated at the time of constructing the works, have loosened the earth and destroyed the foundations to a considerable extent...and I am of the opinion this has been chiefly the cause of the sinkings and failure of the sewers in that locality.” Although his report was only one section of the city, the same can be said for the rest of the sewage system because the Thames River was the nexus of the system for the city. As described in an overview of the work done on the sewage system in 1865, one article in *The Times* describes the Thames before the reinvention as “a great open sewer, running through the centre of the metropolis, and poisoning the atmosphere with its noisome exhalations.”¹³

The largest problem London faced regarding the sewer system and the treatment of cholera was the fact that no agreement could be made on two major topics. The first was the fact that the building of new sewage systems was discussed and delayed by those commissioned to build them, until after two outbreaks of the disease had already occurred. This left the people of London dissatisfied with the progress being made by those who were put in charge of the project to fix the sewers in the late 1840's. The second and most important was the lack of knowledge about the disease of cholera itself. These two sets of disagreements led to arguments which were played out in the public eye through *The Times*, and helped delay the progress towards cleaning up the city and ridding it of cholera.

The first group established to create the new sewerage system in London was the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers in 1849¹⁴. By July of the same year, the commission was facing criticism for their lack of progress. One editorial stated, "instead of working together, and collecting from the best authorities the evidence most serviceable to the matter in hand, the commission subdivided itself into private committees, which carried on a series of disconnected and inconclusive experiments, costly to the public, but bear only in a remote and insignificant degree upon the great question at issue."¹⁵ In fact, the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers, only newly created, was quickly seen as a useless group unable to clean up the city. A second editorial from *The Times* in October of 1849 states, "Public opinion requires little further evidence or enlightenment on the subject of the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers. This sanitary council is wholly inefficient and useless for any other purposes."¹⁶ These articles were placed in *The Times* for the daily readers everyone to see. It would seem

natural that no agreement could have been reached with such prejudiced information being publicized on such a regular basis. At this point there had been so much debate between the commissioners as to the correct way to proceed with their charge that no resolution had been made. By January 1850, the public was outraged at what little progress had been made by the commission that was supposed to be cleansing the city especially because the death rate of cholera was climbing ever higher.

Along with the lack of progress of new sewage systems, an even larger debate concerning the causes and treatments of cholera in London were circulating. In a letter to the editor of *The Times* in 1854, William Farr states, "It has been the painful duty of the Registrar-General to announce, within a few weeks, the deaths of more than 12,000 of the inhabitants of London from cholera and diarrhea."¹⁷ The sheer volume of deaths such as this required an explanation and a cure to be found immediately. The common theory was that cholera and epidemic diseases in general were spread through the toxic airs, which is commonly known as miasma. While little was known about cholera and its treatment, an advertisement in *The Times* for ginger brandy claimed that it was "a decided preventive to cholera and sea sickness."¹⁸ According to the New Commissioners of Sewers in 1847, "cholera is not contagious; its progress coincides with the line of rivers and watercourses; in towns it prevails most in the dampest and poorest neighborhoods; humid and impure air are its great predisposing causes."¹⁹ This statement epitomizes the prevailing medical theory of the time, which surmised that the stench was rising from the inadequate sewers was the culprit since the deteriorating air quality coincided with the escalation of the sickness. Therefore, in theory, by ridding the

Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera

city of bad air quality, the cases of cholera would disappear.

At the time, London thought it could rid itself of cholera by clearing the cloud of odor that was forming as a result of the sickness and filth. In 1846, S.R. Goodman wrote in *The Times* asking that the sewers:

...let out water during the night so as thoroughly to flush and clear the several gulleys and drains within their districts, and thereby prevent in a great measure those noxious exhalations in the atmosphere which are constantly emitted from the decayed animal and vegetable matter in the sewers, and which are considered by the highest medical authorities the chief cause of the formidable disease above referred to (cholera).²⁰

This same idea was used two years later by Edwin Chadwick when he decided to pump the filth from the cesspools by sewer directly into the Thames.²¹ Unfortunately, now the same water being drawn up by wells from the aqueduct and the river was being polluted with the filth the city was trying to eliminate.

One man had a decidedly different theory as to the etiology of cholera. Dr. John Snow was born in 1813 in a poor area of the town of York.²² He grew up in a large family with little money and little social status. Nevertheless, he soon was in the service of Queen Victoria because of his work with chloroform as an anesthetic during pregnancy.²³ He assisted her in the births of two of her children at the request of her royal doctors. Even with this reputable beginning working with the newly

popularized anesthetics, Snow's work went down in history because he dedicated his later life to the study of the proliferation of cholera in London. As one letter written in 1885 describes him, Dr. Snow was "one who shortened his own life in his arduous labours for the preservation of the lives of others."²⁴ The writer, Thomas Snow, also says of Dr. Snow's studies that "he did, indeed, prove by a *catena* of incontrovertible facts that cholera was largely propagated by water thus tainted."²⁵ This was the basis of Dr. Snow's studies, which took him many years and much trouble to prove.

In 1854, John Snow was presented with the perfect natural experiment to test his hypothesis of water-borne bacteria as the cause of cholera. Two years previously, the Lambeth Water Company moved its operation to a location up the Thames which was not affected by tides, and therefore was not contaminated with the city's filth as the tides came in. This meant that on the south side of London, people were drawing their water from two different sources. The Lambeth Water Company was clean while the Southwark and Vauxhall were contaminated.²⁶ This would be a perfect test for him to prove his hypothesis against those believing in "bad air" because there was no difference between the homes drawing from the clean water versus those that were drawing from the contaminated one. The air that was permeating the south side of London affected everyone equally. Dr. Snow found that compared with the epidemic of 1848-1849, the mortality of the epidemic which plagued the south side of London in 1854 was nine times higher in the houses supplied by Southwark and Vauxhall than those supplied by Lambeth Water Company.²⁷ This provided Snow with his own conclusive evidence that cholera cases were directly related to the cleanliness of the water being consumed.

Alison Mueller

Dr. Snow knew that because his work was new and contrary to the established miasmatic theory of disease he would need unequivocal evidence to substantiate his initial hypothesis. While still working on his research on the south side, Snow's second opportunity came in 1852. During September of that year, an outbreak of cholera struck the city, which Snow methodically tracked on a map with individual dots marking where each of the deceased lived. The deceased all resided on streets in Soho, which Snow pinpointed to one crucial link: they surrounded the Broad Street Water Pump. After doing much footwork to talk to the relatives of those affected by cholera around Broad Street, he found that "in sixty one cases out of eighty three, the victim either always or sometimes drank from the pump" either because they preferred the taste of the water from that pump or because it was the one closest to their home or business.²⁸ The remaining deaths were hard for Snow to pinpoint to the Broad Street Pump because they either had no relatives, their relatives had disappeared or died, and some might not have known that the deceased went to the pump. In any case, Snow also noticed that certain areas on his map showed little to no deaths related to cholera but were in close proximity with the Broad Street Pump. For example, "the great workhouse in Poland Street" had only 5 out of 535 inmates die of cholera during this time. Snow found out that this workhouse had a pump of its own which supplied their water and never took water from the Broad Street Pump.²⁹ After showing his evidence to local government in Piccadilly they found his research to be unconvincing. Yet because the area lost people at such a fast pace and there was no other explanation, they decided to take the handle off the Broad Street Pump. This resulted in the almost immediate end of cholera cases in the area.³⁰ Yet it was not until the construction and use

of The Main Drainage System by the Metropolitan Board of Works and Joseph Bazalgette that Snow's research was accepted and praised.

Bazalgette.

The answer to ridding London of cholera came in the form of Joseph Bazalgette, who at the time was responding to the problem of too much sewage and "bad air" in the city. In July, 1854, The Metropolitan Commission of Sewers (MCS) selected Bazalgette as chief engineer.³¹ It took Bazalgette two months to devise a plan for creating new sewage systems and repairing the old, less effective ones that were being used. In his report published on September 25, 1854 in *The Times*, he states that the report he presented to the commission is:

...a statement of the nature of the works now in progress under your (MCS's) direction, with reference to the prevalence of disease in London; and a better knowledge of the facts by the public generally will tend to allay the alarm which is at present felt respecting the construction of new sewers.³²

While their intentions were good and Bazalgette's plans were sound, this commission was inadequate for the job they faced. The commissioner of the council states in a meeting on Nov. 30, 1854 that, "a sixpenny rate would not be sufficient to provide proper sewerage for the different districts (of London)."³³ This was in regards to the amount of tax money they appropriated for the sewage works in the city. Along with the debate over the proper course of action to take the lack of revenue

Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera

from taxation to construct the sewer meant the commission came to a standstill. Just as is true today, a raise in taxes, even with the best intentions, does not go over well with the public, especially when the destitute are already sick and dying.

The commission focused on three main projects regarding the sewers in the city. The first and most important to them was creating the main arterial sewers in the city which led the sewage away from the Thames River. The second was the creation of subsidiary sewers which led into the main arterial lines. The third was the construction of the house drainage. As stated in their report on November 30, 1854, “everything had been made subordinate to the main drainage, and no sewer had been constructed which would not fall in with the main drainage scheme.”³⁴ Even though this commission was unable to produce the construction, which was so desperately needed, it provided the backdrop from which Bazalgette based his works in the future.

By 1856, the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers was defunct and their “duties and obligations- some of them of great public urgency” were transferred to the newly created Metropolitan Board of Works.³⁵ Beginning in 1855, the Metropolitan Local Management Act created the Metropolitan Board of Works and set the board to work creating a sewage system that spanned the city.³⁶ As early as January 08, 1856, Bazalgette was named “temporary engineer-in-chief to the board.” Parliament gave this board charge of:

The direct management and control over 166 miles of main sewers partly covered and partly open- namely, 106 miles on the north side of the Thames, and 60 miles on the south side. They had also 27

contracts for new sewers, now in the course of construction, transferred to their control...extending all over the metropolis.³⁷

By the next month, in the public overview of their meeting, Bazalgette was referred to as “the engineer to the board”³⁸ rather than the more temporary title he held the month before. This allowed him to bring his plans to fruition. As such he was charged especially with planning out the new sewers for the city with particular detail to the estimated size and cost for the city of London. These details became the topic of much discussion amongst this new council just as it had with the previous commission and the people of London. In one report Mr. Bazalgette proposed to the board, the expense of “the main drainage of the metropolis on the north side of the Thames...of a gigantic series of public works” is upward of 1,500,000£.³⁹

In time, this board also began to be the target of ridicule in the public eye as being wasteful and disinterested in succeeding in a timely manner. An article published in *Punch* from December, 1856 entitled “Rampant Idiots”, criticizes the board for “instead of attending to the drains, (they) are scrambling up to the corners of the streets, and altering the names thereof.”⁴⁰ In reality, the nomenclature of the streets of London was becoming a problem because “the existing system, under which they had in different parts of the metropolis, in some cases, as many as 50 different streets of the same name.”⁴¹ This posed a logistical problem for the postal service, so the Board of Works with the General Post-office worked on “the most desirable mode of making the proposed alterations.” While they might have come across poorly in the press, the board did aim for making the city

more clean and efficient, though it would take them many years to achieve both.

One problem that the Board of Works faced was the fact that this was such a monumental decision and so many voices needed to be heard on the matter. Beginning with the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers, the engineers in charge of the project heard points of view from every district and engineer in London. Since they were using tax money to construct the future project, they were also obliged to listen to Parliament. Not only that but because they were created by Parliament originally to deal with the crisis so they were obligated to hear their thoughts on the matters brought up in the council. Mr. Ware, a member of the Board of Works, stated in December of 1856 at a board meeting, “they could not remain where they were, nor could they retrace their steps...It was said that they would, to some extent, forfeit their character for independence, and become merely the instruments of the Minister.”⁴² While Bazalgette’s plan did have supporters, it was almost inevitable that dissenters would voice their concerns due to the presence of so many opinions.

Most importantly, those making the final decision were interested in obtaining an unbiased vote from an outside source with an engineering background. Therefore, in December 1856 the Crown-appointed Chief Commissioner of Works, Sir Benjamin Hall,⁴³ selected three men who acted as impartial referees and decided which was best for the city. Those men were, “Captain Douglas Galton, of the Royal Engineers. Mr. Simpson, President of the Institute of Civil Engineers, and Thomas E. Blackwell, who has a high provincial reputation as a civil engineer of some 25 years’ standing.”⁴⁴ These men gathered not only to look over Bazalgette’s plan which was called “Plan B” but to come up with one of their own if they deemed necessary.⁴⁵ In bringing on these

new “referees” to settle the disputes between factions on the project, the commissioners were causing even more of a delay in the construction, and therefore, in the eyes of the public a delay in the decrease of deaths. By October 1857, in spite of the involvement of the referees, the dispute was still unresolved. They “were of the opinion that the Board had not arrived at a wise and proper conclusion on the subject.”⁴⁶ It became obvious to everyone, including the public, that the Board of Works was spinning its wheels. One editorial laid the problem out succinctly when it said, “the Commissioner rejected Mr. Bazalgette’s scheme because it did not carry away the sewage at all, and the Board rejects the Commissioner’s scheme because it does not carry it away in an inexplicable manner. Between the two parties things remain as they were, and the state of the growing metropolis daily becomes worse.”⁴⁷

In 1858, the city of London hit its breaking point when the cholera epidemic rose again to a new height. The most unbearable part of the epidemic to the people was the cloud of foul air that was becoming a permanent fixture around the city. During this year the smell emanating from the Thames and the city itself was the worst it had been, thereby causing the public and the government to call for immediate action. One letter to the editor in July 1858 makes a valid point when the writer said, “if the members of both our Houses were to be suddenly seized with English cholera a committee sitting over the vaporous exhalations of the Thames would soon report that the river must be purified, and the fiat, supported by personal considerations, would be carried out notwithstanding all opposing sponsorship.”⁴⁸ His point being that if the members of Parliament were to start contracting the illness at the same rate as the rest of the population, especially the

Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera

poorer population, the problem would be dealt with much quicker.

Whether a coincidence or not, this point was brought up in Parliament in the House of Commons only five days later. It was discussed that “it had during the last few weeks been impossible for members to discharge their duties in the committee rooms, and latterly even in the House itself, without intolerable discomfort.”⁴⁹ It then goes on to say that the putrid air was not just present around Parliament but in fact “the air of all that part of the metropolis was so poisoned that a few weeks or even a few days of high temperature might produce a pestilence...as had not been known since the time of the great plague.”⁵⁰ The writer in *The Times* five days before this speech was correct in his estimations. The putrid air that was covering London, even the wealthy Parliament members, did in fact spark the decision to begin work on the sewers regardless of the cost.

On August 11, 1858, the Metropolitan Board of Works “came to a resolution, passed almost unanimously, affirming that the scheme of drainage recommended in the report of Messrs. Bidder, Hawksley, and Bazalgette was the most suited for the requirements of the metropolis.”⁵¹ This meant that though other plans had been proposed and studied, Bazalgette’s plan was the one used for saving the city from its own filth. By October 1858, the Board of Works was on its way to finding the men and the resources required to build such a massive work in the middle of London.

Building the Sewers.

After years of debate amongst the different commissions, commissioners, and the public as to the best plan to follow regarding the sewerage of London, Bazalgette was given the go ahead and the

Board of Works commenced construction almost immediately. In a classified advertisement in *The Times* from Jun 25, 1859, The Metropolitan Board of Works announced publicly their intent, “with all convenient speed, to CONSTRUCT, under the powers vested in them by the said Acts, certain MAIN DRAINAGE WORKS...and for preventing, as far as may be practicable, the sewage of the metropolis from passing into the river Thames within the metropolis.”⁵² This was a massive step in the process of building the sewage system because it let the people of London know that progress was being made and steps were being taken to help clear the city.

