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11 REMEMBER MY FORGOTTEN MAN: DEPICTIONS OF GREAT WAR VETERANS IN DEPRESSION-ERA AMERICAN CINEMA
Anna Duensing

37 NIGERIAN DEVELOPMENT: AN INTEGRATED TRAJECTORY
Nili Blanck

51 THE ALCHEMICAL CHARLATAN
Jane Adams

61 NARRATING REDEMPTION: DAS WUNDER VON BERN AND THE “MIRACLES” OF FOOTBALL
Hannah Troxel

75 LANGUAGE COMMODITIZATION IN IRELAND’S GAELTACHT
Will Notini

95 FINDING THE ARYAN RACE: HOW HEINRICH HIMMLER AND THE AHNENERBE FABRICATED THE ANCESTRY OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE
Allison Jungkurth
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LETTER FROM
THE EDITOR


Per nulla civibus vivendum no, no vel dolore rationibus liberavisse. Modo explicari vis ad, an verterem salutandi vix. Qui ad fastidii sapientem, no mea soluta sapientem, at usu harum ubique. Vix ex albucius splendide, vim feugiat efficiantur ut.

Vel ex omnium antiopam. Qui cu graecis nominati, duo denique mediocritatem vituperatoribus id. Eum dicta aeque consul ut, no cum placerat sapientem. Sea prima iudico utroque ex. At hendrerit abhorreant efficiantur pri, ne fugit appareat sea.

Illud ignota inermis ut vel, his ne iracundia efficiantur comprehensam. Eos invidunt liberavisse an, vis minimum theophrastus eu. Ridens gracco albucius sea et, animal ancillae at sea. Cum accusamus atomorum sententiae et. Ut iudico copiodisputando mel, omnes mollis vituperata eum eu, has no dicta partem temporibus. Mea euismod appetere mediocritatem ei, no mei oblique eruditi, graecis indoctum posidonium in mea.

Will Notini
Remember My Forgotten Man

*Depictions of Great War Veterans in Depression-Era American Cinema*

BY ANNA F. DUENSING

This paper is concerned with the history of war films, focusing on the rise and development of the genre following World War I and the early practice of historicizing trauma and depicting the experience of veterans through the medium during the interwar period. On this foundation, this work explores the emergence of the Great War veteran as a driving character in American cinema. Focusing on Depression-era filmmaking and the early 1930s “Golden Age of Turbulence,” this paper explores the significance and function of the veteran character, specifically the extent to which his traits, actions, and misfortunes serve as both active and passive social and political critique. The study here involves navigating the events and conditions both general and specific surrounding a film’s production and release, as well as its legacy in film history. This paper argues that in utilizing veteran films as historic documents, exploring how these productions both reflect and originate cultural values, one is able to examine certain peripheral, personal perspectives that would otherwise be masked by standardized, national narratives of history. Furthermore, an examination of cinema’s early and lesser-known depictions of war veterans can be beneficial in understanding later, more iconic efforts, as well as the present and future roles of the genre.

AREAS OF INTEREST:
Media Historiography, Cinema Studies,
Great War History, Cultural History
As the story goes, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year 1918, the butchering of the Great War was brought to a close, having ended four empires and more than ten million lives. The United States avoided some of the war’s most notorious battles and developments until 1917 when America declared war on Germany and the country mobilized in a decision that famously was meant to “make the world safe for democracy” (Ortiz, 2010, p. 14). Since present volunteer forces remained dwarfed by the great armies of Europe, the Selective Service Act readied an army of up to 4,700,000 Americans, around half of whom would see combat, despite the United States’ relatively short participation in the war. Early film and mass-market photography provide us with the popular image of the era—visions of the crowd, of teeming masses gathered up among the great asphalt roads, bridges, and columned

Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell, full of that Yankee Doodle Dum.
Half a million boots went slogging through Hell, and I was the kid with the drum!
Say, don’t you remember? They called me Al, it was Al all the time.
Why don’t you remember? I’m your pal.
Say, buddy, can you spare a dime?

—*Brother, Can You Spare a Time?* (1931)
steel of modern cities. These images find a grim parallel in the visual history of the First World War, a black and white affair of ordered echelons, endless trenches, and seams of barbed wire cutting through the landscape.

Never before had armed forces been raised and subsequently obliterated on such a massive scale, modes and mechanisms of war peaking with newfound technological intensity. Gone were the days of charging cavalries and infantrymen. New war technologies—machine guns, tanks, poisonous gases, aerial strikes—bloomed forth out of war efforts from all sides. Just as one saw previously with the American Civil War, with the First World War dawned a brutal era of ghastly, modern physical destruction. Medicine had not yet caught up with the technologies of war, advances that burned lungs and eyes, shattered limbs, and tore apart bones and flesh with alarming speed and efficiency. In the months and years following the Armistice, soldiers returned home bearing the strange new physical traces of combat. Dalton Trumbo’s novel *Johnny Got His Gun* famously voices the experience of Joe Bonham, a Great War veteran who regains consciousness in a hospital and slowly realizes that he is missing each one of his limbs and most of his face, including his eyes, ears, teeth, and tongue. Despite sharp mental clarity, he is unable to move, speak, see or hear, and thus becomes the isolated stream of thoughts, memories, and dreams through which Trumbo narrates the rage and helplessness of a generation of young men left behind after the war. Trumbo’s Joe embodies this role physically to the absolute degree, but the novel, published in 1939, follows in a long line of creative work produced in the interwar years that confronts the massive physical, emotional, and psychological effects of the war. While much of this work deals directly with wartime themes—physical pain, the absurdity of such massive destruction, or crumbling notions of loyalty and homeland—we see an equally expansive collection of creative work dealing with the wake of the war and the experience of veterans as they returned home and adjusted to civilian life.
Alongside technologies of warfare, the early twentieth century saw widespread technological advances across other industries, particularly in the realm of mass media—radio, quite notably, as well as the rise of the motion picture and the studio system of Hollywood. American cinema experienced incredible growth during the war years, and by the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, roughly ninety percent of films screened internationally in Asia, South America, and Europe (with the exception of Germany) came from the United States (Cook, 2012). Well before the twentieth century, photography had been an integral part of war and war narratives — cameras lugged across the mud and craters of battlefields or propped at the ready in field hospitals. Film, of course, developed a similarly intimate relationship with warfare on both the home and war fronts, from newsreels and early government propaganda to the rise of narrative war films by the 1920s. While the majority of scholarship on early American war film focuses on fictional features, which rose in prominence following America’s direct engagement with the war, film scholar Richard Abel insists on the significance of newsreels and early feature-length documentary-style films in understanding how Americans received and reacted to the war. Although there are few surviving prints of these early European productions, Abel (2010) points to “some two dozen feature-length non-fiction war pictures…distributed in the USA between late 1914 and late 1916” that promised to “present an educational value beyond words to express, and present, forcefully, eloquently and vigorously, the true phases of the world’s great war” (p. 366; p. 380). For Abel, the reception of this footage across the country gives us an understanding of how American audiences developed a visual archive for understanding this foreign war, embracing neutrality until Americans, too, were called to fight.

This paper is concerned with the history of war films in the interwar period and the early practice of historicizing trauma through the medium. First, however, it is important to explore the meaning of a “war film” in this era and to question the
intentions of these films and the messages they contain about war from the perspective of both the filmmakers and the public. How can we understand the meaning and reception of “pro-war” and “anti-war” films in the United States during the 1920’s and 30’s? Following this brief discussion, we will explore a far more nuanced category of film born out of the Great Depression—narrative films that involve or utilize the figure of the Great War veteran. Where does this character emerge and in what capacity? What message does he bear about his contemporary United States and the memory of the war? Does “veteran” status serve an active, prominent purpose or is the title more symbolic, a character trait particular and familiar to the audiences of that time? Lastly, given the time period, how do veterans on film function as social or political devices in the dawning of the New Deal era? As is typical in media historiography, this exploration attempts to consider both the atmosphere in which these films were produced and received as well as their currency today as historical documents. Thus, while issues of production concerns and initial commercial success are important to note, the themes and symbolic content of the films in relation to historic context prove equally significant.