According to a statement made by Bazalgette, “the works are to be executed in the best and most substantial manner, with materials of the best and most approved quality, to the full and entire satisfaction of the Board and the engineer.”⁵³ The goal of Bazalgette’s Main Drainage system as it was called was to create a labyrinth of sewers which intersected one another in order to pull the sewage from the high ground to the low ground and empty it below the city where the filth could not intrude on the city itself. Paul Dobraszcyk describes the system as resembling, “the form of a tree: the smallest twigs representing the household drains; the larger branches the street sewers; the largest branches and trunk the main drainage system; with the whole arrangement of twigs, branches, and trunk representing the city’s complete sewerage system.”⁵⁴

Once construction was started, Bazalgette and the Board of Works were concerned with the materials to be used. They were spending an immense amount of money on this project which needed to be able to stand the test of time and sewage. One such suggestion was brought up in a meeting of the board; Mr. Howes proposed they consult “eminent antiquaries” on the

best type of materials to be used because “he had in his possession pieces of pottery 1,700 years old, which are still as fresh as if they had been made yesterday.”⁵⁵ Mr. Howes’s point was to find the chemical makeup of the ancient materials to see what made them last for such a long time and remain in such good condition. They could then use the same composition in order to maintain the same durability in the sewer materials. While the board did not readily accept his idea in particular, they did see the necessity in consulting professionals to find the best cement to be used. The material finally chosen to be used was called Portland cement. One article mentions the usefulness of Portland cement to civil engineers over the previous twenty years is second only to metal itself.⁵⁶

Although work had commenced the newspapers in London were not satisfied with the progress made. Just one month after the announcement of construction on the sewers, *The Times* released a story recalling the history of the board and stated the following, “every new drain has only increased the already gigantic evils of a system which has now become unendurable, and which, but for the means that have at length been taken to mitigate and abolish it, must at last have resulted in making a perfect plague-spot of the metropolis.”⁵⁷ After ten years of debate and delay, the Main Drainage system was beginning to take form and yet the public was understandably unconvinced. In many cases this had to do with the fact that the death toll was still rising in the city due to disease. It is interesting to note that in the very same article quoted above, one of the authors’ last statements is as follows:

More than 2,000 men are employed on this part of the work, and the whole will require about 40,000,000

bricks and many thousands of tons of mortar to complete it. So vast is the undertaking, and so colossal are its proportions, that but for its having an important and most beneficial purpose in view, it would almost remind the spectator of the gigantic and meaningless works which the Egyptians seem to have erected, apparently only to excite the astonishment of after ages.⁵⁸

While recognizing the usefulness of the project and the resources being directed at it, the author was unhappy with the size of the system itself. He believed it to be wasteful, and compared it to the ancient pyramids erected in Egypt which he deemed lavish as well. The city’s population knew the necessity of the work being done yet at the same time they were frustrated by the slow progress being made up until construction finally began.

On top of the delays in work, the public was faced with yet another reason to criticize the Main Drainage project. Three major accidents left the people of London weary of the construction project because of the dangers it posed not only to the workers but to the public as well. The first happened on May 28, 1862 in the area of Church-street Shoreditch. According to a report from *The Times* the following day, the men working on the sewage system piled large portions of stones on top of the roadway. Under the heavy weight of these stones, a collapse broke the pipes, which produced the gas for the homes and businesses in the neighborhood. This caused the gas to release from the pipes and meet with “the furnace of the engine” thereby causing a massive explosion. Unfortunately, one bystander, a woman named Jane Smith, was set on fire

Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera

and caught under fragments of a nearby business until firemen could free her.⁵⁹ She later died of her wounds.⁶⁰

The next accident happened on July 16, 1862 near King's Cross where a new underground railway station was being constructed right next to the new sewage lines which were being put in at the corner of Acton-street. After a particularly heavy storm had fallen on London that week, it was reported that there was "a sudden rush of water into the works."⁶¹ The article published by *The Times* then described the detail of the accident and its repercussions; one of which was "the cellars and basements of the houses (nearby) were speedily overflowed, and the utmost alarm prevailed."⁶²

While there were no deaths related to this accident, the sewer construction was to blame, not that of the railway which was being built very close to the sewage project. Mr. Bazalgette felt it was his duty to respond the next day in *The Times* to correct the errors in the reporting of this accident. He wrote, "At King's-cross, I believe, the railway contractor had built a temporary wall in a small branch sewer, which burst and allowed the waters to escape into the railway cutting; but I cannot learn that any houses have been flooded thereby, and the result does not appear to have been as serious as has been reported."⁶³

The third accident occurred on April 27, 1863 when a portion of the main drainage collapsed on eight workers underneath.⁶⁴ The collapse left two of the men dead and a third missing. This accident was the deadliest of the three, and created one more case that could have been used against Bazalgette and the safety of the work being done. However, these accidents were not dwelled upon as much as others had been before.

This was because less than a year later, the completion of one of the major

parts of the Main Drainage system was celebrated by the wealthy and poor alike. On April 04, 1865 at the Crossness Pumping Station the ceremony involved "formally starting" the engines that bring the water up to the reservoirs which were built to contain the sewage until they could be taken down river, away from the city, with the tides. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales as well as a multitude of others attended the ceremony. *The Times* described the station as "a perfect shrine of machinery."⁶⁵ An article published on August 31, 1867 describes the Main Drainage system and says the following of Bazalgette: "all the engineering details are perfect, and do Mr. Bazalgette the highest honour."⁶⁶ This was a great accomplishment for Bazalgette after many years of scorn and contempt for his plans as well as his capabilities regarding the building of such a massive sewage system. In that same article, the author relates the amount of materials used to that of the Pyramids of Egypt, this time in praise of Bazalgette and his works.

Sanitation and Changes in Medical History.

While the Board of Works was celebrating their achievement of opening the Main Drainage system, one more problem stood in the way of the vindication of John Snow and his research into water borne cholera: the reappearance of cholera in the London. Ironically the reintroduction of cholera in 1866 helped to prove the theory of John Snow's water borne theory conclusively and put his name down in medical history as, "the father of epidemiology."⁶⁷

In 1866, London witnessed the appearance once again of cholera. This caused the city much distress and by July of that year, the city was again panicking. As one article from *The Times* entitled, "Cholera in the East of London" states,

“There can be no question that cholera in a very malignant form is already raging among us. The Registrar’s Return gives us 346 deaths in the eastern districts.”⁶⁸ This time it was specifically present in the following parishes: Whitechapel, Bethnal Green, Poplar Stepney, Mile End, St. George’s in the East, and Greenwich.⁶⁹ The significance of this epidemic arising in the eastern parishes of London at this time was the fact that “only one part of the system was incomplete and not yet working, namely, the low level main drainage on the northern side, which served the whole of the cholera-stricken parishes.”⁷⁰ By bringing this fact to the public’s attention, *The Times* helped publicize the idea that cholera was indeed linked with the cleanliness of the sewers and the water was proven to be the carrier of the disease.

Unfortunately, dissenters amongst the scientific community disputed Snow’s findings. His research was viewed as erroneous even into the late nineteenth century after London’s new sewers had been installed. One letter to the editor of *The Times* in 1885 states, “I do not believe polluted sites are the cause, or that polluted waters are the cause. I do not believe one bit in microbes... I heard the late Dr. Snow on cholera excreta tainted water being necessary to the production of cholera. I however, have seen that theory disproven on great scale.”⁷¹

Thanks to the innovations in the very foundation of the city of London, Dr. Snow’s work eventually became influential in the eradication of cholera and the creation of sanitary standards throughout the world.

Although he was ahead of his time with his study of epidemic disease, he was able to save hundreds of lives with his studies and the removal of the pump on Broad Street. In an article printed on July 29, 1869, The British Medical Association stated, “the special facts collected by Dr.

Snow prove that one of the great agents in the diffusion of cholera was drinking water...the presence of minute portions of cholera excreta in the water supplied to a district for drinking purposes will be followed by an outbreak of cholera in that district.”⁷² Even with dissent against his work, the work of John Snow is seen as crucial to the eradication of cholera in London as well as the increased need for sewage and water treatment all over the world.

Conclusion.

The eradication of cholera from London in the middle of the nineteenth century can be traced to two main heroes. The first was Dr. John Snow, whose works on the study of cholera and sanitary drinking water led to discoveries about the causes of the disease and saved hundreds of lives in London during this time. The second was Joseph Bazalgette whose work with both the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers and the Metropolitan Board of Works produced the elaborate scheme of underground sewers known as the Main Drainage System. Without these two men and their contributions to their fields, the city of London might have suffered from cholera and its repercussions more excessively than they already had.

Even though Dr. Snow was relatively unheard of in the medical world in mid-nineteenth century London, his work in the south of London and Soho in particular with the Broad Street Pump proved to be the first modern study in epidemiology. He is mentioned in one book entitled, *Medical Marvels: The 100 Greatest Advancements in Medicine* as having drawn the link between sewage, drinking water, and the cholera epidemic. While today this connection seems obvious, it would not have been the

Curing London: How the London Sewer System Eradicated Cholera

case without the studies performed by Dr. Snow in London in the 19th century.

Along with Dr. Snow, the work of Joseph Bazalgette amid myriad contrarians and delays resulted in the construction of the massive sewage system running under the city of London today. While his work was originally aimed at ridding the city of its own sewage and clearing it of the “bad air” which was thought to be the cause of cholera during this time, Bazalgette inadvertently contributed to Dr. Snow’s work on water borne disease theory. When the last bit of sewerage was left incomplete in one neighborhood and that particular neighborhood of all the others in the city was struck with cholera, Dr. Snow’s work was deemed valid. From then on, the importance of the separation of drinking water and sewage was of the highest priority to metropolitan cities all over the world.

Notes

¹ *The Times*, June 30, 1858; pg. 9; Issue 23033; col. D.

² *Ibid.*, Sep. 17, 1853; pg. 11; Issue 21536; col. A.

³ Sandra Hempel, *The Strange Case of the Broad Street Pump* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), 33.

⁶ Hempel, 2.

⁷ *Punch*, (July-December 1841).

⁸ *The Times*, Jun. 11, 1794; pg 1; Issue 940611; col. A.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Jun. 26, 1858; pg. 6; Issue 23030; col. D.

¹⁰ Paul Dobraszczyk, *Into the Belly of the Beast: Exploring London’s Victorian Sewers* (Reading: Spire Books, 2009), 16.

¹¹ *The Times*, Dec. 26, 1815; pg 2; Issue 9714, col. D.

¹² *Ibid.*, Jul 27, 1853, Issue 21491; col. F.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Apr. 04, 1865; pg. 11; Issue 25150; col. B.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Jan 11, 1849; pg 5; Issue 20070; col. F.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 21, 1849; pg 6; Issue 20234; col. B.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Oct 01, 1849; pg 4; issue 20295, col. B.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Oct. 09, 1854; pg. 5; issue 21867; col. F.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Apr. 14, 1841; pg 7; issue 17645; col. A.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Dec 06, 1847; pg. 3; issue 19725; col. F.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Jul 31, 1846; pg. 3; issue 19303; col. C.

²¹ Hempel, 160.

²² *Ibid.*, 70.

²³ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁴ *The Times*. Sep. 26, 1885; pg 6; issue 31562; col. B.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Hempel, 164.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 216.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 218.

³¹ *The Times*. Jul. 19, 1854; pg. 12; Issue 21797; col. D.

³² *Ibid.*, Sep. 25, 1854; pg. 9; Issue 21855; col. C.

³³ *Ibid.*, Nov. 30, 1854; pg. 5; Issue 21912; col. E.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Jan. 08, 1856; pg. 8; Issue 22258; col. C.

³⁶ Dobraszczyk, 64.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *The Times*, Feb. 08, 1856; pg. 10; Issue 22280; col. E.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, May 24, 1856; pg. 5; Issue 22376; col. D.

⁴⁰ *Punch*, December 27, 1856. Vol. XXXI, pg. 251.

⁴¹ *The Times*, Apr. 05, 1856; pg. 5; Issue 22334; col. B.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Dec. 17, 1856; pg. 12; Issue 22553; col. E.

⁴³ Dobraszczyk, 64.

⁴⁴ *The Times*, Dec 30, 1856; pg. 7; Issue 22564; col. A.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Oct 15, 1857; pg. 10; Issue 22812; col. C.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Oct 16, 1857; pg 6; Issue 22813; col. D.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Jun 21, 1858; pg. 6; issue 23025; col. E.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Jun 26, 1858; pg. 6; issue 23030; col. D.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 16, 1858; Pg. 12; Issue 23126; col. D.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Jun. 25, 1859; Pg. 5; Issue 23342; col. A.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Oct. 16, 1858; Pg. 12; Issue 23126; col. D.

⁵⁴ Dobraszczyk, 10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 30, 1859; pg. 10. Issue 23138; col. F.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Jan. 14; 1885; pg. 10; Issue 31343; col. A.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Jul. 19, 1859; pg. 5; Issue 23362; col. B.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *The Times*, May 29, 1862; pg. 11; Issue 24258; col. E.

⁶⁰ Dobraszczyk, 107.

⁶¹ *The Times*, Jul. 18, 1862; pg. 6; Issue 24301; col. A.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Jul. 19, 1862; pg. 7; Issue 24302; col. F.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Apr. 28, 1863; pg. 10; Issue 24544; col. C.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Apr. 05, 1865, pg. 5; Issue 25151; col. F.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Aug. 31, 1867; pg. 9; Issue 25904; col. C.

⁶⁷ Hempel, 165.

⁶⁸ *The Times*, Jul. 28, 1866; pg. 5; Issue 25563; col.

E.

⁶⁹ Charles Creighton, *History of Epidemics in Britain* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1965), 857.

⁷⁰ Creighton, 857.

⁷¹ *The Times*, Sept. 21, 1885; pg 13; issue 31557; col.

F.

⁷² Ibid., Jul. 29, 1869; pg. 5; Issue 26502; col. C.

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

Sarah E. Oatman

The *Punch*, or *The London Charivari*, was a satirical newspaper first published in England in the year 1841. The animated character that was Mr. Punch was created as a tool of humor and satire. Appealing to Britain's elite audiences as well as the working and middle classes, over the years his presence within British culture grew tremendously. The very first article in the debut publication of *The Punch* was titled "The Moral of Punch." In the article, creator Mark Lemon describes Mr. Punch when he explains, "We have considered him a teacher of no mean pretensions, and have, therefore, adopted him as the sponsor for our weekly sheet of pleasant instruction." With each weekly edition of the humorous paper, readers followed the caricatured mascot alongside new historical developments and into each New Year. Mr. Punch provided witty commentary on current events using anecdotes that entertained the British citizenry. Referring to *The Punch's* ability to narrate and satirize topics in *The London Charivari*, art critic Marion Harry Spielmann claims, "None has been too exalted or too powerful for attack; his assaults, in comparison with those of his scurrilous contemporaries, have been moderate and gentlemanly in tone."¹ This paper will focus particularly on how the weekly cartoons and political statements within *The London Charivari* reflected the principles imposed on British culture and the degree to which those expectations inhibited British women. Whether prompted to partake in activism with poise, engage in men's work for victory in wartime, or to

reassume domestic obligations, women were stifled and confined by institutionalized British traditions.

Victorian Feminism.

Nineteenth-century Victorian women were expected to be proper, compassionate, conservative, and subservient. Feminist activism within this time period consisted of efforts to secure further employment for single women and widows and also focused on aiding the health and welfare of young children. Victorian women's rights groups formed during the height of the fight for increased male suffrage. The second Reform Act of 1867 enfranchised male householders, allowing two-thirds of the British male population the right to vote. With a systematic campaign and transition to an almost complete male enfranchisement, twentieth-century women assumed suffrage would soon be extended to them as well.

During the late Victorian era, few contested the cultural tradition that entitled England's men to act in the best interest of their wives and children in the public sphere. A clear example of the expected female role is that of a *Punch* cartoon published on August 13, 1902. As a woman gently knits, readers are reminded that "The man's extremity is the woman's gateway towards change." With knowledge of the practice of virtual representation, one can come to the conclusion that the word extremity most likely refers to the husband's hands and metaphorically to his ability to fulfill the duty of representing his wife and family

efficiently within the public realm. John Stuart Mill, elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) in 1865, was one of the first male advocates for women's rights and chastised the institutionalized tradition of virtual representation. Co-written with his wife Harriet Taylor Mill, in 1869 Mill published "The Subjection of Women" proclaiming the belief that female emancipation would also benefit Britain's men. On March 30, 1867 a cartoon titled "Mill's Logic or Franchise for Females" was published in *The Punch* showing Mill escorting a group of women through an annoyed congregation of MPs. Mill's character captures the sentiment regarding female enfranchisement when he says, "Pray clear the way, for these here a-persons." While Mill was no longer a Member of Parliament after 1868, there were a number of fellow liberal members who also lobbied for women's rights, including Henry Fawcett, husband of Millicent Fawcett, future president of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS).² In the last decade of the century upper-class British women witnessed marginal rewards as some slowly made progress in assuming local positions on community education boards. In 1894 women were allowed to vote in local elections via the Local Government Act.

Edwardian Idealism.

In 1900, the main themes surrounding female characters in the various cartoons and poems in *The Punch* reinforced the social expectations placed upon British women. Mothers were satirized placating their children's desires but were also viewed as a tool for societal development. British women were commonly depicted in familiar roles of care giving, and many of the cartoons illustrate interactions with young ones. This glimpse in to the private sphere

of the early twentieth-century British family does not fully portray the gender divide within society but it reflects the existence of required gender roles.

A reoccurring mode of entertainment for Mr. Punch included mocking the related naiveté of women and children. The interactions between women and children in *The Punch* during the turn of the century convey conflict and upheaval. Women were often believed to hold the mind of a child and were therefore best suited as the dominant caregiver in the household. The inability for females to effectively participate in important political and economic matters was attributed to pseudo-science, which blamed biological inadequacies and brain size. Women were considered hyperemotional and unable to possess the intellectual development necessary to maneuver within Britain's model government and society.

The Diversity of British Feminism.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, debates over Irish Home rule greatly affected the strength of the women's rights campaign. The coinciding split within the Labour Party over the Irish issue contributed to further divides in turn of the century feminist ideology. The famous Suffragettes, led by the mother and daughter team of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, were members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). This infamous and eventually militant female suffrage organization was established in 1903, effectively splitting from the NUWSS and its leader, Millicent Fawcett. Fawcett belonged to the Loyalist Unionist Party and had actively denounced Irish Home Rule. Despite factions, the NUWSS continued their campaign and eventually built a solid partnership with their American sisters in

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

the National American Women's Suffrage Association.³

The Pankhurst family believed that the NUWSS had not rallied effectively for female suffrage. Combined with the disunited political system, the limits of mainstream feminist ideology were the main motivations for the new proactive WSPU slogan of "Deeds Not Words." The WSPU coined the term early on in the campaign and its meaning was embodied to the fullest extent as actions taken by WSPU members became increasingly bold and rebellious over a relatively short period of time. Austrian novelist Hermann Bahr praised Britain's Mrs. Pankhurst, claiming she was "The most astounding personality that even England – a country that is for ever turning out new types of genius, has yet produced."⁴

The early years of the women's movement were dominated by conservative policies. All suffragists sought to prove the necessity of female representation in Parliament by demonstrating how giving women the right to vote could improve the domestic sphere of British society. Not to be confused with the more specific group of hostile Suffragettes, the term suffragist refers to any person, Suffragettes included, that campaigned for the vote. Assuming a domestic and moderate stance in terms of suffrage was necessary in order to appeal to the conservative male government, while also attracting upper and middle-class married women to the cause.

Although policy disagreements existed, militant feminists and moderate groups strove for the same goal. British feminism sought "[t]o secure for women the parliamentary vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish the equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community."⁵ The eventual radicalism of the Suffragette platform completely

contradicted the picturesque English wife, who was responsible for the expansion of British civilization. As mothers of the superior race, British women were expected to passively assume their destiny of securing the British family with love, structure, and most of all with the woman's ability to reproduce. During the plight for women's suffrage in Britain, the evolution of the female role within society and the home was reflected in the satirical poems, stories, and cartoons of Mr. Punch's *London Charivari*.

In a cartoon from February 4, 1903, Mr. Punch appears shocked at the amount of Edwardian women being distracted from their domestic duties. The woman missing from the cartoon temporarily abdicated her maternal obligations by spending the morning in leisure by golfing and playing bridge. As Mr. Punch jokingly titled the drawing, she was the "Model Matron." Influenced by the decline in Britain's birth rate during the last half of the nineteenth century, as well as numerous legislative changes giving women greater power within both the public and private realms of society, Britain's social structure was in the midst of a great upheaval. Fearing the destruction of the proper British family and the eradication of Victorian era morals, conservative parties and groups rallied against progressive social changes, sparking strong opposition to women's suffrage.

Anti-Suffragists.

The Women's National Anti-Suffrage League (WNASL) was founded in 1908 and led by conservative novelist Mary Humphrey Ward. The establishment of the WNASL occurred at the peak of the British women's suffrage movement. The WNASL published anti-suffrage newsletters and distributed weekly leaflets. Dozens of local branches were established throughout England and members successfully gathered

thousands of signatures for anti-suffrage petitions to Parliament. Mainstream British media happened to be very pleased to publish articles written by WNASL members and many activists wrote pieces for *The Times* or *The National Review*. During this time the collaboration of the WSPU and the NUWSS was at its greatest. Two years later the WNASL merged with the partnering men's league to form the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage.

Anti-suffrage ideology focused on building ties with traditional conservative feminism, which sought to educate women on the consequences of displacing gender roles and the benefits of a strictly domestic feminist view.⁶ Women involved in the WNASL were mainly from the educated upper class. Humphrey Ward and many of her closest partners attended Oxford. WNASL members declared themselves satisfied with their place in society and claimed that the majority of British women would not feel it was necessary to exercise their right to vote if allowed. During this time Humphrey Ward and Millicent Fawcett attended highly publicized suffrage debates. As the Suffragette tactic grew increasingly volatile it became easier for the anti-suffrage league to recruit even more members from Britain's polarized society. A cartoon from the January 17, 1906 edition of *The London Charivari* shows a sensible woman restraining her "shrieking sister" from storming a Liberal Party Meeting. The activist urges to push forward with her "Votes for Women" flag and combat clothing. The anti-militant proclaims, "You help our cause? Why! You're its worst enemy!" Prominent male anti-suffragists claimed that the tactics of the WSPU confirmed the inability of women to civilly participate within the public realm.

Socialism & Women's Rights.

During the early twentieth century, socialist ideology greatly conflicted with mainstream British feminism. Female socialists were continuously pressured to focus on either their sex or their class in the fight for suffrage. Some activists considered themselves to be Feminist Socialists and others Socialist Feminists. The existing conflict between patriarchy and capitalism not only created a divide in feminisms but also exposed the variety of thought amongst socialist women. Despite variance in ideology, socialism sought a fully "democratic franchise based on the rights of the individual rather than on the possession of property."⁷ For female Socialists the struggle against British capitalism led most to denounce mainstream feminism's acceptance of restrained suffrage via property qualifications.

The socialist movement for adult suffrage originated in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The evolution in policy of both the socialist Independent Labor Party (ILP) and the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) revealed the impact that suffrage had on socialist ideology. The ILP promoted limited female enfranchisement while the SDF lobbied for universal adult suffrage.⁸ This tension between full versus limited suffrage was exacerbated by radical suffragist activism, including Suffragette disobedience. Female socialists felt that upper middle-class feminism undermined the plights of working-class women. The movement's failure to represent the female working class was also used by suffrage opponents as many claimed opposition to the movement because it was not gaining mass support.⁹ During the years 1904-5 controversies erupted with regards to constraining women's suffrage, as Parliament was currently debating the Women's Enfranchisement Bill.

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

Why Militancy?

The British economy of the early twentieth century was negatively impacted by the successful industrialization of the United States and Germany. England's domestic industry lacked new and innovative technology and became incapable of producing goods to the same extent as the U.S. or Germany. The British generations experiencing this relative economic decline became divided over whether the modes of life during the high tide of imperialism, that had achieved such international and domestic greatness, were sufficient for current economic and political success. Coinciding with an international shift towards domestic industrial output, Britain's imperial scheme of controlling and distributing world resources fell in to an inferior category. The potential irrelevance of the Empire, not to mention the opinion on women's suffrage in Islamic areas of the Empire, intertwined with domestic pressures to form a strong sentiment against the enfranchisement of women in Britain.

An important factor in the failings of female suffrage legislation leading up to the First World War was that most acts had been modeled after the path of male enfranchisement. Allowing women to vote under terms of property ownership or salary qualifications would have enfranchised around one million single women and widows.¹⁰ This demographic was undoubtedly unappealing to members of parliament and women were continuously unrecognized for their public contributions until they rose to form the majority workforce during the First World War. Emmeline Pankhurst made many remarks during the years of militancy in which she credited the government with fostering the Suffragette strategy.

A lack of educational, economic, and personal opportunities cultivated a sense of helplessness among British women and in turn prompted radical protest. In essence, Suffragettes sought to incite as much chaos as was necessary to be recognized and represented within Parliament. However it must be noted that not one person died or was violently harmed by a Suffragette or at any WSPU protest. This specific form of militancy focused on public disobedience and vandalism, not violent acts of rebellion. Depicting the everyday experiences of a Member of Parliament, a November 11, 1908 edition of *The Punch* included a cartoon captioned, "Study of an earnest MP." The man was walking along the sidewalk and suddenly became surrounded by hysterical women protesting for the vote. A Suffragette was even climbing out from underneath the city's sewer system to attack the oncoming MP. How long the battle between Britain's government and its female constituency would have continued, if not for World War I, remains questionable.

The first account of the transition to militancy was the 1905 arrest of Emmeline Pankhurst, her daughter Christabel, and their fellow WSPU member Annie Kenney. Successfully disturbing a Liberal Party meeting, a parade of suffragettes prompted a "Votes for Women" demonstration in front of the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. Following the restraint and difficulty presented by the British police, Christabel purposefully spat in the face of an officer. The subsequent arrests of a number of Suffragettes became a highly controversial and discussed topic, and all women involved refused to pay their fines.¹¹

Reaction to Militancy.

Reinforcing the general angst regarding the emerging female repertoire of unconventional duties, pleasures, and

attitudes, older male generations pleaded for women to remain conservative. This appeal to Britain's women reflected the necessity for moderate feminism to endorse center left propositions in order to gain mass support. Male fear of societal degradation compelled feminism to prove that Britain's new liberated and educated women had no intention of abandoning domestic family life. In a poem written in the style of an advice column, Mr. Punch's "Almanack from 1906" recounted the characteristics of Britain's "New Mother." Small cartoons surround the lines and readers see a mother reading a book, playing golf while her husband watches, and one last depiction of her forcefully scolding her children. Mr. Punch ends with the lines: "But this freak of the feminine gender, though apt our annoyance to move, is mostly a youthful offender, and seldom too old to improve. When she's schooled by adversity's training, and grows less ungentle in mind, there's a hope of her possibly gaining, some hold on the hearts of her kind."

The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies serves as an example of women who refused to detach themselves from conservative influences. With a following of over 100,000 members before the war, the dozens of female suffrage groups proved to be a consistent organization that relied on voicing their conservative ethics and intelligence to achieve their means. The beginning years of Suffragette militancy witnessed a partnership between the Pankhursts and Fawcett. The eventual endorsement of arson by the WSPU would lead Fawcett to later cut ties with the organization.

Over the next few years, the new Prime Minister Henry Asquith and the House of Lords continuously denied potential suffrage legislation. Righteously convinced it was the only way to promote change, the Suffragettes increased their

semi-violent tactics. In 1907 liberal MP W. H. Dickinson introduced a suffrage bill that would not disqualify married women from voting in Parliamentary elections. Unfortunately, it was argued that the bill discriminated against working-class women, as the ability to vote was contingent on property ownership and was discarded. Another potential suffrage bill was rejected in 1908, making it the twenty-third bill on the issue denied since 1867.¹²

In a 1908 speech from her trial for insinuating chaos at a political rally, Emmeline Pankhurst claimed, "When women get the vote, they will take very much better care of babies than men have been able to do."¹³ Another reference to the domestic arena, Pankhurst based her argument upon Britain's fears regarding the dwindling birth rate, the emergence of social welfare, and also the current economic state. Feminists believed society needed their input regarding the health of Britain's women and children. The British government simultaneously blamed female insubordination for the social and economic decline that feminists were protesting against. Single and working-class women, who assumed unconventional roles in British society, were profoundly disadvantaged by Britain's institutionalized discrimination.

It was very common for *Punch* cartoons to depict women as incapable of accomplishing things men were accustomed to doing. This included driving vehicles, riding horses and bicycles, as well as playing sports. A 1906 *Punch* cartoon shows a sketch of a group of women huddled around one lady who has just shot a bottle of wine off the top of a fence. The woman with good aim describes the bottle when she says, "It turned out to be a full one, which the men had put away for final refreshers, and instead of complimenting me on my good shooting, they were quite stuffy about it!" In

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

this instance, the female had successfully completed the supposedly male-only task though her mental error still portrayed her as less able. In a 1907 series of *Punch* cartoons themed “Women’s Triumph in the Professions,” women are depicted as unable to assume traditionally male dominated positions. For instance, “Women’s Triumph Within Dentistry” depicted a group of five ladies struggling to assist one male patient. One woman exclaims, “Hold on, I’ll ring for more help!” Women were considered one-sided beings, biologically unequipped for physical and mental strain.

Funding the Women’s Social & Political Union.

The WSPU received economic support and guidance from Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, a wealthy couple fully committed to the cause of women’s suffrage. Their joint last name reflected their genuine dedication towards gender equality and together with the Pankhursts, the WSPU was funded and organized with efficiency and professionalism.¹⁴ Members of the WSPU were mainly middle and upper-class women who were able to spend time and money away from the home. Large processions of women would parade through the streets of London showcasing the WSPU’s signature colors of purple, white, and green. Purple signified royalty and tradition, the color white for purity, and green represented hope and rejuvenation.¹⁵

Aside from their militant actions, to spread the cause for women’s rights the WSPU also advertised and manufactured Suffragette items. In 1907 the WSPU’s “Votes for Women” newspaper was established and became increasingly popular with working-class and lower middle-class women who could not donate their time to the cause. Most of the organizations’

revenue was accrued by newspaper sales, though there were WSPU shops established throughout the entire country. Items such as tea, jewelry, literature, tobacco, blouses, stationary, belts, bags, sashes, ribbons, and of course, the Suffragette Uniform were manufactured and displayed for sale. In fact, many married British women found deep satisfaction knowing their husbands were drinking tea that was purchased in support for women’s rights, most likely paid for with his earnings. Shop-keeping was one of the first opportunities for women to engage in everyday commerce outside of the domestic arena.¹⁶ Working-class women were able to purchase affordable pins, brooches and badges adorned with the Suffragette colors. The ability to market the movement to working-class women was a huge turning point for British feminism. The coalition between feminist organizations and the working class proved to be a crucial element in the struggle for female suffrage.

Showcasing the divide between upper middle-class suffragists and working-class women, Mr. Punch portrays women merchants on the streets of Britain in 1908. The Suffragettes received good business marketing their ladies’ newspaper while other women selling flowers watched angrily as no customers visited their stand. It depicts lower-class women, who relied on their own earnings to support their families, as reluctant to buy Suffragette propaganda. The cartoon does not reflect the law. However, there was a short period of time when Suffragettes were not allowed to promote their campaign on city streets. Suffragettes were forced to stand at the edge of the road and could not step over the curb on to the sidewalk. The obstacles conquered during the Suffragette’s quest to market “Votes for Women” expressed the government’s intention of preventing the accumulation of working-class support for women’s rights. By trying to portray the

WSPU platform as an ultra-radical misrepresentation of British women's circumstances, anti-suffrage activism focused efforts towards exposing the true female majority.

A New Decade.

British society was saturated with uncertainty during the first years of the twentieth century. Mr. Punch recalled the years in a 1911 issue, proclaiming, "If the ten years had to be described swiftly, they might be called, for England as a whole, the era of universal golf, of bridge and motoring, of suffragettes, and flying." A July 19, 1911 issue of *The Punch* included a cartoon captioned "The Suffragette that Knew Jiu-Jitsu: the Arrest." The woman stands in a defensive pose guarding her "Votes for Women" sign while policemen surround her with their batons, obviously unable to contain the crazed female. If the Suffragettes had attained but one thing from militancy it was public recognition. Nevertheless the greatest acts of rebellion were yet to come and the public chaos created by the Suffragettes would force the issue of female suffrage to be dealt with in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

Demonstrating the elite male indifference towards Suffragettes and also the complete abhorrence of women's enfranchisement, a *Punch* cartoon from 1910 shows a rather robust wealthy gentlemen walking by a "Votes for Women" newspaper stand. He tosses the ladies a penny and prompts them to go ahead and keep their paper. As women were continuously being drawn from the home, society feared younger generations would be impacted the harshest. With new forms of dancing, music, and entertainment, Mr. Punch drew his readers another example of the modern British mother's shortcomings.

As a nurse plays loud music to soothe a crying baby, the mother is shown out to dinner with her husband and another couple. Here was "Another Triumph of Science," as the images were titled. The perpetuated theme of inadequate maternal care and the question of what would happen to the new generation was a revolving issue.

The Evolution of Suffragette Militancy.