In introducing his historical methodology for film scholarship, historian Michael T. Isenberg (1981) discusses various means of interpreting war on film in relation to popular belief and culture in American society. Acknowledging the mass appeal of the medium and the manifold constructions of film-as-communicator, film-as-evidence, and film-as-art, he raises a crucial question for historians interested in film as a means of telling cultural history—“Do movies merely reflect cultural values, do they originate these values, or is there some middle ground?” (p. 48). The answer, as one might expect, is not an easy one, tending toward that broad middle ground. With regard to the industry and studio system of the interwar years, most historians acknowledge the popular narrative of a population of habitual moviegoers and corresponding film content designed to stimulate, entertain, and distract. A sense of public service and responsibility in this era
is certainly linked to individual films and studios, but one must wonder how much of this sentiment has been applied retroactively or through layers of interpretation.

While Hollywood and theaters around the country felt the impact of the Depression, and while critics are sharply divided over the role of film for American audiences during the thirties, there seems to be some consensus as to the ultimate significance and livelihood of the medium during this time. In terms of the question of reality versus escapism, historians often point to a crucial window, spanning from the late-twenties, with the birth and rise of “talkies” (beginning with *The Jazz Singer* in 1927), to the strict enforcement of the Production Code in July of 1934 (Bergman, 1971, p. xvi). Within this small window, called the “Golden Age of Turbulence,” Pre-Code Hollywood produced a large turnout of films whose content stands in stark and provocative contrast to the films of later years. In addition to blatant depictions of sex, violence, and the glamorizing and heroizing of figures like the Gangster and Bootlegger, this brief period gave rise to a compelling collection of films that were not at all escapist, but rather engaged with public sentiment by speaking directly to the harsh realities of life during the Depression. Interestingly enough, in confronting contemporary issues, these films often utilized the figure of the Great War veteran, placing him in the midst of transgressive and risqué themes and situations. Although they cannot quite be considered war films, these products of the early Depression years boldly address the war and its legacy, drawing vestiges of the last national crisis to the forefront of the next. These productions possess both palpable and tantalizing entertainment value, as well as weighty socio-political messages. War films of the 1920’s were notably more ambiguous with regard to their standpoint on war, and scholars have debated over these films and their harsher successors in the thirties, divided over the exact meaning, function, and impact of “pro-war” and “anti-war” cinema between World Wars I & II.

While film acknowledged and involved the war as a major
plot element even before the twenties, as was the case with Charlie Chaplin’s war comedy *Shoulder Arms* (1918), these productions did not yet carry the kind of scathing political commentary or critique of war that one finds in, for instance, major literature and art movements of the same period, particularly coming out of Europe. While this is certainly a reflection of mainstream American sentiment during and after the war, Isenberg (1981) notes that alongside postwar patriot zeal, the American public grew largely isolationist and increasingly anti-war following the Armistice. This divide between popular culture and popular sentiment suggests a complex exchange between filmmakers and audience, one that revolves around the long-running debate over entertainment value, commercial success, audience expectation, and the ultimate implications and efficacy of war on film. As Isenberg (1981) observes, despite a jovial appreciation of neutrality in this period, when it came to entertainment, oftentimes “Americans continu[ed] to elevate the patriotic, glorious and militaristic aspects of the war over its despair and disillusion” (p. 50). One can find this predilection in acclaimed global box-office successes of the twenties like King Vidor’s *The Big Parade* (1925), which established Vidor as a Hollywood great and remained Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s highest grossing film until *Gone with the Wind* in 1939 (May, 2005).

*The Big Parade* was groundbreaking for its realistic portrayal of the horrors of trench warfare and the physical suffering of veterans, though one can still find images of patriotism and Great War zeal typical of the decade in the film. However, the decision to include these latter elements can be attributed to certain aesthetic standards and expectations of the period, as well as a fear over government censorship. Despite these narrative devices, many name Vidor’s work as the first true American anti-war film, a belief that corresponds to the director’s own plans for the production:

I was strictly anti-war and I was doing as much as I could to speak against war in that film. And it has a lot of things that we thought could not be shown in regular theatres…
if you made anything that discouraged enlistment, the government would not permit it to be shown. Yet we had surprising support. One of the top men from Dupont, the armament people, told me that if we had any trouble, he would arrange for it to be shown throughout the country in tents. (Brownlow, 1985, p.145)

Vidor’s words here allude to the intricate relationship between filmmakers, studios, and the government with regard to depictions of the war that take a critical moral stance. Although one can detect an anti-war sentiment in the film, the feeling is subtle and matched on a tremulous balance with components of typical American war dramas. In his analysis, Isenberg (1981) recognizes the possibility of an anti-war interpretation, though ultimately places these early films within the category of “war as adventure,” a genre that stands in significant contrast to the rise and acceptance of more blatantly anti-war films in the thirties. Isenberg (1981) argues, “the onset of the Depression, which brought with it films of despair and bitterness, may have made the anti-war film more acceptable” (p. 128). Reacting to the popularity of the “war as adventure” genre, critics and academics of the twenties and early thirties debated fiercely over the presentation of war on film. Is it morally wrong to portray such violence in popular media? Are war films dangerous or distracting? Does a good war film foment the desire to make war or does it encourage feelings of peace?

Within the debate between pro-war and anti-war cinema (both of which were derided as propaganda by their respective camps), critics and academics often raised questions related to truth and realism in contrast to the war dramas (or “war as adventure”) that Hollywood was churning out at this time. Those arguing from an anti-war standpoint often pointed to the cheap thrills and bombastic glamour of these productions, as well as the commercial success associated with patriotic soldiers and their narratives of strength and sacrifice. As novelist Marcel Aymé reasoned:

18
In order to make it a pacifist propaganda, one would have to show the picture of life in the trenches and not that of death. The real pacifist propaganda film would show men tired with ennui, killing their lice, scraping mud from their clothes, and looking at desolate plains in front of the trenches. Success would be complete if the audience fell asleep in their seats, but no one would have the courage to go and see this. (Isenberg, 1981, p.129)

While this is an extreme circumstance that Aymé rightly acknowledges as impossible within the system, the thirties ushered in audiences receptive to alternative depictions of war on screen. The most notable example is Lewis Milestone’s All Quiet on the Western Front (1930), adapted from German veteran Erich Maria Remarque’s 1928 novel Im Westen nichts Neues and winner of the Academy Award in its year for Best Picture.

“This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure,” begins the novel’s epigraph. “For death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped its shells, were destroyed by the war” (Remarque, 1958, p. 6). This passage could readily stand in as the epigraph for the veteran films at the center of our discussion, produced in that brief pre-code window. All Quiet on the Western Front is widely regarded as the greatest and most poignant anti-war film concerning The Great War. Technologically speaking, the production was immense and resulted in images so accurate that fragments of the film were later mistaken for and credited as documentary newsreel footage (Robinson, 1985). This aesthetic realism was coupled with poetic and often unrealistic dialogue from the novel’s English translation, and resulted in a highly critical film that speaks directly about the horrors of war. Nonetheless, Remarque’s intention is honored and the film plays up to the soldier archetype and remains relatively general in its critique, rather than offering any specific indictments. The film is
anti-war, but not necessarily anti-Great War. This, of course, very likely has to do with the film’s German protagonist in contrast to its American audience.

The positive reception of All Quiet on the Western Front despite its more palpable anti-war message brings us back to the question raised earlier by Isenberg: Do films merely reflect cultural values, do they originate these values, or is there some middle ground? Does this film’s success indicate an American public comfortable and receptive to anti-war standpoints, or did it pave the way for such attitudes? Many would have us look further, as has been suggested before, plunging into that middle ground. Isenberg (1981) is quite right in pointing out that All Quiet on the Western Front was a best-selling book in the United States at that time and was thus very likely to prove commercially successful as a film (p. 130). Further, in terms of the question of studios boasting public responsibility, it is worthwhile to point out that it was the same studio system that previously produced “war as adventure” films before moving on to the more anti-war films of the thirties. In the wake of films like All Quiet on the Western Front, we will now travel back with the great steamships from Europe—cameras moving closer to home, tracking past armies marching through capital cities, back to small towns across the United States to examine the emergence of young American veterans on film.

What do these films and figures say about the war? What can they tell us about public sentiment and the Depression? How much is the “veteran” meant to be an active, integral part of the film, and how much is that trait simply a symbol, an easy and familiar character archetype, one already loaded with requisite meaning, depth, and connotation? Returning to the idea of a successful pacifist film as pitched by Aymé, how might we fit veteran films into this framework? The soldier has been plucked from the violence of combat, thrilling on film though often dreary and anxious in reality, and dropped back down into civilian life. After a 1920s heyday lag, following Black Tuesday, the American public required neither long-traveled newsreels nor reports from
abroad to understand the bleak reality of the present national and global situation. The veteran, in street clothes now with the war a decade past, shares this crisis with his fellow citizen, though still becomes the lens through which contemporary issues are explored. While veteran films do not often address the war directly, nor do they directly indict the American government or military, they do raise pertinent socio-political questions regarding those post-war days. Were veterans neglected? Do servicemen deserve compensation for their time in war? Although they received some attention immediately following the war, questions of this nature were pushed to the forefront in the difficult, early years of the Depression. Leading this charge were the veterans themselves, though films from the 1930 to 1933 period also grapple with related themes. The full extent to which the films reflected or originated these cultural values is difficult to say, but we can find a gateway for analysis through the figure of the “Forgotten Man.”

The “Forgotten Man” has origins in nineteenth century political discourse, though gained currency for our purposes when it entered mainstream vernacular following a Fireside Chat from President Roosevelt (1938) on April 7, 1932:

In my calm judgment, the Nation faces today a more grave emergency than in 1917. It is said that Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo because he forgot his infantry—he staked too much upon the more spectacular but less substantial cavalry. The present administration in Washington provides a close parallel. It has either forgotten or it does not want to remember the infantry of our economic army. These unhappy times call for the building of plans that rest upon the forgotten, the unorganized but the indispensable units of economic power, for plans like those of 1917 that build from the bottom up and not from the top down, that put their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid. (p. 624).
Clearly Roosevelt is not referencing veterans so much as the lower classes who had been neglected by the previous administration and would benefit from the New Deal, although he utilizes a strange military metaphor that foreshadows the entrance of the veteran into the “Forgotten Man” signifier. Within the same year, the term traveled and appeared in direct reference to Great War veterans in the final number of Mervyn LeRoy’s musical film Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933). The song in question, “Remember My Forgotten Man,” was written by composer Harry Warren and lyricist Al Dubin. They were reportedly inspired by a veterans’ protest in Washington as part of the Bonus Marches of 1932, which began just one month after Roosevelt gave his “Forgotten Man” address (Miller, 2012; Taylor, 1985).

The “Forgotten Man” number is staged in the iconic style of choreographer Busby Berkeley with elaborate, geometric formations and shadow-heavy German expressionist cinematography. The song itself is described in the film as a “wailing blues song” and the number as “the Big Parade… the Big Parade of Tears,” perhaps in reference to King Vidor’s film (LeRoy, 1933). Performed in iconic Sprechstimme style by the famously unmusical Joan Blondell with the uncredited though notable contralto of Etta Moten, the song stirs to gloomy life as a simple, sensual jazz tune, slowly rising toward a wail, growing into a performance that is part mournful blues, part funeral dirge, part military parade. Any sense of glory and passion is distorted by the minor key, resulting in a dark mood often compared with that of Depression-era hit “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” One of the main reasons Golddiggers of 1933 holds such lasting significance is the gravity of this end number, a distinct perversion of the laughs and wedding bells typical to Hollywood musical comedy endings. In fact, Golddiggers subverts this format further by presenting its all-smiling, all-singing, all-dancing number at the opening of the film—“The Gold Diggers’ Song (We’re in the Money).” It is difficult to imagine the experience for contemporary moviegoers upon this film’s release, the screen before them lighting up to a
wealth of ladies in coin-bikinis singing of endless, giddy prosperity now that “Old Man Depression you are through,” and ending the evening with breadlines and rows of veterans marching up around a lone, melancholic streetwalker (LeRoy, 1933).

“Remember my forgotten man,” the number begins, with Joan Blondell leaning against a lamppost, her wide eyes shining. “You put a rifle in his hand. You sent him far away/You shouted ‘Hip-hooray!’/But look at him today” (LeRoy, 1933). In addition to the language of “forgotten men” and references to the Bonus Marches, this number utilizes several images that were already part of a growing visual archive associated with veteran characters on film. A prominent example is the moment in the choreography when a bum, shooed away by a police officer, pulls back his lapel to reveal a military medal. Images of World War I medals pinned to tattered jackets or piled up at pawnshops, like the image of the veteran himself, work symbolically in relation to their contemporary setting. The experience of the veteran and the revival of veterans’ affairs on film during The Depression correspond directly to actions found on newsreels and the front pages of newspapers at the time. However, as we have seen, given the complex process of film production with regard to popular sentiment and desire for commercial success, again it is difficult to measure the extent to which these filmic gestures were a response to public sentiment, just as it is difficult to track how fully they served as the driving force of that sentiment.

The rampant poverty and widespread unemployment of the Depression created an immediate crisis around which Great War Veterans could organize themselves. The conditions of the Depression gave many veterans something real and urgent to rally around, particularly those who had already been seeking an earlier payment date for Veterans’ Bonuses. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, which evolved out of an earlier veterans’ organization founded before the turn of the century, struggled for membership and active veteran participation throughout the 1920s. However, by 1932, when most volunteer organizations were losing participants,
the Veterans of Foreign Wars boasted up to 200,000 members. Veterans joined organizations like this one in order to access various services, assistance, and compensation, most notably in the form of ‘the Bonus,’ which was federal financial compensation for wartime service promised to veterans to be made payable by 1945 (Ortiz, 2010, p. 32). With the onset of the Depression, veterans rallied to receive this payment earlier, culminating in ‘Bonus Marches’ in Washington D.C. of 40,000 unemployed and homeless veterans between May and June of 1932. On July 28th, 1932, under orders from President Hoover, U.S. army troops forcibly evicted these veterans from their encampment before torching their tents to the ground (Ortiz, 2010, p. 32).

In stark contrast to President Hoover’s perceived disregard for the average American, the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in November of 1932 was meant to usher in a time of positive change and hope for Americans. As seen through Roosevelt’s far more benevolent treatment of veterans participating in a smaller Bonus March in 1933, this was seemingly the case. Nonetheless, the question remained at large: What, if anything, does the federal government owe veterans for their service during the Great War? Particularly because veterans’ rights were now being framed in terms of the Depression and not the war, Roosevelt felt pressure from fiscal conservatives to regard Americans with equal deference during such widespread financial trouble. Reflecting this influence, Roosevelt spoke at the American Legion’s annual convention in 1933, claiming that “no person, because he wore a uniform, must thereafter be placed in a special class of beneficiaries over and above all other citizens” (Ortiz, 2010, p. 5). The U.S. government as a whole, however, did not agree with this single statement, and by 1936, Congress declared Veterans of Foreign Wars a government-chartered non-profit organization. Incidentally, that same year veterans received early payment of the Bonus (Ortiz, 2010, p.1).

The complex debate over veterans’ rights was a popular subject of interest during the Depression years, but the U.S. Government’s ultimate feelings on the matter would manifest in the passing
of the GI Bill, one of the largest social welfare programs in U.S. history, during World War II in 1944 (Ortiz, 2010, p. 3).

We can find many of these socio-political tensions over veterans reflected in the films of the era. As we consider these examples, we must keep the fundamental role of the veteran character at the center of our analysis. What do these characters, as both individuals and universal symbols, say about the war, the Depression, and the United States? In addition to the sentiments of individual filmmakers and studio desire for commercial success, what other factors must be taken into account? William A. Wellman’s *Heroes for Sale* (1933) depicts the harsh realities of Depression-era America, and the film’s themes of drug addiction, Bolshevism, and violence make it a true pre-code gem. Also known as *Breadline*, the film stars Richard Barthelmess as Tom Holmes. Barthelmess, popularized among American audiences as the All-American Boy, affected moviegoers with his portrayal of Tom, a Great War veteran addicted to morphine, a habit he picked up in a German war hospital through treatment for steel splinters in his spine (Wellman, 1933). After he is caught stealing from the bank where he is employed, and asked why he does not want to live a good, Christian life, Tom breaks down and exclaims, “It’s not my fault! It’s not my fault if I steal! If I kill somebody. I tell you, I’m going crazy! How do you think I started taking that stuff? For fun? Or pleasure? Well, I’ll tell you how. They gave it to me in a German hospital to keep me from going mad with pain. Pain! Agony! Continual Torture!” (Wellman, 1933).

Aside from addressing the physical and mental damage that the war inflicted on individual veterans, the film also deals with the lingering need for camaraderie among soldiers adjusting to life at home. Another common theme in veteran films from this period is the failure of this unity to actualize productively in civilian life, instead manifesting in violent and morally repugnant domains like gangs, bootlegging rings, and prison blocks. One soldier’s father in *Heroes for Sale* puts it well: “You fellas forget the war is over. It’s time to stop beating the drum and waving the flag” (Wellman, 1933).
As with many veteran films, the narrative of *Heroes for Sale* begins immediately after the war with the protagonist’s shaky adjustment to civilian life. After hitting rock bottom, he rises through honest and humble labor with the discipline of an army man in order to truly make something of himself; Embracing the individualistic ideals of the American Dream, he experiences financial and domestic success in spite of the Depression.