The militant Suffragettes progressed through three stages of militancy leading up to World War I. The first stage was civil disobedience, which began with Suffragettes heckling Members of Parliament and chaining themselves to public railings. Women who were arrested for disturbing the peace or other petty crimes usually invited arrest and continued to choose jail time instead of fines or bail. The first woman to declare a hunger strike while incarcerated was Marion Wallace-Dunlop, who was held in North London's Holloway Prison. Many women began fasting and would afterwards recount tales of brutal force feedings at the hands of British doctors and guardsmen. In 1909 Wallace-Dunlop spent 91 days refusing food or drink, and was subsequently released for health reasons. Other jailed Suffragettes soon adopted the same strategy and eventually in 1913 the "Cat and Mouse Act" was initiated. The act allowed prisons to keep the women in custody up until almost complete starvation. Earlier that year King George V dictated a letter to the Prime Minister and his Parliament. A portion of the letter claimed "His Majesty cannot help feeling that there is something shocking, if not almost cruel, in the operation to which these insensate women are subjected through their refusal to take necessary nourishment."¹⁷ Under the act, Holloway Jail, Strangeways Prison in Manchester and others around the country released the militants with the condition that

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

they would be rearrested as soon as their health permitted. For Suffragettes this allowed previously imprisoned women to go into hiding and to continue committing militant acts. More importantly it also enabled women to spread word of the atrocities taking place within Britain's prisons and jails.

Following civil disobedience, the next stage of militancy involved the destruction of public property. The Suffragettes led groups of women on rampages smashing government windows with hammers and bags of rocks. The vicious cycle of arrest, hunger strike, and destruction of property continued until WSPU members began using arson as their means of attack. The main catalyst for this more intense mode of public protest was the destruction of the Conciliation Bill. The House of Commons denied further implementation of the bill, which would have given women who were currently allowed to vote in local elections full enfranchisement. On November 18, 1910 Suffragette rioters gathered around the Palace of Westminster in protest. Police used forceful means against the women and rioting lasted for over six hours. 120 women were arrested and dozens injured by police.¹⁸

In response to Parliament's continued injustice upon women, on November 21, 1911 Suffragettes initiated a widespread attack on the city of London, resulting in over 200 arrests. Militants began setting churches on fire, attacking historical buildings, destroying public art in museums, blowing up mail boxes and cars, and some even attacked golf courses with chemical acid.¹⁹ The effect on the game of golf is witnessed in a *Punch* cartoon from 1913, where the words "Votes for Women" are burned into the putting green. Men stare puzzlingly at the hole, not sure how to make their shot.

During an anti-suffrage gathering in Bristol, Cabinet Member Charles Hobhouse asserted that the women's movement did not contain the popular support male reform protests had. He blamed that popular feeling for the 1832 burning of Nottingham Castle and the 1867 scene in Hyde Park, which far surpassed that of the present tone. By comparing female protests to that of men, Emmeline-Pethick Lawrence claimed Mr. Hobhouse assumed "the grave responsibility of inciting them to serious forms of violence in comparison with which Mrs. Pankhurst's exhortation is mildness itself."²⁰

The first Suffragette act of arson was committed by Christabel Pankhurst, and it was this particular faction of Suffragette militancy that grew to be the parting grievance between the Pethick-Lawrences and the WSPU. Christabel and fellow WSPU member Mary Richardson devised plans to set fire to the houses of prominent Parliamentary men. This included Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George. Women also set fire to railway stations, golf course clubs, cricket arenas, and destroyed thousands of pieces of mail by lighting London's postal boxes ablaze. The fears of attacks by Suffragettes were frequently represented within *The Punch*. One 1913 cartoon shows a train station owner shouting to another, warning him to watch out for the lone woman sitting on a faraway bench, fearing she might blow up his station. This peak of violence in the Suffragette strategy lasted until the beginning of the war, when militancy ceased and the WSPU transferred their resources to the war effort.

One of the most famous Suffragette acts during this time was the debated suicide of Emily Davison. At the yearly Epsom Derby on June 4, 1913, armed with a "Votes for Women" sign, Davison jumped the railings of the track during the race and was trampled and killed by the King's horse.

Thousands of women attended her funeral and a large memorial procession took place in London to commemorate the fallen Suffragette. Close to a year later *the Punch* published a cartoon captioned “Race Course of the Near Future: Suffragette Proof.” The sketch of the course depicted horses rounding the corner of the chain link covered track, an obvious reference to Davison’s jump to her death.

During the years right before the war many Suffragettes, including the Pankhurst family, visited the United States and were able to witness the direct effects of the American women’s movement. British and American women collaborated in terms of philosophies and literature but they also exchanged personnel. Many women were members of both associations and travelled back and forth promoting universal female suffrage.²¹ During this time the WSPU suffered from splits within the party, as the Pethick-Lawrences were no longer involved in campaigning or fundraising. Despite factions in organizational framework, rising numbers of women expressed interest in the WSPU and other suffrage activities. The ability for militant women to eventually cease protests and adopt a pro-war position represented a victory for the British government. Some historians point to the importance of World War I in regards to female enfranchisement, others to the combination of pre-war chaos and post-war social structure. Both the activities of British feminists and the shift in female wartime occupations significantly impacted Parliament’s acceptance of limited female suffrage. Ultimately it was only through the efforts put forth by women during World War I which proved female worth to the public realm of British society.

English Feminism during the First World War.

The change in female occupations throughout World War I is considerably obvious within *The Punch*. Wartime produced cartoons and poems reinforcing family values and British nationalism. In November of 1914 *The Punch* published a cartoon titled “History of a Pair of Mittens.” There are four sketches on the full-page cartoon, with the first three of a young woman arduously trying to conquer the craft of knitting. The soldier that receives the pair of uneven mittens ends up using one for his hands and one for his feet. The comedy behind the inability to knit for a soldier is part of a common wartime theme in which women were urged to adopt ways of contributing to the war. The inability to participate in the war effort was an effective propaganda tool used by the British government.

The beginning of the war sparked a truce between the government and the Suffragettes. All activists were released from prison or jail and the Pankhurst’s WSPU refocused its efforts towards the war. Mrs. Pankhurst spoke at a number of WSPU events advocating for adequate training for women in the workforce and believed the government was not proactive in recruiting women for wartime work. To improve the morale of female workers, Mrs. Pankhurst worked closely with newly appointed Minister of Munitions David Lloyd George. Lloyd George initially only advocated for male laborers but when the King read an article Christabel published in *The Observer*, he requested Lloyd George to seek advice from Mrs. Pankhurst on female labor. MP and WSPU member Sir James Murray delivered the request to Emmeline, who was utterly shocked at Lloyd George’s diplomacy. Numerous members of Parliament were grateful for WSPU support

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

and thought the Pankhurst's war work was much more acceptable than Millicent Fawcett's peace brigade. Mrs. Humphrey Ward of the National League for Opposing Female Suffrage claimed the Pankhurst's to "have been extraordinarily clever!"²²

The NUWSS aided in the war effort by establishing hospitals and advocating for wounded soldiers, some establishments were completely staffed by females. A 1914 *Punch* cartoon showed a sketch of three female nurses surrounded by a soldier that had been wounded at battle. The patient instantly recognizes his nurse and says, "Well mum let bygones be bygones. I was a police constable." The woman was most likely involved in the suffrage movement before the war. Newfound peace between the two reflects the general wartime truce between society, government and progressive female activists. Even though a number of women were mobilized for the war effort, most of the cooperating organizations that formed the NUWSS continued the campaign for female equality after the start of the war.

In the early months of 1915 Chrystal Macmillan, secretary of the British branch of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), urged women from America and all European nations to attend a women's peace conference at the Hague in South Holland. Fawcett's immediate refusal to participate in an international pacifist movement forced a separation between internationalists and nationalists within the NUWSS. To affirm her dedication to the war Fawcett was willing to resign her position as Vice President of the IWSA. Eventually 180 dissenters from the group of NUWSS pacifists signed up to attend the sixth International Congress of Women in the Netherlands.

As a result of wartime legislation that increased the British government's capability to censor and interfere with public

life, anyone who intended to leave the country was forced to apply for permission to exit. Home Secretary Reginald McKenna initially cleared twenty four of the female applicants for exit privileges to attend the conference. Unfortunately in the weeks before the conference Secretary McKenna also remanded passenger traffic on the British Channel, inadvertently allowing only three British women to attend the Congress at The Hague. Having already been out of the country, the three English women in attendance were Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, IWSA Secretary Chrystal Macmillan, and feminist-pacifist Kathleen Courtney. Courtney had worked closely with Fawcett within the NUWSS during the years preceding the war, and as proof of their partnership was dubbed Honorary Secretary of the society.²³

Women in Industry.

In the early years of the twentieth century most working-class women were employed in industrial domestic services such as textile manufacturing and tailoring.²⁴ However by the beginning of the First World War women were employed within the clothing and retail industry, the cotton industry, laundry trade, and within other domestic-based industrial factories. As wartime dawned over Britain and thousands of men volunteered for the military, the barriers between British women and the male dominated labor force continued to deteriorate.

A full-page Mr. Punch sketch published in 1914 displays the "Anomalies of Femininity" by drawing several portraits detailing the duality of Britain's emerging new woman. A woman is shown reading to her children while she is also drawn fancily dressed and enjoying provocative dancing. Not only were women not expected to assume duties outside of the household, but

the various new tasks and pleasures of Britain's new woman invoked an even greater fear within British society. As the war progressed women began assuming non-industrial positions that had been previously denied to them. Such posts included bank clerks, ticket counters, delivery drivers, mail carriers and tram conductors. During this time women were also stepping up to accept positions within the war industry and were able to manufacture munitions along with other various battle provisions. Domestic and textile industries, which had already normally employed women, expanded to include wartime equipment in to their production. Female textile workers manufactured leather, boots, bags, hosiery, medical dressings and more.²⁵

World War I sparked a shift in English humor and culture. Society was challenged to dedicate itself towards the war effort and during the years 1914-18 *The Punch* exemplifies this readjustment in morale. Women are once again commonly seen interacting with their children, explaining matters of war and family sacrifice, but were also depicted assuming predominantly male positions. In a sketch published on December 1, 1915 a woman comes home with a new outfit, and magically transforms extra clothing from her hat, scarf, overcoat, and skirt in to new outfits for her three daughters. On January 26, 1916 a patriotic drawing of a masculine woman tilling a field was captioned "Pro Patria, A Tribute to Women's Work in Wartime." Pro Patria, meaning "for the Fatherland" in Latin, was employed as a motivational tool and was a way of publicly recognizing the female labor force during the war. Contemporary feminists would argue the importance of her muscular portrayal because it relays the incapacity for working women to fulfill the expected standards of femininity. Another wartime

sketch showed two females nurses with one telling the other, "I'm really a University lecturer, but at a time like this we are all human beings." Wartime instilled a sense of British unity and some claim forcefully leveled existing social classes. Rationing, struggle, and wartime sacrifice helped form the large British middle class that would emerge in the 1920's, however a small percentage of elite households would remain unscathed by the dire war economy.

The British government urged women to assist in the fight for their country and even under the harshest of settings women worked more arduously than ever before. Not only were male British workers "exploited by their employers through long hours, poor working conditions and inadequate safety regulations, [but] mothers were handicapped by poor diet, bad housing and the demands of husbands, children, and employers."²⁶ In July of 1914, 3,276,000 English women were employed in an industrial setting. Three years later that amount jumped to 4,507,000 women, all considered part of the working class.²⁷ As inferior laborers, women were subjected to intense discrimination in the workplace and most females were confined to unskilled or repetitious work during the war years. This did differ from factory to factory as some women were employed as skillful mechanics or tradeswomen, but the majority of female workers experienced atrocious systematic disparities.²⁸

Female Suffrage in 1918.

The effort British working-class women had put forth during the war was undoubtedly a crucial supporting reason for the inclusion of female franchise in the Representation of the People Act of 1918. While remembering Suffragette chaos and fearing an even larger uprising of unsatisfied working-class women, the emergence of

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

lower-class feminism forced Parliament to concede and deliver suffrage to Britain's wives and daughters. The International Women's Peace Movement was also a factor in the inclusion of female franchise, as women had successfully created an intercontinental wartime organization dedicated to both peace and universal suffrage. A *Punch* cartoon from 1917 shows Prime Minister Asquith ascending the stairs to board a bus with a destination titled: "Women's Suffrage." The sketch is captioned, "Come along Sir, better late than never."

The 1918 Representation of the People Act awarded franchise to women thirty and above. The Sex Disqualification Removal Act of that same year allowed women to attend Oxford and also forced the Bar to accept female applicants. On January 23, 1918 a full-page *Punch* drawing of England's beloved Britannia showed her holding a flag decorated with the words "Women's Franchise." The only line accompanying the photograph is the heartfelt caption, "At Last!" Another deciding factor in delivering franchise to women hinged upon the realization that according to the property qualifications of parliamentary law, many of the soldiers who had fought for their country during the last four years were unable to vote. If English suffrage was to be addressed at all, the memory of Suffragette anarchy ensured the bills inclusion of at least minimal female enfranchisement.

After Parliament granted women age thirty and above the right to vote, *The Punch* highly satirized the capability of women to use their vote effectively. In January of 1919 a cartoon of two women chatting aimlessly was captioned "The Enfranchisement of Woman." The ladies discuss a recent election and one mentions "No I voted for the other man. You see, Mr. Jones supports women's suffrage, which I abhor."

Coinciding with the British woman's newfound privileges, duties, and modes of entertainment, the female vote sparked profound anxiety amongst the male-governed public.

From an international perspective, the unsettling results of the 1917 Russian Revolution, combined with the atrocities of the war in Europe, helped spark the post-war return to the home push within Great Britain. Socialism represented a fearful threat to the British Empire and Parliament now sought to patch Britain's domestic disputes in order to focus on international hazards. This opinion was especially true for Mrs. Pankhurst as she eventually became deeply involved in the struggle against socialism, feeling the necessity to fight for her country's existence rather than the woes of her gender.

In the months directly after the so-called "war to end all wars," many British people theorized that women were only recently distracted from the home. Presuming that British women were satisfied with the progress of female suffrage and of newly gained opportunities, the government urged women to readopt the domestic life and allow returning veterans to resume customary roles. This task was not as simple as Members of Parliament and the country's elite conservatives had hoped. Millions of British soldiers perished during the war and consequently the number of English widows and single mothers more than doubled. Thousands of men returned home from the battle front shell shocked and unable to work, again forcing their wives to assume the role of provider. This minority of self-supporting women, who continued to rely on industrial work as a means of feeding their families, received the harshest discrimination within the transitioning work force of the 1920's. Showcasing the surplus of women, the 1921 census published a total population of 18,082,222 males and

19,803,022 females living within Britain.²⁹ A cartoon titled “To meet the shortage of dancing men,” was published in a 1923 edition of Mr. Punch. The picture proposed a solution to the surplus of women in Britain, two ladies for every male on the dance floor.

British Feminism & the Roaring Twenties.

In 1917 the WSPU formally renamed themselves The Women’s Party. The activists demanded for equal pay and equal treatment for women in regard to marriage laws, parental rights, and other social responsibilities previously dominated by men.³⁰ WSPU members were obviously not particularly popular with most politicians before the war, but years later, when the Women’s Party formed the war effort put forth by WSPU ladies, they influenced a more favorable public opinion. The primary focus of the organization was to educate newly enfranchised women about the vote however the group was also geared to promote Christabel Pankhurst’s campaign for the House of Commons. Along with partial franchise, women were now granted the right to run for a seat in Parliament. As the nominated candidate of the Women’s Party, Christabel would lose the 1918 election by a close margin of 775 votes.³¹ Having won sufficient votes as a member of the Conservative Party, on November 28, 1918, American-born Lady Nancy Astor became the first female Member of Parliament in the House of Commons.

After the 1918 Women’s Party defeat, the interests of Emmeline, Christabel and Sylvia Pankhurst grew increasingly separate. Mrs. Pankhurst focused on the threat of Bolshevik socialism and would travel to Canada and the United States to bring focus towards uniting women of allied nations and fighting the communist threat. Not long after becoming a Canadian citizen

in 1923, as she believed Canada to be the most egalitarian society she had yet encountered, Emmeline Pankhurst assumed the Vice Presidency of the Canadian Public Health Association.³² The failure of the Women’s Party to spark a united female organization reinforces the degree to which feminism and the opinions of British women in general grew even more diverse after the war. The Pankhurst family is a prime example of how widely varied female beliefs are.

After her parliamentary loss Christabel became entrenched in Christian fundamentalism and published a number of religious texts by 1920. Leftist Sylvia Pankhurst worked closely with other British socialists during the twenties and evolved to form a less communist oriented and more anti-colonialist perspective during the thirties. Despite the various activism of the Pankhurst family, the majority of women belonging to the NUWSS and WSPU merged to form the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC). With Millicent Fawcett passing the throne to new leader Eleanor Rathbone in 1919, NUSEC campaigned for female workers rights and reforms in British divorce law. Just two years later in a 1921 by-election Liberal Margaret Wintringham joined Lady Nancy Astor as a Member of Parliament in the House of Commons. In the general election of 1922 both Wintringham and Astor held their seats and though no new women were elected to the House of Commons, the number of female candidates more than doubled that of the 1918 election.³³

Women and the Post-War Workforce.

The interwar era consisted of structural changes in Britain’s production and labor force. As the market for heavy capital goods declined, England

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

reprogrammed its industry in order to manufacture consumer products. Before fully transitioning to a commodity based industry, in the direct months after the war factories were geared towards manufacturing cable and other equipment for construction work.³⁴ Young working-class women were attracted to industry positions but were again constrained to monotonous assembly work. A full-page *Punch* sketch titled "After the War: The War Work Habit" displays pictures of women attempting to fulfill male positions. One woman marches alongside fellow male gardeners, while one wears her pants out to dinner. We see another woman sticking her head into the engine of a car attempting to fix a mechanical issue, and the last depicts a female munitions worker unable to control her complicated factory machine.

The attempt to return to normalcy after the First World War resulted in the displacement of millions of women from their wartime positions. An overwhelming majority of posts held by female workers in the immediate years after the war were not the same ones they had assumed during the war.³⁵ However the invention of electricity and its use in the home created a number of new products and options for female employment. As women in the 1920's assumed new roles in factories assembling household appliances and equipment, the discrimination they experienced stemmed from the belief that women would eventually return to the home. The lack of decent wages, insurance, safety, and training also resulted from the assumption that working-class women only sought part-time or temporary work. The presumed inadequacy of female labor again confined women to positions requiring monotonous assembly work.

Women who chose not to work in factories were able to receive lower wages as domestic servants. However as the

number of middle-class families escalated, the ability for Britain's middle class to afford domestic servants decreased. A small percentage of elite households were unaffected and continued to employ numerous servants. Between 1901 and 1920 the wealthiest West London boroughs experienced a twenty five percent decline in the number of domestic servants per family. The next wealthiest boroughs faced a decline of sixty percent with only twelve female servants per 100 households.³⁶ Families that could no longer afford to employ help resorted to domestic consumer products, which eased women's household duties.

Working women who would otherwise have been employed as domestic servants eventually transformed in to the British female working class and it was no coincidence that their work environment reproduced familiar domestic hardships. Instead of directly assisting upper middle-class women with household work, lower-class females were now subjected to mass producing consumer goods. Kitchen appliances, office supplies, cleaning products, household tools (including the newly invented vacuum), as well as electronic devices like radios and televisions were assembled by women in Britain's factories. The lack of domestic servants during the twenties was present even up until 1927, when Mr. Punch drew a humorous cartoon with advice for the "domestic servant problem," as it was captioned. A female servant is kept happy at work with the ironic comfort of listening to the radio.

The New British Woman.

Britain's "new woman" of the 1920's grew to symbolize the continuing decline of English society. War conditions liberated women and with their newfound independence came different styles of hair,

dress, and makeup. Short hair was in fashion and women in London began to wear lipstick and dance to American jazz music. Smoking was popular among the new generation of emancipated women and some even dared to wear pants or trousers. Another fraction of Britain's new independent women valued education, as an unprecedented number of females aspired towards advanced degrees. Women began assuming roles within the professional field as secretaries, teachers, lawyers, dentists, typists and more. An August 31, 1921 full-page *Punch* cartoon parodied a familiar nursery rhyme with a drawing of a man sitting on top of a large shoe. Captioned "The Independents," there are a number of women surrounding the shoe each dressed for a different popular profession. The poem underneath explains, "There was an old fellow who lived in a shoe; He had too many daughters with no one to woo; He expressed his regret but 'Don't worry' they said; 'We are able and willing to earn our own bread.'"

Not surprisingly, imperialism was found to be an important cultural theme in England during the twenties. Today, London's Wembley Stadium is famous for British football; however, in 1924 and 1925 the stadium held the King's exhibition on Empire. Displaying lush gardens and artifacts from the many lands under the British Commonwealth, tens of thousands of British attended the summer events. Nightlife was also an important aspect at Wembley and young couples could dine at nice restaurants and attend dances or shows. This distinct appeal to the strength of the British Empire is important with regards to women because it reinvigorated pre-war fears and concerns over a regressing family structure. Again under scrutiny, the mother of the English race was constrained by similar pre-war attitudes however she now had female Members of Parliament to lobby for her rights.

Conservative feminists believed poverty and other societal woes were responsible for the immorality of Britain's provocative new woman. In the last six months of 1920 the insured population witnessed a 5.1 percent increase in unemployment and the combined decrease in coal consumption prompted miner strikes across all of England.³⁷ The government imposed coal rations and promptly initiated power cuts which seemed to temporarily satisfy the miners, however the structural change required by the transition to electricity stunned Britain's coal industry indefinitely.

Increased violence after the partition of Ireland also captivated British politics during the early twenties and tensions between Labour and Conservative parties magnified.³⁸ In 1920 *The Punch* printed a full-page cartoon that questioned the effect of women's franchise on the upcoming election. Mr. Asquith asks a young female mill worker "How are you voting my pretty maid?" The working-class woman responds, "Wait and you shall see my kind Sir." From 1922 to 1924 Andrew Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin both became Prime Ministers as members of the Conservative Party. A 1922 full-page sketch in *The Punch* draws readers a picture of a British woman as half lion, a familiar cultural reference representing the British Empire. She has a smirk on her face and uses her paw to place her completed voting card in the ballot box.

A 1923 by-election announced eight women attaining seats in the House of Commons; unfortunately the next year's election ousted four. Referring to Prime Minister Baldwin, another humorous political depiction in *The Punch* was published in 1923 and portrayed "Mrs. Britannia" sitting on a comfortable chair having put down her newspaper so she might share a word with her helper. Her maid, a man dressed like a woman, sweeps

A Portrayal of British Women: *The Punch*, 1900-1928

the floor as Mrs. Britannia exclaims: “Why all the fuss about the servant problem? There’s my Baldwin, can turn her hand to anything, keeps the house in order, checks the accounts, doesn’t want the evenings off, very tactful visitors—especially foreigners, in fact a perfect treasure.”

Even though issues regarding decent pay, hours, training, and treatment were uniform amongst most working class persons during the twenties. Men believed that their complaints in the workplace overshadowed those of women. A *Punch* cartoon published in 1921 depicts a stampede of men and women trying to fight their way on to an already crowded city bus. The accumulation of workers strife was undoubtedly exacerbated by the woman’s urge for equal employment. Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald became Prime Minister in January of 1924 and was disliked by many for having been a pacifist during the war.³⁹ Although production increased by seven percent, wages remained the same during the years under MacDonald. Unemployment continued to plague society and not much had improved for Britain’s unfortunate during the years under the new Labour government. Workers gathered mass support under the Trades Union Congress, and a general union strike took place in 1926. For nine days millions of railroad, coal, steel and other transportation workers protested against unstable working conditions. A two-page 1926 *Punch* cartoon depicted a busy city street, and was captioned “The Political Traffic Problem.” The color cartoon resembles the dynamism of the 1920’s as workers, politicians, women, and professionals collide within a city intersection.

Suffrage At Last.

On July 2, 1928 Britain’s Equal Franchise Act awarded the vote to women

age twenty-one and over. A year later five million new female voters exercised their right and succeeded in forming the second Labour government.⁴⁰ Emmeline Pankhurst passed away just a month before the establishment of the act but Millicent Fawcett was still living and able to rejoice over the woman’s triumph. In September of 1928 a cartoon was published displaying a middle-aged woman standing next to a traffic-filled street, she shockingly claims “And they once used to call me noisy!” The battle for the right to vote had finally been conquered, but it would be another fifty years before conservative politician Margaret Thatcher would become Britain’s first female Prime Minister.

Circumstances regarding Britain’s women and daughters during the first quarter of the twentieth-century were transformed and molded by such things as war, government, the Suffragettes, Empire, and industry. Observing the British government’s reluctance in giving women twenty-one and above the right to vote, Mr. Punch drew his readers a depiction of “Prospective new voters discussing affairs of state at jazzville on sea.” The young women plug their ears and are straining to hear each other’s views over the torturous music. Despite the semi-deconstruction of gender roles and female integration in to the public sphere, the treatment of women remained relatively immutable during the first half of the twentieth century. Although women acquired new occupations, representation in Parliament, and of course the vote, females were continuously characterized as secondary to men. The reoccurring yet altering portrayal of women in *The Punch* or, *The London Charivari*, highlights cultural impediments that perpetually constrained Britain’s mothers and daughters to an inferior social status.

Notes

- ¹ Marion H. Spielmann, *History of Punch* (New York: Cassell Publishing Co., 2007), 2.
- ² Martin Pugh, *Votes for Women in Britain 1867-1928* (London: The Historical Association, 2009), 10.
- ³ Jean H. Baker, *Votes For Women, The Struggle For Suffrage Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 144.
- ⁴ Christopher St. John, *Biography of Ethel Smyth* (New York: Cassell Publishing Co., 1959), 145.
- ⁵ Diane Atkinson, *Suffragettes in the Purple White & Green: London 1906-1914* (London: Museum of London, 1992), 11.
- ⁶ Julia Bush, *Women Against the Vote*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164.
- ⁷ June Hannam & Karen Hunt, *Socialist Women, 1880s-1920s*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 107.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.
- ⁹ David Rubenstein, *Before The Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890's* (Great Britain: Harvester Press Limited, 1986), 148.
- ¹⁰ Pugh, *Votes for Women*, 11.
- ¹¹ Daniel Cossins, "The Fight for Women's Suffrage," *BBC History Magazine*, 2007. Accessed April 2012. www.historyextra.com.
- ¹² Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp, ed., *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes* (London: Associated University Presses Inc., 1999), 23.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ¹⁴ Atkinson, *Purple White & Green*, 11.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ¹⁶ John Mercer, "Commercial Places, public spaces: suffragette shops and the public sphere," *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History* (2004): 6.
- ¹⁷ St. John, *Ethel Smyth*, 148.
- ¹⁸ Atkinson, *Purple White & Green*, 30.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.
- ²⁰ June Purvis, *Emmeline Pankhurst: A Biography* (London: Routledge, 2003), 178.
- ²¹ Baker, *Votes for Women*, 144.
- ²² Purvis, *Emmeline Pankhurst*, 276.
- ²³ David S. Patterson, *The Search for Negotiated Peace: Women's Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I*, (London: Routledge, 2008), 73.
- ²⁴ Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1981), 28.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.
- ²⁹ Richard Bennet, *A Picture of the Twenties* (London: Vista Books, 1961), 34.
- ³⁰ Purvis, *Emmeline Pankhurst*, 302.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 314.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 334.
- ³³ David Rubenstein, *A Different World for Women, the Life of Millicent Garret Fawcett*, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 265.
- ³⁴ Miriam Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 82.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 251.
- ³⁷ Bennet, *Twenties*, 30.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

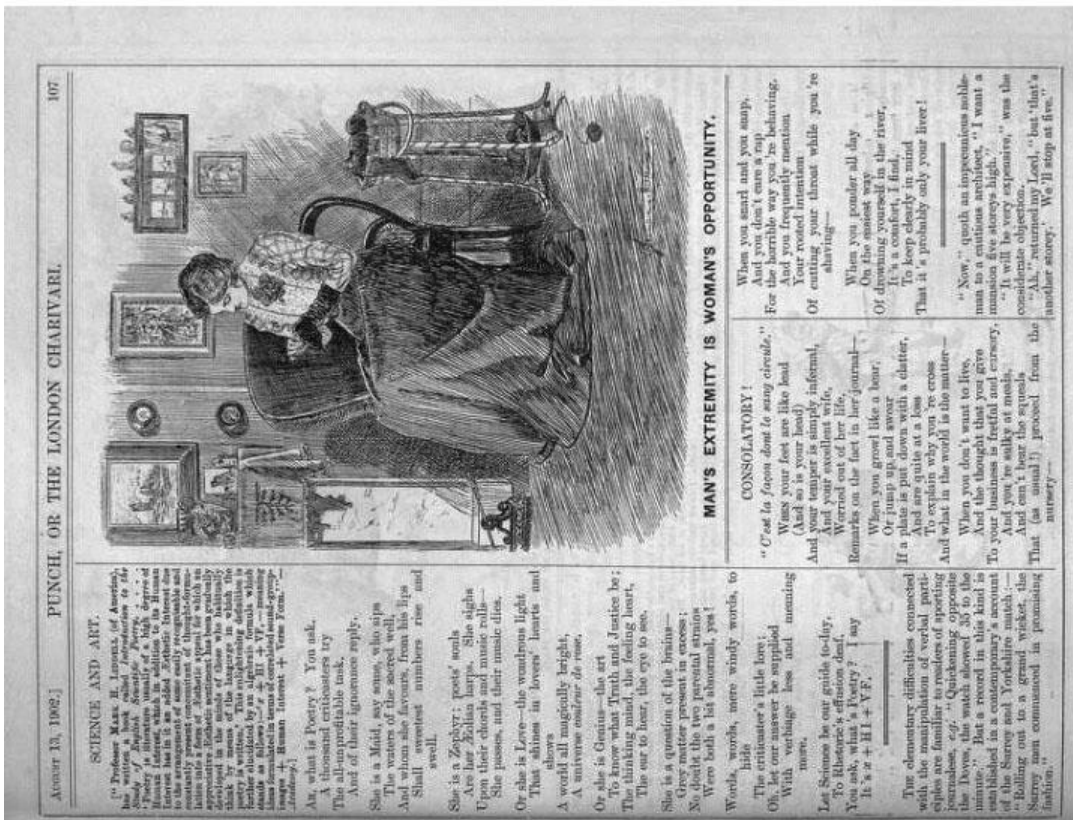


PUNCH OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI. - JANUARY 17, 1906.

THE SHRIEKING SISTER.

THE SCENE: WORKS. "YOU HELP OUR CAUSE? WHY, YOU'RE ITS WORST ENEMY!"

Samuel Parnley & Co.



PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

107

SCIENCE AND ART.
 ("Professor Max E. Lorenz, of America,"
 writes a book called *Intimations of the
 Future*.)
 "Poetry is literature manifest of a high degree of
 human feeling, which in addition to its human
 nature, is the result of some early recognizable and
 consistently present characteristic of which the
 representative European treatment has been gradually
 thickened in the course of the centuries in which the
 poetry is written." This enlightening definition is
 made as follows: "The word 'poetry' is a name
 (Lorenz?) which denotes a certain kind of poetry."
 (Lorenz?)

Are you in Poetry? You ask.
 A thousand criticisms try
 This all-unpredictable task,
 And of their ignorance reply.
 She is a Maid, say critics, 'who sips
 The waters of this sacred well,
 And whom she favours, from his lips
 Shall sweetest numbers rise and
 swell.

She is a Zephyr; poets' souls
 Are her Balkan harps. She sighs
 Upon their chords and music rolls—
 She passes, and their music dies.
 Or she is Love—the vaulted light
 That glows about in lovers' hearts and
 throbs
 A word all magically bright,
 A universe *enfour de rose*.

Or she is Queen—she set
 To know what Truth and Justice be;
 The thinking mind, the feeling heart,
 The ear to hear, the eye to see.

She is a question of the brain—
 No, cry the critics present in excess;
 Were both a list of nouns, you!

Words, words, mere windy words, to
 hide
 The poet's little lies;
 Oh, let our answer be scribbled
 With verbiage less and meaning
 more.

Let Science be our guide, faculty,
 To illustrate's effort dead.
 You ask, what's Poetry? I say
 It's X + H I + Y F.

The elementary difficulties connected
 with the manipulation of verbal parti-
 cles are familiar to readers of sporting
 the boys, who watch almost 300 to the
 minute." But a record in this kind is
 established in a contemporary account
 of the Surrey and Yorkshire match. —
 "Rolling out to a grand winner, the
 Surrey man committed in promising
 fashion.

MAN'S EXTREMITY IS WOMAN'S OPPORTUNITY.

When you stand and you say,
 And you don't care a ray
 For the horrible way you're behaving,
 And you frequently mention
 Your roared intonations
 Of cutting your throat while you're
 shaving—

When you ponder all day
 On the most way
 Of drowning yourself in the river,
 It's a comfort, I find,
 To keep closely in mind
 That it's probably only your liver!

"Now," quoth an impecunious noble
 man to a cautious architect, "I want a
 mansion five storeys high."
 "It will be very expensive," was the
 considerate objection. "I need," but 'that's a
 peculiar story. We'll stop at five."

CONSOLATORY!