In the latter half of the film, *Heroes for Sale* turns its attentions from the sufferings of a young veteran to the breadth of suffering experienced by all working-class Americans, symbolized through the meeting of these figures in the breadlines, a return to the broader notion of the “Forgotten Man.” Reacting to such masses, the film’s archetypal German Bolshevik foil transforms into a paranoid, social welfare-wary capitalist, while the film’s All-American veteran protagonist stands resolute for the “honest, hard-working people out of jobs” and makes teary-eyed proclamations like, “If you smash the machines, they’ll only build more!” (Wellman, 1933). Although the protagonist, Tom, ultimately experiences another fall from grace, after which he settles in with a group of hobos who are all ex-servicemen, the film ends with a patriotic optimism that is complimentary of President Roosevelt and hopeful for the future of the United States. *Heroes for Sale* portrays the initial sufferings of a veteran and the socio-economic conditions of the twenties and thirties that fostered such suffering, but the film ultimately stands as an incredibly pro-American one, its criticisms outshone by persevering optimism and patient faith in the system. This ending puts the film in contrast with a similarly themed, though far more critical film, *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932), another work from Mervyn LeRoy, released a year before *Goldiggers of 1933*.

*I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, adapted from a popular memoir published in January 1932, was released in November of the same year to an American public still basking in the hope and aching optimism of Roosevelt’s election (Maltby, 2012). Although the film is viewed today as the pinnacle of Warner Brothers’ social
consciousness within the “Golden Age of Turbulence,” film theorist Richard Maltby (2012) posits that there are other factors to consider before drawing this conclusion (p. 76). Lacking an optimistic ending, the film is wrought with suffering, hopelessness, and pre-New Deal despair, surrounding the wrongly-accused protagonist James Allen, a Great War veteran played by Paul Muni, who is meant to “symboliz[e] all Depression victims” (p. 76). After returning from the front, James Allen is hopeful for the future, aspiring to build bridges as an engineer. His former employer at a factory encourages him to return to menial labor, explaining that he should be “a Soldier of Peace instead of a Soldier of War.” James declines, claiming that he feels “out of step with everybody” in a work environment that is “cramped, mechanical, and worse than the army” (Le Roy, 1932). He pursues construction positions, but eventually becomes another victim of high and chronic unemployment. After attempting to pawn his war medals but failing due to the surplus of medals already at the pawnshop, James finds himself wrapped up in crime and sentenced to ten years of hard labor.

Despite the protagonist’s veteran status and the looming entrance of the Depression into the film’s late-twenties, early-thirties setting, neither the war nor the Depression factor prominently into the film’s plot, which instead involves the plight of a wrongly accused man trapped in the Southern chain gang system. Maltby (2012) argues for an interpretation similar to the one proposed earlier with regard to All Quiet on the Western Front:

[The] Warner’s certainly aimed to produce a topical movie, but its topicality lay in its adaptation of a current best-selling book rather than in its allusion to broader events in the culture, and nowhere in the surviving documentation of the movie’s production and distribution is there any evidence that its makers intended that it provide a definitive expression of the national mood in 1932 or, whatever their later claims, to reform the penal system. (p. 77)
Moreover, claims that the film intended to indict the Southern penal system come under question if one accepts Maltby’s (2012) assertion that the chain gang subject was chosen as a topical alternative to twenties gangsterism, which had recently come under scrutiny by the Association of Motion Picture Producers (p. 85). Furthermore, in acknowledging that the film was based on the true story of World War I veteran Robert Burns, the symbolic meaning of the veteran character has literally met its real life equivalent (Maltby, 2012, p. 85). While this factor certainly fuels our discussion over the role of film in both reflecting and originating cultural values, *I Was a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, with its legacy and prestige in film history, offers a keen though subtle and peripheral way of understanding the experience of American veterans in the interwar years.

Aside from several notable scenes which contrast the suffering and camaraderie of military life with that of conditions on the chain gang, the most famous scene of *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* comes at the end of the film. James Allen has fled from wrongful imprisonment for a second time, literally blowing up the bridges he had once hoped to build. Meeting his wife in the shadows of a parking garage, he tells her the reality of his life, a future of “no friends, no rest, no peace.” “How do you live?” she asks him. In the famous last shot, he backs into the shadows and, with unsettling eyes, wide and mad, he responds, “I steal!” before disappearing into the night (Le Roy, 1932). This final line fits well alongside Tom’s unapologetic threat of theft or murder at the beginning of *Heroes for Sale*. Both men cannot apologize for the helpless conditions of their lives, forced upon them by larger powers and institutions. For Tom, this force was a morphine addiction born out of the war. For James, the forces were a massive and indiscernible amalgamation of the war, veteran neglect, the Depression, and the corrupt penal system of the South. One of the few moments in the film that links his plight back to his status as a veteran comes with the quick flash of a newspaper headline: “What had become of James Allen? Is he,
too, just another forgotten man?” (LeRoy, 1932).

A final theme in film to consider in relation to the veteran character is that of gangsterism and bootlegging. The genre was quite popular in pre-code Hollywood, and gangster films like Erle C. Kenton’s *The Last Parade* (1931) utilized the figure of the Great War veteran for many of the reasons already discussed, namely veteran neglect and unemployment after the war. Some of these films also address the disillusionment toward violence caused by the war, rendering young men comfortable with wielding guns and killing individuals deemed disloyal, threatening, or abstracted by an “Us versus Them” mentality. Furthermore, the fierce loyalty and violence shared during soldiering life transfers easily to gang culture. Raoul Walsh’s *The Roaring Twenties* (1939), which bookends films like *The Last Parade* in the gangster genre of the 30’s, serves as an interesting means of comparison. The film begins with the wartime bond formed between Eddie Bartlett, played by iconic tough guy James Cagney, George Hally, a supporting role for Humphrey Bogart, and Lloyd Hart, a sweet-faced Jeffrey Lynn. The three young men meet in the trenches, revealing various degrees of fear and zeal for combat, and later revive this camaraderie as various actors in a bootlegging ring. Bogart’s character, in particular, expresses considerable pleasure and malice with his weapon during the war, a tendency that transfers to his cool and menacing demeanor as a successful gangster and eventual enemy to ringleader Eddie Bartlett.

Although it is certainly a gangster film, *The Roaring Twenties* displays clear signs of its status as a post-code production. Although Eddie Bartlett is our notorious gangster protagonist, he is placed in contrast to his war buddy Lloyd, who leaves the bootlegging business in search of honest work and takes Bartlett’s girl with him to enjoy a wealthy, happy home life. As much as we see this film today as an historical work, the film also historicizes itself, as noted in its nostalgic opening message, which juxtaposes images of President Roosevelt and a world aflame with the threat of World War II to a far different time, though just a decade
“Bitter or Sweet,” The Roaring Twenties begins, “this film is a memory of an era” (Walsh, 1939). Although the film contains the veteran narrative, its intention was that Eddie Bartlett’s downfall ultimately had little to do with his status as a veteran and instead suggested the end of the Gangster Film era. Here the label of veteran seems to serve a much more symbolic and culturally relevant role, dramatic and feasible within the time period despite limited documentation of actual Great War veterans turning to this lifestyle in the 1920s. As the film leaves the trenches in its opening scenes, voiceover narration describes returning soldiers with the same language of the “Forgotten Man,” sympathizing with soldiers “almost forgotten by all but their relatives and friends” (Walsh, 1939). As newsreels flash across the screen, the narrator suggests that the world has moved on, but this temperament increases twofold by the end of the film when a fallen Bartlett’s corpse is identified: “This is Eddie Bartlett. He used to be a big shot” (Walsh, 1939). Thus, in the end, the Forgotten Man of The Roaring Twenties is not the veteran, but the gangster. One finds a similar treatment of the veteran-as-gangster in W. S. Van Dyke’s They Gave Him a Gun (1937), which opens with hints at an anti-war tone. Our newly-drafted protagonist Jimmy declares that “I’ll work for my country and live for it and be any kind of a cockeyed good citizen they want, but when they order me to dress up like a monkey and travel 3,000 miles to butcher somebody, I’m walkin’ out” (Van Dyke, 1937). Unsurprisingly, he is the gangster-to-be, hardened by his time in combat, and the film quickly shifts its focus toward drama and the mood of film noir.