"Oad to Japan don't to easy circle."
 Wince your feet are like lead
 (And so is your head)
 And your temper is simply infernal,
 And your avocations write,
 Vergerous out of life,
 Remarks on the fact in here journal—

When you groan like a bear,
 When you jump up and down
 And are quite out of a clatter,
 To explain why you're cross
 And what in the world is the matter—

When you don't want to live,
 And the thought that you grove
 To your business is fearful and crowsy,
 And you're willy of muck,
 And can't bear the squads
 That (as usual) proceed from the
 antwery—

q



1906.

STEPH OF AN EMBROIDERED M.P. TAKING A CONSTITUTIONAL.

manner of speaking, his limbs, not to mention his other organs, to such an internal contrivance . . . and so on. Supper's Leg, who was next in line, was not so much impressed by the experience as exhilarating in the extreme. He said that it was like riding on a Tibetan eagle, or a swan. Bidding a turtle was nothing to it. In an eloquent peroration Mr. Lenz vindicated the use of a high-down machine.

Mr. Cusaraxox's experiences were less fortunate than those of his friends. For a long time the aeroplane refused to leave the ground; and it was not until the great critic had emptied his pockets of books and other impedimenta that it made good.

Mr. Huxey Passay, who obtained his seat on the aeroplane only by disguising himself as an ecstatic French journalist and kissing Mr. Wainour very vigorously, said that he did not think much of his experiences. In fact he did not feel safe for a moment. He said, of being in a heavenly

came to him, he would show him what flying really was. He said Mr. WILLIAM ALCORN on alighting said he had never before experienced wonderful ten minutes. As he passed down from the skies an aeroplane to carry him to Fleet Street, and vice versa.

MADAME MELBA and MADAME TERAZZINI, who made successive ascents, were equally enthusiastic in expressing their delight. At Madame Melba's request, I have long been able to find out what she had near the other stars before."

Mr. TERAZZINI declared that the aeroplane soared higher in altitudes when she was on board than when Madame Melba was the passenger; but when asked to adjudicate on this point Mr. Wainour proffered a discreet reply.

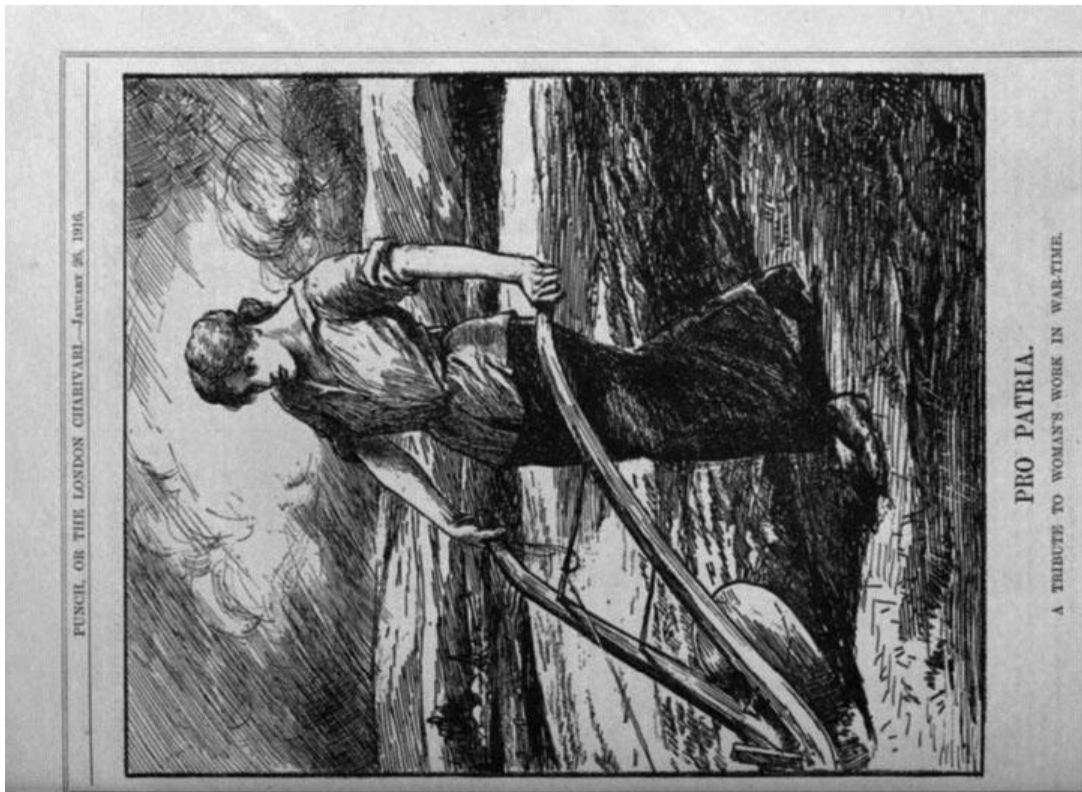
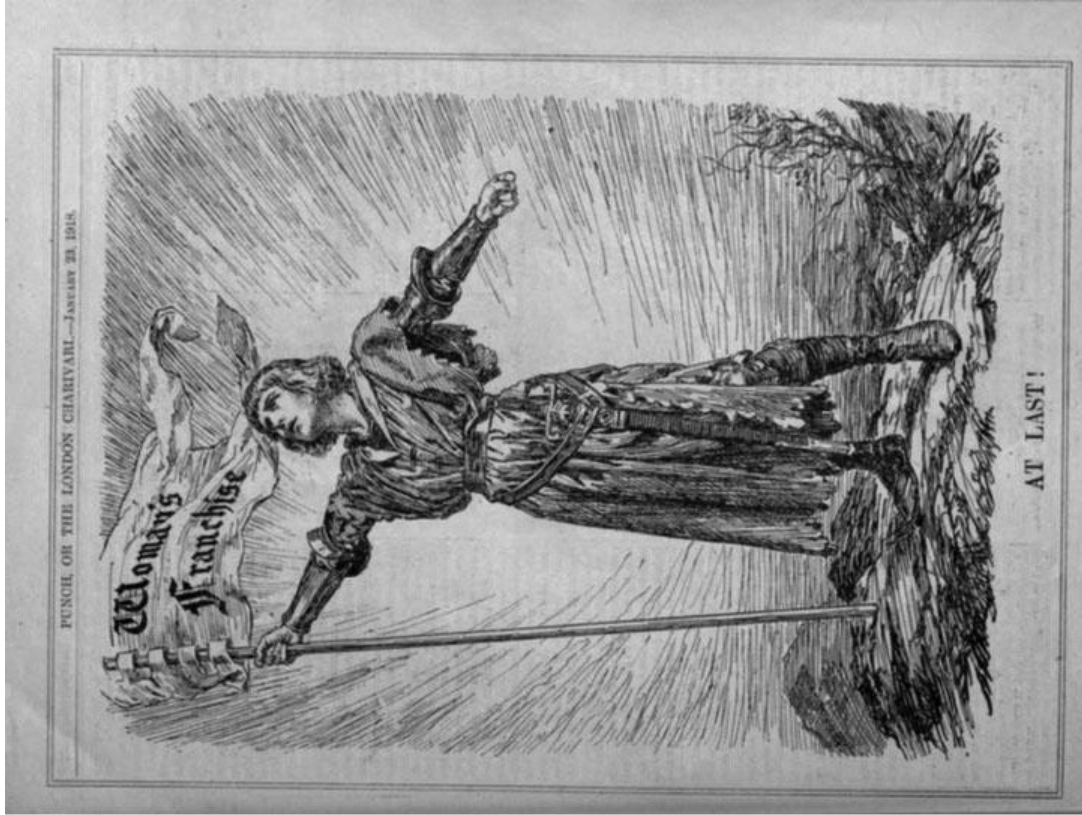
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Little Oxen.
 (From the life of Mrs. Partners, after their appointment have discussed "Globe.") "Oh, no, thank you," Mr. Jones. "I've never seen Mrs. Partners (she has never played Bridge before)."
 LITTLE OXEN.



THE SUFFRAGETTE THAT KNEW JUDITH.
 THE ARREST.





Buck v. Bell and Eugenic Sterilization in the United States

Kathryn Phillips

By the 1920s, eugenics had become a popular scientific movement predicated on improving society through encouraging reproduction of people with advantageous traits and discouraging those with disadvantageous ones. Many important figures of American history, including Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft as well as Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and Margaret Sanger, subscribed to the beliefs of eugenicists and supported the use of public policy to control proliferation of hereditary traits. The Virginia Sterilization Act of 1924, based on a model law that Harry Laughlin of the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) had created, allowed superintendents of institutions to forcibly sterilize people the superintendents deemed 'defective,' either by mental, moral or physical shortcomings. To express the eugenic reasoning behind sterilization laws, Margaret Sanger, a famed birth control activist and founder of Planned Parenthood, wrote, "Moreover when we realize that each feeble-minded person is a potential source of an endless progeny of defect, we prefer the policy of immediate sterilization, of making sure that parenthood is absolutely prohibited to the feeble-minded."¹ Carrie Buck was a young woman sent to the Virginia Colony for Epileptics and Feeble Minded, the same facility the state committed her mother to. Carrie's foster family had her committed to the Virginia Colony after becoming pregnant as a result of rape by a relative of her foster family. Like her mother, the colony found Carrie to be feeble-minded as well as promiscuous because of her illegitimate

baby and the superintendent chose her to be a test case for the new sterilization law. Her case made its way to the Supreme Court where the court upheld it in 1927 with only one dissenting vote. Justice Oliver Holmes Jr. wrote the majority opinion that declared, "Three generations of imbeciles are enough." Although the Supreme Court upheld the law and deemed compulsory sterilization constitutionally legal, eugenics faced much criticism based on its lack of scientific integrity as well as its complete disregard for the influence of environment over inheritance. At the time, however, many people, including some scientists, deemed eugenics a legitimate science regardless of the fact-based science that proved otherwise and scientists that continually criticized it. Had there not already existed a court bias for eugenics, the justices might have seen the real science, science with correctly interpreted data and evidence to support it, which would have prevented the sterilization of Carrie Buck and many others in the United States.

Eugenics departments existed in many of the elite universities, including Harvard and John Hopkins; further institutes like the Eugenics Record Office conducted research to support the eugenic movement. According to Edwin Black's *War Against the Weak*, "Eugenic extremism enjoyed layer upon layer of scientific veneer not only because eminent scholars enunciated its doctrine and advocated its solution, but also by virtue of its numerous respected 'research bodies.'"² The 'science' behind eugenics was loosely based on Darwin and Mendel; however, eugenic scientists began to argue

that nearly everything was inheritable including temperament and morality. During the trial, the Eugenics Record Office sent Dr. Arthur Estabrook as an expert witness. Estabrook had worked in the field of eugenics documenting families of the unfit. He compared the Bucks to the famous Juke family, a study done by sociologist Richard Dugdale of an extended family that was nearly all 'defective,' on which Estabrook had done extensive research.³ Dugdale attributed the Jukes with "crime, pauperism, fornication, prostitution, bastardy, exhaustion, intemperance, disease and extinction."⁴ However, he believed that bettering their environment and solving poverty was the solution to the burdens that families like the Jukes imposed on society, whereas eugenicists reading his works interpreted his findings as unavoidable hereditary traits that would continue through generations and degrade American society as a whole.⁵ Estabrook's extensive research of the Jukes and families like them led the court to believe him as a scientific expert and believe his claim that the Bucks were another family that would continue to procreate feeble-minded people who would cause a drain on the rest of Americans.

In order to show hereditary defect and cast the Bucks in the same light as the Jukes, proponents of eugenics needed to assert that Carrie Buck's daughter, Vivian, was also feeble-minded. Dr. Albert Priddy, the superintendent of the Virginia Colony, had already declared Vivian to be 'backward,' but he would need someone else to also confirm his diagnosis for the trial. "Priddy asked a Red Cross social worker to send evidence certifying the infant as feeble-minded, and was almost certainly startled to hear back from the social worker: 'I do not recall and am unable to find any mention in our files of having said that Carrie Buck's baby was mentally defected.'"⁶ They desperately needed

someone to testify that a seven month old baby was feeble-minded. After a cursory examination of little Vivian, Dr. Estabrook confirmed that she showed signs of 'backwardness' in support of his Jukes comparison. This was obviously a hollow diagnosis in order to legalize forced sterilization as she was only a small infant; furthermore, her later school records from the first and second grade show that she was a good student receiving mostly As and Bs, something that seems highly unlikely for a feeble-minded girl. It thus seems that Estabrook confirmed the feeble-mindedness of Carrie's baby in order to support the unfounded eugenic theory that the inherited trait would continue through generations of Bucks if the government did not use sterilization to prevent it. No one could honestly say that a seven month old was feeble-minded or 'backward,' yet the court trusted Estabrook as an expert witness and eugenics as a legitimate science.

Many scientists criticized eugenics for its claims without providing enough evidence to support them. For example, Estabrook declared all of Carrie's family defective, including some of them who were long dead, without meeting most of them, by relying on stories and rumors about them.⁷ In fact, school records reported Carrie herself to be a 'very good' student, although her foster family pulled her out of school at a young age in order to increase the family income by hiring her out to perform chores for neighbors.⁸ Yet the eugenicist witnesses affirmed the 'facts' that concluded Carrie and the rest of the Bucks to be feeble-minded rejects of society. David Heron, a British scientist of Galton Laboratory and fellow eugenicist, wrote about Laughlin and the Eugenics Record Office, "Those of us who have the highest hopes for the new science of Eugenics in the future are not a little alarmed by many of the recent contributions to the subject which threaten to place

Buck v. Bell and Eugenic Sterilization in the United States

Eugenics... entirely outside the pale of true science...we find such teaching- based on the flimsiest of theories and on the most superficial of inquiries... must mean the death of Eugenics as a science.”⁹ Heron also criticized their methods “that the material has been collected in a most unsatisfactory manner, that the data have been tabled in a most slipshod fashion, and that the Mendelian conclusion drawn have no justification whatsoever...a family containing a large number of defectives is more likely to be recorded than a family containing a small number of defectives.”¹⁰ Members of their own ideology deemed those providing the science in favor of sterilization to have no scientific integrity. Other eugenicists criticized the Eugenics Record Office for misusing Mendelian laws, the laws that determine the heredity of dominant and recessive traits, to fit their own means instead of finding the truth. Fellow eugenic scientists accused those taking part in the Buck trial of incorrect methodology and relying on unreliable evidence in order to prove their hypotheses; however, the Supreme Court did not hear the objections by other scientists that eugenics did not qualify as science.

Furthermore, other scientists criticized eugenics for oversimplifying heredity. Eugenic scientists like Estabrook and others at the Eugenics Record Office compiled an enormous amount of family pedigrees showing the supposed heredity of traits such as feeble-mindedness, criminality, and all other undesirable traits. “Many officials were easily swayed by the stacks of scientific documentation eugenicists could amass.”¹¹ The sheer volume of these pedigrees impressed many people and convinced them that these traits were, in fact, inheritable. However, both evolutionary biologist Thomas Morgan and biologist and sociologist A.M. Carr-Saunders stated that defects like

feeble-mindedness more likely resulted from multiple traits. Morgan wrote in his book *Evolution and Genetics*, “Those that react below some selected standard might be called feeble-minded; but there are no grounds for assuming that the results are due to one particular defect in the nervous system and in fact a critical study of the cases shows that they are probably not all due to a single factor.”¹² The findings of factually based science of the time indicated that these undesirable traits more than likely did not come from a single inherited trait but from multiple and that it would be impossible to separate them in order to weed out the undesirable.

Many scientists had also devoted time and work to discovering the extent to which our environment affects us as individuals; however, eugenics showed blatant disregard for such work and maintained that heredity was the true factor in intelligence and morality of an individual. As previously noted, Dugdale put forth his study of the Jukes in order to show how environment affects these “unfit” families and changing this environment would be the solution. In “A Criticism of Eugenics,” Carr-Saunders wrote, “In the face of so much ignorance concerning, not only heredity itself, but also its complement, the influence of the environment, how can anyone be justified in making sweeping generalisations with reference to these subjects?”¹³ Carr goes on to say that social class affects abilities by handicapping those in lower classes. There are those with higher mental capabilities within lower social classes but they are not necessarily able to rise above their classes. It is like people of different classes are running in a simultaneous yet completely different race.¹⁴ Thus, being in the upper class does not mean that one inherited better traits than those below them as eugenicists believed.