Despite the richness of Great War films, history marches on and many productions from the thirties are colored by a kind of specter that hangs over and darkens our contemporary understanding of them. Of course, it is the promise of a Second World War that troubles our cultural perception of the First, a sense of imminence that speaks to the stance of some historians [which historians] that there should be no divide between the narratives of the two global events. Regardless, in examining a
particular era, it is impossible to blot out the later course of history. When we talk then of an isolated cultural history in the interwar years, this task not only proves impossible, but laughably so. It was an era, to be sure, and one rich with new global media and cultural exchange. But while film provides a far more nuanced perspective than uncut or even annotated newsreels, deconstructing cinema from this time is a far greater task with many more elements to consider. Furthermore, taking a focused look at veterans in film, our contemporary understanding of these early pictures lies in sifting through many layers and generations of subsequent work.

America’s most legendary and affective veteran films, those with the widest reception and resonance today, are arguably those that deal with men from the Second World War or the war in Vietnam. World War II’s standards include *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) and *It’s Always Fair Weather* (1955), while Vietnam veterans have been depicted in iconic films like *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989). In tracing the influence of anti-war and veteran films from the Depression years on these latter productions, it almost goes without saying to also note that Dalton Trumbo’s *Johnny Got His Gun* became one of the most popular protest novels of the Vietnam Era, cited as the greatest influence for veteran Ron Kovic, whose autobiography became the basis for *Born on the Fourth of July* (Trumbo, 2007, p. xiii). The novel was recently published with an introduction by Cindy Sheehan, who explains that Trumbo’s writing helped her to recover from the death of her son in the Iraq War in 2004 (Trumbo, 2007, p. v). The further that these traces and influences are linked and tied, the more convoluted they become within the intersection of cultural history and the legacy of American wars.

With specific regard to the question of veterans on film, the “veteran” figure in his earliest depictions can be broken down into three parts—the veteran as a real individual, the veteran as film character, and the veteran as national myth, a kind of folk symbol called the “Forgotten Man.” The Forgotten Man, in his namesake’s abstraction, stands most in line with a national historical narrative,
though his very presence there works to disrupt it and point out its failures and shortcomings. The first two elements, individual and character, might best be understood by a seemingly simple gesture—acknowledging and confronting modern-day equivalents. In this age of new global media, how do we understand and depict veterans in relation to popular values and cultural sentiment? As Veterans Day each year begets widespread though all-too-often limited discussions of the experience of veterans in the United States, in acknowledging the holiday’s roots in Armistice Day and that eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, we might look back today with a comparative and solemn perspective on what is now nearly a century of film dealing with wars and those who fight them.

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The economic development of Nigeria is best described as a perfect storm in which a brutal colonial history intersects with an equally exploitative neocolonial petroleum industry. Competition over Nigeria’s oil-rich regions is problematized by the fact that two conflicting minorities groups – the Ijaw and Ogoni – have historically controlled these areas. This reality informs the severe natural, economic and human abuses inflicted by Shell Oil – the dominant actor monopolizing Nigerian oil – that provoke reactionary violence by Nigerian youth. Moreover, this paper examines efforts of corporate responsibility produced as remedies for Shell’s treatment of Nigerians and the Nigerian environment. A market driven by a singular commodity that engenders a crippling dependency on both a fickle commodity and capitalist foreign consumers, destroys the environmental landscape through a harsh extractive process and foments a social atmosphere defined by violence and internal competition, necessitating an examination of Nigeria’s development trajectory through an “integrated explanation.”

AREAS OF INTEREST:
Nigerian Development, Neocolonialism, Environmentalism
Nigeria’s development trajectory resembles a perfect storm animated by the interplay of a variety of extreme factors. Highlighting the reality that Nigeria does not exist in a vacuum, both the existence and relationship of some of these dominant factors must be outlined in order to construct a germane understanding of the country’s current political economy and violent social condition. In 1967, only seven years after Nigeria gained its independence from British control, civil war broke out. Lead by the Biafran separatist movement and resulting in the Biafran famine, the civil war further engendered conflict in the already unstable atmosphere within Nigeria. Taking into consideration Nigeria’s lengthy civil war, along with its lucrative petroleum resources and the control of foreign oil corporations over the Niger River Delta, the Nigeria case becomes as much a product of modern neocolonialism as of its colonial history. Nigeria’s dependence on a singular and politically volatile commodity has proved detrimental for both the country’s economy
at large, and to its physical environment, ruined by a harmful petroleum extraction process. This brutal amalgamation of factors cultivates a hostile social situation plagued by severe reactionary violence triggered by the bitterness of local minorities over their overwhelming social and economic disenfranchisement. This essay argues for what writers Uwafiokun, Idemudia, and Ewem E. Ite describe as an “integrated explanation” for Nigeria’s development and “on the relationships among the different factors often deduced to be responsible for the conflict” (2006, p.392). Nigeria’s political economy is characterized by a continuous colonial legacy, a competitive petroleum market and a disappearing natural environment that fuse and erupt within an already hostile social milieu marked by the violence of defensive oil corporations and a reactionary youth movement.

Fifty years after independence, Nigeria’s colonial history remains deeply entrenched in the country’s present circumstances. Understanding this particular nation’s development process necessitates examining the relationship between the capitalist model and the role ascribed to Africa by the Western ideologies. Author Samir Amin (2002) employs this method of analysis as a means to understand the overwhelming marginalization of this enormous and diverse region. Amin argues that integration is a two-staged process, in which the nation is ideologically locked, via a century of colonialism, within an attitude of carelessness held by dominant market forces towards Africa, before it is integrated into the international economic market. Adopting this model, the Nigerian market is first characterized as mercantilist within a core/periphery paradigm that establishes an “outward looking export economy,” easily imagined in a postcolonial environment, after which, it is possible to see Nigeria’s development according to a strictly Western agenda (Amin, 20002, p.44). In this respect, Amin highlights the ties between the past and the present, and the overlooked fact that “the criticisms of independent Africa…of the lack of economic direction…forget that these features of contemporary Africa were forged between 1880 and 1960” – a

Thinkers interrogating the manner in which Africa became distinct and separate from the Global North ultimately articulate that a subordination occurred, and continues to do so, at a dually physical and conceptual level. These arguments inform Amin, as well as Stuart Hall (1992) and James Furgeson (2006). Hall (1992) conducts a retrospective analysis of how the West and Non-West “became different parts of one global social, economic and cultural system, one interdependent world” – binary opposites whose meaning is founded in difference (p.279). Hall argues that descriptions of the West – “industrialized, urbanized, secular, [and] modern” – serve as a system of representation (p.277). Taken one-step forward, the system becomes one of repression, built on a ‘discursive practice’ that produces knowledge through exercises of meaning construction, ultimately resulting in, “how the West behave[s] towards the Rest” (p.291). Similarly, Ferguson (2006) offers Achille Mbembe’s critique of Africa “as an idea, a concept” that serves “a polemical argument for the West’s desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world” (p.2). Described in terms of its “lacks and absences, [and] failings and problems,” Africa, Ferguson argues, transforms into a “shadow state” that “lurks beside” the West it strives and fails to take after, never its own culture worthy of admiration (2006, pp. 15-16). In addition, the continent holds a specific place within a hierarchy of states, akin to the expression, “knowing your place,” that relates to global links that “connect in a selective, discontinuous, and point-to-point fashion” (p.14).

The concepts presented above are not merely abstractions, but concrete processes with real consequences in Nigeria. Approximately 300 ethnic groups positioned against each other by boarders, carelessly established by the British government, now compete over petroleum resources, historically governed by two minority groups alone. In turn, Nigeria resembles “not a nation state, but a mere geographic expression” constructed by the British, and built upon an atmosphere of induced competition
that ignites the divides between religious and ethnic groups (2006, p.391). The discovery of “black gold” in 1958 at Oloibiri fostered a false sense of hope within individuals living in the region, as Nigeria (specifically the Niger Delta) was transformed from a relatively insignificant region into one of significant geopolitical importance” (ibid).

From these foundations emerge an understanding of the neocolonial oil market that on the one hand offers Nigeria the potential for mass revenue, and on the other hand stymies any attempt at development. In this respect, Nigeria does not stand alone, as Tina Rosenberg (2007) states in her New York Times piece, *The Perils of Petrocracy*: “Oil-and-gas-dependent countries are historically ill governed” (Rosenberg, 1). Although the industry generates incredible profits, the nature of oil drilling cripples a country’s prospects for widespread development. Not especially labor intensive, oil limits prospects for extensive employment, but due to its reign over the country’s economic efforts, creates an import-dependent, mono-commodity environment that, without manufacturing, kills any prospect of growing a middle class (Rosenberg, 2). Additionally, Rosenberg explains that oil countries fall victim to corruption as “money is made by soliciting politicians and bureaucrats rather than by making things and selling them” (Rosenberg, 1).

For Nigeria, it is the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company that leads the neocolonial process of primitive accumulation. With a government focused mainly on exerting control over local communities through the defense of the military, many Nigerians feel as though “Shell is the only government [they] know” and that “in the Niger Delta Shell is the state” (Zalik, 2004, p. 406). In decentralizing the government’s control of domestic oil and removing management opportunities that could fund state programs, Shell Oil engenders a neocolonial paradigm that imperially extracts natural resources at the expense of local development.

Shell finds itself accountable for Nigeria’s ongoing
underdevelopment, as the multinational corporation works closely with the “protection of the Nigerian military” to remain operationally in control of the industry, argues Zalik in *The Niger Delta: ‘Petro Violence’ and ‘Partnership Development’* (2004, p.404). Despite the fact that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNCP) “holds the majority of shares” in on and offshore ventures, ultimately the Nigerian state “disappears in a process of parceling and privatization” (p.404). The immediate transference of oil from the Delta to the hands of foreign corporations immediately post-extraction contributes to the ongoing marginalization of local Nigerians made vulnerable by being robbed of their own resources: “Shell remains the most visible manifestation of social control and regulation in a region… bereft of basic services” (p.406). Devising models to reorganize “revenue sharing and allocation” proves especially difficult in a climate replete with differentiating values and notions of what development should look like and who should control it. Moreover, the unavailability of “reliable socio-economic data” and frequency of regime changes has made drawing conclusions on these issues increasingly difficult (Idemudia et al., 2006, p.398).

Nevertheless, as Michael Watts in his *Petro-Insurgency or Criminal Syndicate? Conflict & Violence in the Niger Delta* (2007) points out, evidence of stark inequalities do exist: “85% of oil revenues accrue to 1 percent of the population” (Watts, p.641). What is more, Watts estimates that “$100 of $400 billion in revenues since 1970 has simply gone ‘missing,’ evidencing the susceptibility to corruption of the oil industry, reminiscent of Nigeria’s 20th century political record (p.164). Despite the nine digit revenues, “oil did not seem to add to the standard of living” (Ibid). According to The World Bank in 2007, both the GDP and life expectancy rates of Nigeria had fallen since the prior decade (Ibid). Shell’s practices fomented what Watts names ‘the oil complex’ within Nigeria’s petro-state. Perhaps its most defining feature is the culture of paradoxes; facilitated by oil extraction, these “contradictions” are “nowhere greater than on the oilfields of the Niger Delta,” a
troubling portrait of abject poverty and severe underdevelopment coexisting alongside massive capital (Ibid).

The mono-commodity market of Nigerian oil production not only surpresses local industry by placing emphasis on foreign markets, but also proves extremely detrimental to the physical environment. Arable farmlands “have been lost” to the construction of infrastructure necessary for oil extraction – lands on which minorities groups historically lived (Jike, 2004, p.690). Moreover, oil is especially harmful to flora and fauna; excessive land exploration diminishes crop quality and results in a loss of soil fertility. Similarly, the quality, as well as size and shape of “traditional staples” like “cassava, yam [and] plantain” suffer under these conditions. Moreover, the ramifications of petroleum extraction extend to aquatic life, and it is proposed that oil spillage may lead to the disappearance of entire aquatic species (Jike, 2004, p.590). According to Watts, 4,835 oil spills occurred during the period of 1976 and 1996 (2007, p.399). These spills occur alongside frequent petroleum fires (Jike, 2004, p.691). Not only is a community’s main protein source – fish – depleted, but oil spills have also ruined once clean and consumable water sources (Ibid).

Environmental factors cause an additional paradox within oil culture, as Nigerians “perceive the discovery of oil as a threat to their life-support system, the land” (2004, p. 691). Petroleum extraction exacerbates tensions among local populations, comprised largely of farmers and fisherman, who compete over the slim natural resources that remain (Watts, 2007, p. 399). Further, Nigeria’s oil production processes occur near densely populated areas, producing environmental impacts that provoke sociological costs. Gas flaring also contributes to a reported increase in carcinogen-related diseases amongst civilians. The prospect of facilitating sustainable development seems more challenging than ever, as sustainability entails meeting “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (2004, p. 692). Once viewed as a gateway for achieving comparative development, black gold now poses
“deleterious consequences for human capital, soil fertility, and the ability of the environment to sustain life” (p. 691).

As Idemudia and Ite explain, the “environmental factors in the Niger Delta conflict can only be understood in terms of being a proximate cause” (2006, p. 399). Considering the “dependency of the people” on their natural surroundings, the environment – although playing a leading role – should more accurately be viewed as an integrated component of Nigeria’s political economy that grows larger due to its relationship to the economy and the socio-political conflict (Ibid). In addition to the “overuse of renewable resources,” environmental changes also manifest in terms of pollution, overpopulation, and the demise of spatial living conditions. These analyses are critical components of environmental discourse, and further highlight the interconnectedness of the various forces at play within Nigeria’s multifaceted socio-political arena. Many sociological changes made their way through the Nigerian social composition, affecting young men, family units, and urban structures. In particular, the elimination of indigenous lands previously used as community centers and for agricultural production lead to a mass movement of young men into urban centers to search for employment. Naturally, effects of over crowdedness proved grave, as diseases like typhoid and tuberculosis spread rapidly and in great numbers (2004, p. 693). On the macroscopic level, this population swelling contributed to increased filth and decay, to the point where “human settlements [are] beyond the ability of the local ecosystem to renew itself or to absorb waste in both rural and urban areas” (Ibid).

This migrant pattern lead not only to the expansion of slums in urban areas, but also to the creation of a specific kind of subculture defined by the communal trope of frustration among groups of young men, often siblings and extended family members (Ibid). It is not without significance that the highest rate of unemployment in Nigeria belongs to the Niger Delta region (Idemudia et al., 2006, p.401). Living in such close proximity, these
individuals “began to raise [their] level of awareness about [their] deprived social conditions” and generate an exigency among an entire demographic to affect change based on the fact that the citizenry at large felt hapless (2004, p. 694). This newfound sentiment also reflects that education within rural communities “has been on a steady increase” since independence (2006, p. 401). Motivated by this “collective sense of alienation,” as well as debilitating unemployment, a movement of youth politics came into existence. Employing a distinct style of militancy, these reactionary youth movements bare a fair share of the responsibility for the “militarization of the Niger Delta” (2006, p. 402). A black market anchored in oil bunkering blossomed, where reactionaries worked in conjunction with criminal organizations to “illegally bunker substantial oil flower” – between 100,000 and 300,000 barrels per day. The youth willing to undergo the risky job earned enough capital to buy equipment, namely weapons: “rifles, machine guns, satellite phones and speed boats” (Ibid). Through violence, these youth movements established greater ideological goals to “cultivate and to nurture ethnic nationalism” and to gain enough clout to stand alongside more prominent groups that possess a voice in the determination of Nigeria’s “national cake” (Jike, 2004, p. 694).

The group to that best emblemizes the fusion between a nationalist rhetoric and militant modus operandi is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, commonly referred to as MEND. Born in 2005, after the arrest of the politically important Ijaw members – the ethnic group that, in addition to the Ogonis, historically controlled most oil reserves – MEND claims “to be a ‘union of all relevant militant groups”’ (Watts, 2007, p. 645). Acting as an “umbrella organization for several armed groups,” MEND’s political agenda did not clarify until early 2006 when the group struck an offshore oil vessel belonging to TIDEX and kidnapped four workers (Economist, 2008, 1; Watts, 2007, p. 645). This agenda supports “a greater share of Nigeria’s oil revenues to go to the impoverished region that sits atop the oil” (Economist
1) In a statement signed in February 2007, MEND outline its political platform through five demands: the “immediate and unconditional” releases of Alhaji Asari-Dokubo (the former head of Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force or NDPVF), Governor Alamieyeseigha (former governor of Bayelsa State – one of the predominant oil producing areas – arrested by the British in September of 2005), and youth leader Joshua Macaiva; fourth, the “immediate and unconditional demilitarization of the Niger Delta”; and lastly, the “immediate payment of $1.5 billion compensation from Shell approved by the Nigerian National Assembly covering four decades of environmental degradation” (Watts, 2007, p. 646).