Professor H.J. Muller also said that environment is the cause of intelligence and morality and refuted heredity as the cause in a quote from a newspaper interview:

There is no scientific basis for the conclusion that the socially lower classes, or technically less advanced races, really has genetically inferior intellectual equipment since the differences between their averages are to be accounted for fully by the known effects of environment. If the above is true of intelligence, it is even more true of temperamental traits, moral qualities, &c, since these are more responsive to conditioning than are purely intellectual characteristics.¹⁵

Research at the time found environment to be just as important or even more so in shaping a person's intelligence and morality. Arguments of the environmental impact on a person's intelligence and morality easily disputed the copious amounts of family pedigrees eugenic scientists like Estabrook had compiled; however, none of the science discussing the effect of the environment on a person was presented in the Buck trial and eugenicists ignored the implications of such work when forming their hypotheses.

With all the science available at the time arguing against the legitimacy of eugenics and refuting the expertise of witnesses like Estabrook, one may ask why the court did not see scientific evidence that countered eugenics and dismiss the case entirely as a result. Eugenics enjoyed widespread popularity among many of the upper class, which created a bias among the participants of the Buck v. Bell trial. This

bias included Carrie's eugenicist lawyer, Irving Whitehead, who had a longtime connection with the Virginia Colony and supported Dr. Priddy's sterilization program. "But at no time during the litigation, from the hearing before the special board to the brief he submitted to the Supreme Court of the United States, did Counsel Whitehead offer any evidence or produce any witness to question the validity of the eugenical basis of the statute."¹⁶ Any competent lawyer could have easily refuted the science behind the law by calling witnesses to do so or challenging the assessment of Dr. Priddy of Carrie Buck by reporting that her pregnancy was a result of rape rather than promiscuity. However, Whitehead chose to push forward his ideology of eugenics instead of protecting the interests of his client. He never called any witnesses like the previously mentioned anti-eugenic scientists who could have easily refuted Estabrook's testimony and the whole of eugenics as a sham science. Whitehead's collusion with the eugenic opposition, in addition to allowing eugenics to remain a legitimate science in the eyes of the court, fostered the legalization of coerced sterilization.

The idea of the over-fertility of the unfit plagued eugenic scientists and some dedicated their time to the research of the supposed heightened fecundity. Feebleminded women, according to the studies of Sir James Chrichton-Browne and others, were twice as fertile as normal ones, having many more children in their lifetimes.¹⁷ Eugenicists frequently used the fertility of the unfit to strike fear of being, as Holmes said in his opinion, "swamped with incompetence." This is evidenced in Margaret Sanger's *Pivot of Civilization*:

Modern studies indicate that insanity, epilepsy, criminality, prostitution, pauperism, and mental

Buck v. Bell and Eugenic Sterilization in the United States

defect, are all organically bound up together and that the least intelligent and the thoroughly degenerate classes in every community are the most prolific. There is every indication that feeble-mindedness in its protean forms is on the increase, that it has leaped the barriers, and that there is truly, as some of the scientific eugenicists have pointed out, a feeble-minded peril to future generations—unless the feeble-minded are prevented from reproducing their kind.¹⁸

A newspaper article reporting the outcome of *Buck v. Bell* reiterated this fear of being overrun with the unfit through quoting concerns of sociologists regarding institutions reaching double capacity as it were.¹⁹ Dr. Laughlin also estimated, by his version of Mendelian science, that the unfit, or those carrying the recessive traits and therefore able to produce unfit people, would reach 11,891,700 in the year 1950.²⁰ Eugenicists painted pictures of being overrun with the unfit of society due to their increased fertility over the fit members. However, Margaret Sanger did go on to admit that the upper classes actually had fewer children because of their access to contraception despite the laws against birth control and not because of a lesser amount of fertility. One can assume that other eugenicists also realized this must be true, but ignored it as it did not support their research. Through eugenic ‘science,’ eugenicists painted a picture for the court of criminals, alcoholics, paupers, as well as the insane and feeble-minded overwhelming all of society and presented sterilization as the solution.

Adding more bias in the court against Carrie was Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. His father, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, believed in the earlier notions of eugenics and often wrote about morality being inherited in the same manner as physical traits.²¹ The Supreme Court justice grew up with the early notions of eugenics and became a eugenicist himself. Even prior to hearing only witnesses and evidence in support of eugenic sterilization, Justice Holmes believed the eugenicist notion regarding the heredity of ‘imbecility’ as well as other degenerate traits. It is no surprise that in delivering the opinion of the court, in a manner even the other justices found a bit harsh, Holmes wrote:

We have seen more than once that the public welfare may call upon the best citizens for their lives. It would be strange if it could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the State... in order to prevent our being swamped with incompetence. It is better for all the world if, instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind.²²

Holmes also fearfully envisioned a world in which those belonging to these unfit families would completely overtake the rest of society and “sap the strength of the State” because they either lacked mental ability to care for themselves or the government had imprisoned them for their lack of morality. Holmes considered eugenics to be a legitimate science and his bias for it led to his decision to forcibly sterilize Carrie Buck

and encourage others to be sterilized after her.

Many eugenicists had fears of unfit overpopulation and turned to sterilization as the solution; however, the Hardy-Weinberg equation proved that sterilization would not work. In 1908, mathematician G. H. Hardy and physician Wilhelm Weinberg developed the Hardy-Weinberg equation to use the Mendelian rules of dominance and recessiveness to predict the probabilities of traits in an entire population. Through this equation, scientists recognized that even with sterilization, recessive traits, in addition to the 'defectives' of society, would always exist. This equation showed that dominant as well as recessive traits would rise and fall at certain times within a society, making fears of overpopulation of unwanted recessive traits completely unfounded. Although Hardy and Weinberg discovered this nearly twenty years prior to *Buck v. Bell*, no one presented the equation in the court nor did it dissuade eugenicists working to prove otherwise. Eugenic scientists completely ignored it because they would much rather depend on their family pedigrees and other unreliable forms of science. Those who had knowledge of the Hardy-Weinberg equation could easily have refuted the supposed expertise and scientific nature of eugenicists, but unfortunately the *Buck v. Bell* trial did not include them. Through ignoring good science that followed the rules of scientific research, eugenics produced inaccurate science that condemned Carrie Buck and those like her to the scalpel.

According to newspapers, people across the nation applauded the court decision to allow the sterilization of Carrie Buck.²³ A legal precedence now existed that supported eugenic sterilization of the unfit, especially those considered feebleminded and promiscuous. Prior to the *Buck v. Bell* decision, 23 states had sterilization laws;

however, of those, six had no recorded sterilizations at all, two states had performed one each, and one state had only performed five. California performed most of the 6,244 sterilizations up to that point, three-quarters of them to be specific. After the Supreme Court ruling, which alleviated any burden of liability to these states, six new states enacted laws and many of the others broadened their previous laws and began sterilizing the unfit.²⁴ The Human Betterment Foundation, located in Pasadena, California, sent out pamphlets entitled "Human Sterilization Today" to explain the benefits of compulsory sterilization and encourage more states to follow the example of California. The pamphlet reiterated the same 'scientific' arguments of other eugenicists, but also included that forced sterilization also reduced sexual deviance: "Of 304 feebleminded girls sterilized and paroled, 9 out of every 12 had been sex offenders before commitment. After sterilization, only one out of every 12 became sex delinquent on parole."²⁵ For the twenty years of state sterilization laws leading up to *Buck v. Bell*, just over 6,000 people had been sterilized by state institutions. Just four years later in 1931, the number of sterilizations more than doubled to 15,156 cumulative sterilizations in America.²⁶ In the eyes of American eugenicists, the decision of the Supreme Court affirmed eugenic beliefs regarding the heredity of defects and the duty of society to curb the reproduction of people with these undesirable traits. To eugenicists, the decision removed all doubt of their scientific legitimacy despite the criticisms of others. Many states had waited with bated breath to see how Laughlin's model sterilization law would stand up in the highest court of the land. After the legislative bodies of these states had seen the outcome and the law held up, they enacted similar laws and began

Buck v. Bell and Eugenic Sterilization in the United States

sterilizing in large amounts those whom, like Carrie Buck, the states deemed unfit.

The Buck v. Bell decision led to a dramatic increase of sterilization in the United States and influenced worldwide eugenics movements. “The Buck case confirmed the theory of hereditary defect, providing legal approval for operating on more than sixty thousand Americans in over thirty states and setting a precedent for more than half a million other surgeries around the world.”²⁷ The heavily biased members of the trial made way for an explosion of sterilization procedures of the ‘defective’ without even hearing a word of opposition. Through this decision, the Supreme Court labeled eugenics a legitimate science and those that testified as experts. However, criticisms of eugenics and forced sterilizations continued. While eugenicists claimed that after sterilization, most of those in institutions would be able to leave and live their own lives, in reality, “experienced superintendents gave estimates ranging from three to five per cent” while the rest did not have the ability to care for themselves. A British newspaper article discussing national decline in intelligence in 1939 read, “Sterilisation was an ineffective instrument for dealing on a large scale with the problems of the eugenics of intelligence.” This article further stated it was better to encourage the intelligent to marry young and have larger families while trying to improve conditions for the less intelligent, realizing that environment played a large role.²⁸ Another critic argued, “It has been computed that if the proportion of feebleminded is one per thousand, to decrease that proportion to one per ten thousand will require about 68 generations, or two to three thousand years, if it is done merely by stopping the propagation of all feebleminded individuals.”²⁹ Although the years following the massive increase in sterilizations brought evidence of its

ineffectiveness, the Second World War and the link between eugenics and Nazism served the biggest blow to the eugenics movement, especially after Nazis at the Nuremberg trials cited the Buck v. Bell ruling as a defense for their eugenics program that led to genocide. Despite the turn of public sentiment against Nazi associated eugenics, compulsory sterilization continued in most states well into the 1960s, and in some states even into the early 1980s. Continually disregarding good science that disproved many of its theories, eugenics desperately hung on to its false science as reasoning behind the sterilization of more than 60,000 Americans including poor Carrie Buck.

Notes

¹ Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (Humanity Books: New York, 1922), 122.

² Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (Thunder's Mouth Press: New York, 2003), 89.

³ Paul Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2008), 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 114.

⁷ Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles*, 4.

⁸ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 109.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹² Thomas H. Morgan, "The Inheritance of Mental Traits," *Evolution and Genetics*, 1925. Accessed March 2013. eugenicsarchive.org.

¹³ A.M. Carr-Saunders, "A Criticism of Eugenics," *Eugenics Review* 5, no. 3 (October 1913): 219.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 221-227.

¹⁵ "Holds Capitalism Bars Eugenic Goal," *New York Times*, 24 August 1932. Accessed March 2013. eugenicsarchive.org.

¹⁶ Walter Berns, "Buck v. Bell: Due Process of Law?" *Political Research Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (December 1953): 765. Accessed February 2013. sagepub.com.

¹⁷ Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization*, 112.

¹⁸ Ibid, 108-109.

¹⁹ Russel Briney, "Sterilization of Defectives, Aim," *Richmond Courier Journal*, 26 May 1927. Accessed February 2013. eugenicsarchive.org

²⁰ Berns, "Buck v. Bell," 766.

²¹ Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles*, 9.

²² Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., "Buck v. Bell Supreme court decision," 1927. Accessed Feb 2013. eugenicsarchive.org.

²³ Briney, "Sterilization of Defectives, Aim."

²⁴ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 122.

²⁵ "Human Sterilization Today," (Human Betterment Foundation: Pasadena, 1938). Accessed February 2013. <http://memory.loc.gov>.

²⁶ "Cumulative record of operations for eugenical sterilization in the United States from 1907-1935," 1935. Accessed March 2013. eugenicsarchive.org.

²⁷ Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles*, x.

²⁸ "Intelligence of Nation Said to be Declining: Sterilization No Remedy," *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, 13 January 1939. Accessed March 2013. eugenicsarchive.org.

²⁹ Quoted in Berns, "Buck v. Bell," 768.

Ebony and Irony: African-American Soldiers in the Great War

Mary Shanahan

When U.S. troops landed on French soil in 1918 and announced, “Lafayette, we are here,”¹ they brought with them Woodrow Wilson’s lofty goal of “making the world safe for democracy.”² However, there was a stowaway amongst the disembarking soldiers: racial prejudice. Of the two million American men sent to Europe in WWI, over 200,000 were of African-American descent.³ The contribution of these black-American troops in trench warfare and labor service played a significant role in America’s part in hastening the war’s conclusion. Despite the United States government’s hypocritical treatment of its African-American soldiers throughout WWI, it failed to tarnish their exemplary record of service or stem the tide of an oncoming racial equality movement.

When the United States entered the war in 1917, prejudice against blacks was still accepted as the status quo in many areas of America. The highest concentration of hatred and violence emanated from the South, which had the longest history of white-black interaction and racial tension, and continued long after the passage of the thirteenth amendment⁴. Jim-Crow laws segregated blacks from whites; the KKK had reformed in 1915; and racial tension had reached a boiling point with the Great Migration of blacks to the northern states beginning in 1916.⁵ President Wilson, a native southerner, defended segregation as “not humiliating, but a benefit” to African-Americans⁶. When the U.S. entered the war and needed soldiers, the question of

excluding blacks from conscription had initially passed through the minds of congress. Perhaps someone remembered Frederick Douglass questioning the government when it had initially hesitated to utilize African-Americans in the civil war, whose mobilization helped ensure victory for the Union.⁷ Despite the initial hesitation, blacks were inducted into the U.S. army in 1917. Wilson’s newly drafted black infantry would conform to his segregated ‘ideal,’ entering the 92nd and 93rd Divisions only, under white commanders.

This would immediately expose a paradox within the current military law. African-American West Point graduate Charles Young was promoted to rank of colonel prior to the U.S. entry into WWI. His rank made him eligible to command troops, but the army prohibited blacks from giving orders to whites, resulting in a contradiction to the law. To settle the issue, the army discharged him from active duty. Young’s forced retirement in 1918 (at 54)⁸ was contested by the colonel himself in a letter to Secretary of War, Newton Baker.⁹ Refuting a medical technicality, he asked to be returned to active duty, citing prior successful experience in 1916 under Gen. Pershing at Fort Huachuca.¹⁰ Young refused to acknowledge the underlying issue, which was not his health or military capability, but his color and rank; his request was denied. Outraged, the African-American community pushed for the government to respond to the gross racial inequality within its military. It conceded by creating a special training camp

Mary Shanahan

for black officers,¹¹ though they were still unable to command whites.

Regardless of the lukewarm reception by many white Americans, both civilians and soldiers, to the idea of black soldiers in the U.S. army,¹² the African-American community was on fire to enter the war. The main article in *The Crisis* newspaper in June of 1917 exhorted blacks to “join heartily in this fight for eventual world liberation,” but did acknowledge the irony felt by most prospective African-American enlistees, the reality of continued prejudice at home regardless of good behavior, of “persistent insult and discrimination...even when they do their patriotic duty.”¹³ Despite the immediate emergence of a common enemy to all Americans, Germany, many whites continued to identify with a known ‘enemy,’ African-Americans. On May 22, 1917, the day after the first African-American was drafted for WWI,¹⁴ a black convict was burned alive by a mob in Memphis, Tennessee. A black driver employed by one of the mob participants, standing near the smoking bodily remains, in frustration grabbed the American flag, waved it about and shouted, “We’re all through here, boys; let’s join the Germans,”¹⁵ before tearing the flag to shreds. The man had to be saved from the crowd by police. The reaction to his truth-tinged sarcasm showed that Americans were either unable or unwilling to compare their own violent actions to the ‘atrocities’ exhibited by Germany. This ambiguous patriotism and uneasiness over the reconfiguration of the American status quo would challenge the new African-American recruits when they began basic training.

Those stationed in southern states had to withstand immediate racial pressures emanating from the communities surrounding their training camps. Second Lieutenant Noble Lee Sissle was stationed in

Spartanburg, South Carolina in 1917 for his basic training with the rest of the 369th Regiment from New York, also known as the ‘Harlem Hellfighters.’ One day, while in uniform, he attempted to buy a newspaper in a local store. A white customer knocked his hat off and Sissle was kicked while bending to retrieve it. In disbelief, the lieutenant asked his white assailant if he realized that he was “abusing a United States soldier” and that the hat in question was issued by the government.¹⁶ The shopkeeper replied, “Damn you and the government, too. No nigger can come into my place without taking off his hat.”¹⁷ The deep-rooted prejudice that many whites in the U.S. felt was not going to be easily eradicated. To his credit, Sissle calmly collected his hat and walked away, but would remember this incident long after the war was over. A white officer stationed at the same camp, Captain Hamilton Fish Jr., predicted this racial tension and tried to actively avoid it. Upon receiving his initial orders to train at Spartanburg, Fish sent a telegram to Franklin Roosevelt at the Navy Department with a request to immediately deploy his black troops to France for training near the front.¹⁸ By the end of October 1917 (only three weeks later), the War Department concurred with Fish Jr. about the conditions in Spartanburg, which he had described to his father as tense due to the “disgusting treatment” his men had received at camp from the local whites, and that “several race riots” had “just been prevented in (the) nick of time.”¹⁹ In a tardy attempt to curb any further unrest, the men were to be secretly conveyed to the front. This idea of ‘escaping’ prejudiced America to a ‘racially progressive’ France was not new.