According to journalist, Stephanie Hanson (2007), MEND, characterized by its secretiveness, often works undercover, not only as a means of protection, but also of mystifying the government enough so that it cannot accurately determine MEND’s working structure (2). It is important to note that one of the key differences separating MEND from other like-minded groups is the fact that these young Igaw men appear “more enlightened and sophisticated,” as some of their leaders are recipients of university level education and have an understanding of similar paramilitary campaigns (Ibid). For example, members of MEND remain under the radar by using a decentralized structure, and by operating under the names of other organizations. This effort at maintaining a clandestine persona has proved to be successful as locals grant MEND “sympathy” and honor their work by not speaking (2007, 3). Though MEND has officially denied allegations, it is speculated that MEND acquires wealth from ransom money earned by kidnapping foreign oil workers; hostages that usually remain unharmed and properly returned after a negotiation period (Ibid).

Hanson argues that MEND, Claiming to “distance itself from the criminal activities” of other, smaller militant groups, deploys kidnappings as a means of garnering “international attention” for the cause of the Delta. Kidnappings serving as a
vehicle to exploit “the blaze of publicity thus generated to announce their grievances and demands of the Nigerian government” (2007, 3). Through these measures, MEND halted the production of “at least eight hundred thousand barrels per day, or over 25% of the country’s oil output” (4). Indeed, Hanson points out that MEND represents “the most powerful militant group” currently in the Delta, and exhibits full awareness of “its ability to affect international oil prices” (6). Nonetheless, MEND ambitions for the future – whether concrete government involvement, political autonomy for the Niger Delta, or merely influence in the political process – remain unclear, and therefore will continue to stand for an “idea,” more than a partisan organization (2).

Evidenced by the extreme level of interconnectedness between a deeply embedded colonial legacy, a lucrative oil industry and its harmful environmental consequences, an integrated explanation of Nigeria’s development trajectory proves the most accurate model for not only understanding the difficulties facing Nigeria, but also explaining the atmosphere of violence. Never a homogenous region, the British united the area of Nigeria as a colonial method of control, their interventions positioning ethnic and religious groups at odds with each other. These practices continue in the neocolonial extraction of oil, bringing the relationship between modern development pursuits and historical colonial narratives full circle. So deeply entwined with the powerful international agents, such as Shell Oil, Nigeria finds itself unable to separate from the global power structures of capitalism that move the country’s development process one step forward and two steps back.

Due to the worldwide outcry against the inhumane treatment of local communities, seen most clearly in the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the killing of their principal activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Shell enacted several remedial programs that collectively formed the principle of ‘corporate responsibility’ (Dibua, 2012, p. 5). Through the creation of the Shell Environmental Fund and the Shell
Foundation, which award “sustainable transportation projects in strategically important sites,” alongside “well-placed ads on network television,” Shell’s public relations committee devised a brilliant plan that drastically improved its corporate image and transformed the oil tyrant into a “global leader in corporate social and environmental responsibility” (Zalik, 2004, p. 410). These efforts prove insignificant when compared to the damage done and accomplish nothing to actualize comprehensive systemic change within the operational practices of Shell.

Most importantly, in co-opting the rhetoric of social and environmental responsibility, Shell has become more dangerous. As the extreme marginalization of locals and the depletion of environmental resources continue to plummet at a growing rate, the inseparability between the forces triggering Nigeria’s ‘perfect storm’ are clear, and the debates over resource control and revenue distribution remain unresolved. In looking forward, Nigeria must develop a strategy of commodity diversification that can initiate a departure from oil dependency, and divorce a nation from oil corruption and its practices. Second, an “alternative development agenda” that centralizes the relationship between the people and the environment must take precedence (Jike, 2004, p. 699). In the end, Nigeria must be seen as a global concern, not just an internal one, as it is through this attitude only that a comprehensive and multilayered re-conceptualization of the relationships between domestic and foreign relations, the economic realm, the political sphere, the environment, and the social landscape can progress with any kind of humane and long-lasting traction.
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The Alchemical Charlatan

BY J S ADAMS

Unsurprisingly, the notion of alchemical fraud in early modern Europe is convoluted. In examining alchemy in its social and commercial context, it is important not to apply conceptions of 21st century chemistry to 16th century alchemy. 21st century bias against the possibility of transmutation fails to recognize that early modern Europeans had solid natural philosophical reasons for believing that transmutation was possible, and considerable care must be taken to examine cases of alchemical fraud in this light. This paper examines trial dossiers from the 16th century containing contracts, arrest warrants, and court documents to better understand alchemy in its appropriate context. These documents reveal that accusations of alchemical fraud were served in a commercial (as opposed to heretical) context, and that fraudulent alchemists were punished as such within this context. The treatment of fraudulent alchemists reveals that the general conception of alchemy in early modern Europe was that it was a viable commercial practice as opposed to magic or heresy.

AREAS OF INTEREST:
Alchemy, Fraud, Early Modern Europe
The case on alchemical fraud is considered, for the most part, closed. At the very least, it is considered unproblematic and thus uninteresting. Because modern chemistry does not allow for transmutation—the flying car of alchemical promises where the philosophers’ stone is the time machine, I suppose—it might be generally assumed that early modern Europeans who reported witnessing successful transmutations were either fools or victims of fraud. A number of modern historians sidestep potential condescension by arguing that those who claimed to have witnessed transmutations were not ignorant or unintelligent, but rather were simply the victims of fraud. On this view, fraud amounts to nothing more and nothing less than trickery, and the alchemical charlatan is cast as the scoundrel who “knew better,” taking ignorant “believers” for a ride (Read, 1992).

This view is anachronistic, and it rests on the modern
perspective that transmutation is impossible.¹ The modern bias against the conceivability of transmutation has changed the conversation, failing to recognize that early modern Europeans had solid natural philosophical reasons for believing that transmutation was possible, albeit difficult. Indeed, there was a general acceptance in early modern Europe that alchemy was difficult, and patrons and practitioners alike recognized this. That patrons invested in alchemy in light of this shows that they believed that the goals of alchemy were possible; alchemical frauds, as much as their victims, actually believed that transmutation could be achieved, in theory and in practice.² In order to really understand alchemical fraud one must understand the practice in its original context; that is, what it meant to early modern patrons and practitioners of alchemy to charge an alchemist with fraud.

Court cases from the late 16th-century Holy Roman Empire provide a wealth of perspective on alchemical fraud. Trial dossiers—containing contracts outlining the terms of employment in alchemical work, letters describing that work, arrest warrants and subsequent interrogation records of alchemists, and so forth—reveal that judgments of an alchemist’s ability to transmute metals were often independent of accusations of alchemical fraud. Of course, incompetence and deceit go hand in hand, but the consequences for incompetence alone were less severe than one would think. An incompetent alchemist could, for example, avoid imprisonment or execution by simply owning up to their failure and reimbursing patron(s) for their investments; imprisonment and execution were reserved for those incompetent alchemists who failed to do so.³ If an alchemist could not fulfill their contract, patrons were, for the most part, disappointed but understanding. Importantly, incompetence referred to an alchemist’s inability to

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² For a summary of philosophical and theoretical arguments for belief in the possibility of transmutation, see Moran (1987).
³ This will be discussed in more detail later.
fulfill their contract, not necessarily their ability or inability to transmute metals (Pfeilsticker, 1963).

It was not typically the case that alchemical frauds knew they could not deliver on their contracts. The alchemical charlatan, in other words, was not a Music Man. Early modern alchemical fraud was not an issue of empty promises, as is often assumed today; rather, early modern alchemical fraud was an issue of failure to keep promises deemed “full” by all relevant parties. Admittedly, this distinction is very subtle. Yet, it is of importance because, no more than today, were the consequences of making an empty promise the same as those for failing to keep a promise. It is conceivable that, were alchemical fraud considered an issue of empty promises, the treatment of alchemical fraud would have been of a very different quality, namely more severe consequences for alchemical inability. There is shockingly little evidence of such consequences (Nummedal, 2001).

The concept of alchemical fraud that emerges is thus far more complex than one might expect. There is little evidence in the arrest warrants and interrogation records of the manipulations and the deliberate tricks that are claimed to have been ubiquitous. Rather, the heart of the matter was the practitioners’ inability or unwillingness to fulfill the contracts they had signed with their patrons. Alchemical fraud was tried in a commercial context, revealing that commercial expectations, above all, influenced judgments about and treatments of alchemical competence and legitimacy.