These seeds had been sown far before WWI. In an 1848 speech, Frederick Douglass digressed to equality in other countries, citing that France “accepts the negro as a man” yet America had

Ebony and Irony: African-American Soldiers in the Great War

continually chosen to “deny us our humanity.”²⁰ The 1900 World’s Fair in Paris, included “The Exhibit of the American Negro,” which was viewed and endorsed by W.E.B. Dubois.²¹ When the U.S. entered WWI in 1917, indeed, WWI France’s warm welcome for the African-American troops was in sharp contrast to the lackluster support of the American government. French chests swelled with startled pride as the 369th Regimental band, led by Lt. Jim Europe, played an impromptu, jazzy *Le Marsellaise* immediately upon disembarking onto French soil.²² French acceptance and integration of the black “doughboys” was relatively swift and uniform. Though some racial unrest had emerged in France during the war due to the high influx of African colonials into the country, it did not result in strict segregation laws, nor did this prejudice transfer onto African-Americans. French response was overwhelmingly positive in regards to the new arrivals. A 1918 French newspaper declared that “one could not find a soldier more faultless in his bearing”²³ when describing the U.S.’ black troops. Vera Brittain, nursing on the Western Front in 1917, favored their traits and demeanor over those of the ANZAC troops in her autobiographical recollections of WWI.²⁴

When the U.S. government kept the majority of its black regiments away from its own white troops at the front, it was the French army that took command of these ‘orphans,’ providing all necessities, equipment (except uniforms), and training. The African-American soldiers flourished under the tutelage of the French, even surpassing them in some areas. Captain Fish of the Harlem Hellfighters noticed that his men could throw grenades considerably farther than the French, attributing it to American baseball.²⁵ The men ate, slept, and fought in a fully integrated environment alongside the mustached French Poilu. For

the first time in many of these men’s lives, their skin color was not an issue, but most of white America was not willing to concede to the idea of blacks as equals. The U.S. government encouraged segregation behind the lines in an attempt to mirror the home front. It supported the YMCA’s decision to separate canteens according to color²⁶ and delegated 80% of African-American troops in France to perform manual labor in the Services of Supply (SOS).²⁷ The latter action seemed to pursue two goals stemming from white fear: first, it was an attempt to keep guns out of black hands, and second, it psychologically undermined blacks by subverting them to servile positions. Despite the demeaning undertones in the creation of the SOS, the men who served in it performed quickly and efficiently, rebuilt the area behind the lines and maintained a steady chain of supply to the front, stabilizing the supportive framework that the Entente armies needed for a fast victory.

Uneasy about its black troops in the trenches under French command, the U.S. army circulated a document in 1918 within the French army, which dictated how the African-Americans should be treated. The pamphlet tried to impose stipulations on French conduct when interacting with blacks, suggesting abstinence from meal sharing, shaking hands, and fraternizing. In addition, it advised that black soldiers’ successes were to be downplayed in order to placate the possible jealousy of white officers. Further instruction suggested that French women especially should have no contact with black troops. This specific clause hints at an underlying paranoia felt by many white American males: the fear of interracial relationships, which were legal in France, gaining popularity at home. Throughout the war black soldiers were often accused of wanting or violating white women, yet this fear seemed groundless; white women were depicted in the U.S.

newspapers as some of the most outspoken racists in America²⁸. The French Ministry, in response to the intrusive instructions, stated that “the soldiers sent us have been the choicest with respect to physique and morals” and the pamphlets were ordered to be burned.²⁹ In contrast to the negative implications in the pamphlet, African-American soldiers under French command were the first American soldiers to engage in active battle on the Western Front³⁰ and were rewarded promptly. On May 16, 1918, Henry Johnson of the Harlem Hellfighters became the first American soldier in WWI, black *or* white, to be awarded the *Croix de Guerre* for bravery.³¹

African-American regiments which remained under direct U.S. command were often harshly scrutinized by their white officers. In an August 1918 letter to the AEF commanding general, the white C.O. of the all-black 372nd infantry, Colonel Herschel Tupes, requested (successfully) to replace ‘colored’ officers with white on the grounds of an acknowledged prejudice that had transferred from civilian to military life.³² His accusations of their cowardice and incompetence in battle conflicted with their actual record. His takeover of the regiment in July of 1918 had followed a valiant effort by the 372nd in the Argonne trenches, and capable action at Hill 304, near Verdun.³³ In contrast to the American view of their performance, before the end of 1918, the entire 372nd was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* for their bravery in assisting the French. General Goybet, of the French 157th Infantry, commended the black Americans for their “heroical rush...up the Observatory Ridge,” that “nothing could stop them,” and that those troops should “be sure of his grateful affection...forever.”³⁴ This French gratitude for the African-American soldier, shown at end of the war, had begun well before the United States officially entered the conflict.

In 1915, Eugene Bullard, an African-American expatriate living in France, was serving in its Foreign Legion when the war broke out. He fought for the French at the Somme, was wounded twice at Verdun, received the *Croix de Guerre*, became a pilot in several French *Escadrilles*, and had a confirmed kill. An outstanding soldier, his only defeat was when the United States rejected his application to join their air squadron when they took command of the French air force in 1917, essentially grounding him.³⁵ America’s restriction of black pilots was rather “Jim-Crowish” as the U.S. had no military law on the books to support such an exclusion from its Air Corps. Bullard felt stung by the prejudice, but thought of Verdun and was still convinced “that all blood runs red.”³⁶ This would include the Germans, whose red blood was running profusely from mortal wounds by the summer of 1918.

Desperate, low on options, and fearful of the U.S. “black devils” that were terrifying in hand-to-hand combat, Germany attempted to capitalize on its knowledge of the existing racial tension rampant within the American troops. To encourage mutiny and surrender, Germany tried to stir African-American memories of home-front inequality by throwing pamphlet propaganda from airplanes soaring over black troops along the front. Andrew Johnson of the 368th Regiment caught one fluttering down in the Argonne Forest in October of 1918. It promised better treatment for blacks in Germany than that found in the American South.³⁷ Though it is unclear how they responded to this seditious effort, African-Americans were clearly aware of Germany’s numerous previous propaganda attempts at brainwashing³⁸ and its harsh subjection of its African colonies. Staunch nationalism and pride prevented blacks from depicting Germany as a savior, and Johnson “didn’t remember a single case of desertion.”³⁹

Ebony and Irony: African-American Soldiers in the Great War

Despite the aforementioned evidences of bravery and patriotism, negative rumors persisted to circulate in the United States regarding African-American behavior at the front. This prompted Woodrow Wilson to send Dr. Robert Russa Moton, president of Tuskegee University, to France to investigate the 'hearsay.' He toured the front, doing everything possible to confirm or deny the disputed reports. In a speech given to 200 white officers, he pleaded with them to put a stop to the prejudiced-based rumors which were "defaming a race" and "putting America in a bad light before the world." Dr. Moton realized that the return home from France was going to be a difficult transition for the black soldiers, so he admonished them to not "do anything in peace to spoil the magnificent record you have made in war."⁴⁰ In fact, the dream of equal rights was to be openly discouraged on the home front by President Wilson, who instructed Dr. Moton to inform the African-American soldiers in France that "they must not expect the same democracy" experienced abroad upon returning home.⁴¹

By the end of WWI the Harlem Hellfighters had fought at the front longer than any other U.S. Regiment, black or white. Being the first allied troop to reach the Rhine River on November 18th, 1918, they flew the Stars and Stripes in their wake for *all* Americans.⁴² With the armistice reached, the fight against Germany had ended, and African-American troops crowded triumphantly into the streets of Paris beside their allies. The Armistice celebrations started on November 11, 1918 would seem short lived as the end of WWI immediately brought temporarily-lessened racial tensions back into focus. Awaiting deployment back to the United States, African-American soldiers saw a rise of racial unrest and violence from the white 'doughboys' also waiting to return home.

Lynchings within the AEF base camps in France rose, culminating in at least 12 minority deaths, most attributed to the orders of a white officer called "Hard-Boiled" Smith. He had also withheld rations, gas masks, and ammunition from his black troops in the trenches "as punishment" while the war raged around the helpless soldiers in 1918.⁴³

The victory parade that flowed through the streets of Paris six months later, on July 14, 1919 included soldiers from every country of the Entente that had fought in WWI, even colonials, yet African-Americans were forcibly excluded from the proceedings.⁴⁴ W.E.B. Dubois, outraged at the insult to men who had just risked their lives for America, urged returning soldiers to stand up for themselves in a most moving speech.

Under similar circumstances, we would fight again. But by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that that war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land. We *return*. We *return from fighting*. We *return fighting*. Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.⁴⁵

Upon their return home, parades for African-American soldiers were held in the northern states, but the South stood firm in its resolution to maintain its pre-war racist attitudes. Instead of crepe paper, cheers, and kissable nurses, black soldiers returning to

southern states faced a parade of lynch mobs. Between 1914 and 1918, 304 African-Americans had been lynched in the South.⁴⁶ This trend peaked in 1919, coinciding with the return of the black troops, with 76 incidents, the highest amount killed in one year since 1904.⁴⁷ One of the 1919 victims was a black veteran dressed in his army uniform, which he had been continually harassed for wearing since returning home.⁴⁸

Though many African-American troops were decorated by France for their heroism, not a single one of these men was awarded for bravery by the American government for his efforts in WWI until over 60 years later. In contrast, Britain, which had its racial prejudices, awarded a Victoria Cross to one of its black soldiers during the war,⁴⁹ and allowed a black officer to command whites, even though British law forbade it.⁵⁰ The ‘purposeful ignorance’ of the U.S. regarding its black troops’ overall positive performance was intended to keep African-American status on the home front stagnant and segregated. President Wilson, filled with democratic passion at the Paris Peace Conference for “white minorities” in Europe such as Serbs and Rumanians, pointed out that “nothing...is more likely to disturb the peace of the world” than the mistreatment of minorities.⁵¹ For him, this obviously excluded African-Americans and colonials, who were denied equal rights in the Treaty of Versailles. Japan, part of an Asian minority present at the conference, proposed an amendment banning discrimination based on race or nationality, which was refused.⁵²

After the war, African-American veterans’ feelings regarding racial issues varied from anger and disparity, to a blasé “business as usual” attitude. However, almost all felt the irony of “volunteering to fight a war for democracy and then having to stand for your own country to kick you about like any dog and not (be) allowed to

strike back.”⁵³ Yet some African-Americans, no longer willing to acquiesce to further degradations, did strike back, often in non-violent ways. The justified cause of equality furthered itself in the daily victories won over prejudice by the WWI veterans. In response to the newly formed American Legion’s ‘whites only’ policy, for example, African-Americans formed their own charters. Noble Lee Sissle, who avoided the spotlight when part of the 369th Regimental band during the war, nevertheless shot to musical fame during the post-war Harlem Renaissance. His # 1 hit of 1921, “I’m Just Wild About Harry,” encouraged a stronger African-American presence in Broadway theatre and is still recognizable almost ninety years later. Colonel Charles Young, recalled from retirement in 1919, was appointed military attaché to Liberia and given control of its Frontier Force, previously under white command.⁵⁴ Young’s observations of a stable, successful, black state in 1920 Africa prompted him to profess pride in his race that had “solved problems in Africa that we are struggling with in America today.”⁵⁵ For these men and their contemporaries, any success against prejudice instilled hope that the African-American struggle for equality would end in triumph.

Despite this growing sense of forward momentum regarding race relations, some blacks did not raise the bar very high when gauging post-war white acceptance. In response to the question of how blacks were treated at home following WWI, one African-American veteran stated that “things were much better,” then humorously added that upon entering a white restaurant, “they’d serve you.”⁵⁶ This slow integration of blacks into white society after the war was often punctuated by racial violence. Grounded pilot Eugene Bullard reluctantly returned to the United States after living abroad for over twenty years. Racism would

Ebony and Irony: African-American Soldiers in the Great War

'ground' him again when the middle-aged Bullard was beaten to a fetal position by local police for no apparent reason but skin color in the Peekskill, New York riots of 1949.⁵⁷ The conflicting American reception of black equality, during WWI and for many years after, resulted in an underlying disillusionment felt by almost all African-Americans toward their own government, in some degree or another. W.E.B. Dubois, champion of African-American rights before, during, and after WWI, observed that the United States government had pigeonholed itself into two choices of what to do with blacks in America following WWI. On the one hand, it could allow its African-Americans full equality with whites under the law, or on the other, it could stay out of non-white affairs altogether and blacks could form their own nation.⁵⁸ Either way, according to the ten million African-Americans living in the United States after WWI, the problem was not to be ignored any longer. Interestingly, many white Americans' decided to join blacks in their civil rights efforts after the war, which added fuel to the fire of the emerging Civil Rights Movement. One man with a changed view was Colonel James Moss, the white C.O. of the 367th Regiments' 'Buffalo Soldiers.' Moss wrote a training manual after the war which encouraged the army to "treat and handle the colored man as you would any other human being...and you will have as good a soldier as history has ever known."⁵⁹ Another white WWI veteran with a new outlook on racism was Captain Hamilton Fish, Jr. After seeing the heroic Harlem Hellfighters under his command be denied participation in the victory parade in Paris, the hypocrisy rampant in the United States government in regards to its African-American citizens became clear. Fish

returned home after the war and was elected to the House of Representatives in 1920. Throughout his 25 year congressional career, Fish supported legislation for African-American rights, often in opposition to his own party. After leaving office, in 1953 he formed the Order of Lafayette, an organization that was open to veteran commissioned officers of *any* race or sex that had served in WWI.⁶⁰ This acknowledgement of the honorable contributions that African-American soldiers made in the Great War was admirable, but recognition of their valor by the American government was frustratingly slow. Indeed, Henry Johnson, though obtaining his Croix de Guerre in 1918, was not awarded the Distinguished Service Cross until 2003, posthumously. Spurned even in his grave, Johnson was denied America's highest distinction, the Medal of Honor.⁶¹

Throughout WWI, the government's policies concerning its African-American troops, like stillborn ideas bred from an 'affair' between hubristic jealousy and fear, provoked a disgusted reaction from the black community instead of obedient compliance. Any man who fought so hard for the freedom of others deserved "to find a place for himself beneath the flag for which he has fought and within the borders of the country for which he was willing to die."⁶² This inherent desire to be accepted as an equal, to have the freedom to either succeed or fail based upon one's own merit, was a dream that any American could identify with. For the African-American soldiers of WWI, arguably the sharpest irony felt was the denial of their own government to uphold the Constitution of the United States, which promised to "secure the blessings of liberty" for each citizen.⁶³

Notes

¹ Captain Charles E. Stanton. From his speech manuscript to the American troops assembled at Lafayette's tomb on July 4th, 1917. Accessed May 2013. http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/ow_3.htm.

² John H. Morrow Jr., *The Great War* (New York, Routledge, 2005), 226.

³ Number taken from newspaper article in Leslie's Photographic Review of the Great War, 1920 edition. Accessed May 2013.

http://oldmagazinearticles.com/WW1_African-American_Experience_during_World_War_One_pdf.

⁴ The 13th Amendment of U.S. Constitution abolished slavery, initiating the collapse of the slave-plantation based southern economy. Ratified February 1, 1865. 1917 demographics could still include ex-slaves, and ex-masters, both carrying over tension from another era. Library of Congress Website, The Abraham Lincoln Papers. Accessed May 2013. <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mal/mal3/436/4361100/001.jpg>.

⁵ For some examples of Jim-Crow Laws existing in the U.S. during WWI, see the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History's website. Accessed May 2013.

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/1-segregated/detail/jim-crow-laws.html>. Regarding the KKK, the 1915 film "Birth of a Nation" was a huge influence on its return. With extremely racist content; some of the imagery may be disturbing. The entire silent movie is online. Accessed May 2013.

http://archive.org/details/dw_griffith_birth_of_a_nation.

⁶ Woodrow Wilson, in Arthur Walworth, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: American Prophet*, Vol. I. (New York: Longman's, 1958), 325.

⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Douglass Monthly* (September 1861): "Why does the Government reject the Negro? Is he not a man? Can he not wield a sword, fire a gun, march and countermarch, and obey orders like any other?" From *Three Speeches from Frederick Douglass*. Accessed May 2013.

<http://www.frederickdouglass.org/speeches/index.html#rebels>.

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Ebony and Irony: African-American Soldiers in the Great War

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Mary Shanahan

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