Serious alchemy was expensive, and thus alchemists needed large investments in order to carry out their work. Patrons, analogous to modern investors, returned on their investments with the profits that would, hopefully, be generated by the philosophers’ stone. Terms of employment between patrons and practitioners were negotiated in a business-like manner, with contracts that spelled out, in detail, the obligations of both parties. A contract with Duke Friederech of Stuttgart from 1598, provides an example:
I, Michael Heinrich Wagenmann vom Hoff, recognise [sic] with this, my own hand-written document, that I have received four thousand gulden from the Most Luminous, High-born Prince and Lord, Lord Friederich, Duke of Württemberg … for which I have promised Your Princely Grace, and desire to keep and complete, to produce the high *theophrastan medicine*, the universal, and if this does not happen, then so shall I, Wagenmann vom Hoff, be bound to remunerate Your Princely Grace for all working expenses, including the four thousand gulden, and I am liable and obliged, together with my wife and child, to bring this to fruition immediately, within ten or twelve weeks, humbly and obediently. I have completed and imprinted this true document with my own noble seal, dated Stuttgart, 23 December anno [15]98.

Michael H.
Wagenmann
vom Hoff
Manu propria

(Nummedal, 2001, p. 144)

These contracts, not at all unlike modern contracts, formalized the exchange of payment for services rendered. The formalization of this exchange invoked the standards of the commercial context, and alchemists were evaluated according to familiar economic standards – profit, productivity, quality, and so forth.

Alchemical fraud was viewed in the same commercial context. From the perspective of the patron, alchemical fraud was no different than other types of fraud – counterfeiting coins,

4. *By my own hand.*
5. For a more complete discussion of alchemical contracts, see Nummedal (2001, p. 126 – 141).
falsifying seals or official papers, and misrepresenting products for sale (Werk, 1887). Each of these offenses had slightly different consequences, but it was understood that what connected them was the fact that they all had to do, in one way or another, with misrepresentations in the context of formal agreements, especially economic and commercial agreements. They did not have to do with magic, heresy, or witchcraft. By defining alchemical crimes as fraud and not as heresy, patrons indicated their belief that practical alchemy was fundamentally a commercial practice (Nummedal, 2001, pp. 201-2).

Generally, a conviction for fraud did not automatically lead to a death sentence. In Ulm, for example, only eight of 78 people convicted for fraud between 1500 and 1599 were executed. (Coy, 2001). Jason Coy (2001) speculates that execution was reserved for those who tried to deceive their patrons and the authorities, such as alchemist Hans Heinrich Nüschler. Nüschler also signed a contract with the Duke Friederich of Stuttgart in 1598, stipulating that he would transmute silver into gold in exchange for 20,000 gulden. Once Nüschler found his own efforts unsuccessful, he purchased a tincture that was purported to turn lead—not silver—into gold, planning to use some of the silver provided by Friederich to purchase the lead, and keep the rest for himself. Upon discovering that the tincture was useless, Nüschler panicked; he convinced his brother to mix a few grams of gold into his alleged transmutation, which was to be tested for quality. When Nüschler was eventually found out, he pleaded to Friederich that he had betrayed him out of desperation rather than treachery. Ultimately, Nüschler’s plea was found unconvincing, and he was hanged in 1601 (Nummedal, 2001, pp.105-6).

Importantly, that Nüschler employed deception to try to escape his commitments was the reason he received the death sentence, setting his case in stark contrast to Wagenmann’s case. Wagenmann also held a contract with Duke Friederich, and Wagenmann’s own efforts also proved unsuccessful. However, instead of employing deception as Nüschler had done, Wagenmann
admitted to his failure and repaid Friederich, thereby avoiding both a jail sentence and an execution (Pfeilsticker, 1963). Wagenmann’s punishment is typical of the milder forms of punishment for alchemists charged with fraud who did not attempt to cheat or deceive their patrons: banishment—jail sentences, verbal warnings, etc. (Coy, 2001). According to Coy (2001), these milder forms of punishments were typical under the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* of 1577 for cases of failure to fulfill contracts in nearly all areas of commerce, while the harsher forms of punishment were typical for cases of deceit and fraud (Schmidt, 1577).

Alchemy’s situation in a commercial, contractual context was an important factor in bringing lawsuits against fraudulent alchemists under the Carolina penal code. While there were alchemists in the Holy Roman Empire that did not enter into contracts with patrons, it was only those alchemists that did sign contracts that faced charges in court. None of the better-known alchemists—Michael Maier, Heinrich Khunrath, and Oswald Croll, for example—ended up in court. The alchemists that did were practical alchemists, or, “self-taught practitioners with an orientation more toward the production of goods than the production of knowledge” (Nummendal, 2001). At first blush, this trend suggests that the natural philosophers or physicians interested in “theoretical” alchemy escaped punishment because their intentions were honest and their abilities were greater, while the unqualified, base “goldmakers” were punished because they were caught cozening their patrons.6

But if one considers the trials (as well as the executions of some) in the legal context of the time, the trend suggests a different explanation. The reason “theoretical” alchemists (for lack of a better term) were never brought to trial is that their

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6. “Theoretical” does not quite capture the idea, as it could be interpreted to imply that theoretical alchemists dealt only in the hypothetical. I mean to give the sense that theoretical alchemy is alchemy for the sake of alchemy rather than alchemy for the sake of profit, though alchemy arguably invokes profit by definition.
work could not be contractualized since it was not associated with a single process or product. In short, theoretical alchemists existed in a different context than practical alchemists. Where the latter were implicated in a commercial context, the former were implicated in a somewhat academic context, and academic fraud is a different beast. Furthermore, theoretical alchemists were often employed as long-term physicians for noble families, and as such enjoyed greater security than did practical alchemists who were required to repeatedly prove their worth with products and profits at the mercy of the market (Moran, 1991).

It could be said that the commercialization of alchemy doomed all of practical alchemy to failure. Because practical alchemists were forced to compete in the market in order to survive, they were constantly under pressure to provide new secrets and new products. As demand grew, early modern alchemists promised their patrons more productive secrets and more powerful products. Crucially, practical alchemists committed themselves to these promises in legally binding contracts, effectively shooting themselves in the feet. Theoretical alchemists, on the other hand, were not under pressure to provide secrets and products in the way practical alchemists were. Thus, theoretical alchemists were not accused of fraud because the goal of their work was not susceptible to such accusations (Moran 1991).

The commercial context in which patrons hired alchemists demanded a definition of alchemical fraud in commercial terms. Simply stated, the alchemists who were convicted and executed for fraud in early modern Europe entered into contractual agreements with their patrons and then failed to hold up their end of the bargain. This suggests that patrons were interested in alchemy not just as some abstract philosophy of nature, as support of theoretical alchemists would suggest, but as a legitimate technique and, potentially, quite a profitable investment. Patrons fully expected alchemists to be able to produce large quantities of precious metals and were understandably disappointed (to put it lightly) when they failed to do so.
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Narrating Redemption

Das Wunder von Bern and the “Miracles” of Football

BY HANNAH TROXEL

This paper uses the 2003 German film Das Wunder von Bern as a social document to glean narratives of appropriate Germanness and ways of relating to the past. Specifically, it investigates the uses of football in the film as a way of redeeming Nazi fathers—that is, washing them of their Nazi nature, making them appropriate once more, and rehabilitating them into a newly civilized society—through their innocent, sport-loving sons, in a reversal of the traditional jeremiad narrative. It further examines the film’s role in and reflection of German society’s often-problematic navigation of the period directly after World War II as well as the more recent reunification of the German state. Themes of victimization, unity, and reborn innocence are shown to coalesce in the sentimentality of Das Wunder von Bern, pulling at the German nation’s imagined heartstrings and revealing common ways of understanding German identity.

AREAS OF INTEREST:
Film, German Studies, Nationalism, Cultural Analysis
Narratives play a tremendous role in the formation, reformation, and invigoration of societies. From the earliest creation myths to present-day stories of national struggle, narratives and their various structures have been used to create and sustain social groups through the fixation and naturalization of identity. The grand narratives that frame the twentieth century have been subject to filmic interpretation, suddenly removed from the hands of select storytellers and speechmakers to be distributed en masse. The history of master narratives and their production is especially interesting in the German context. During the Third Reich, Germany used film explicitly as a mode of propaganda, and cinema since then has had to cope with this dark history and with that of the nation itself. With this in mind, this paper will discuss Sönke Wortmann’s popular 2003 film, *Das Wunder von Bern*. This film, which approaches post-war German history and the 1954 FIFA World Cup, actively draws on preexisting German narrative conventions and tropes as well as sports culture to produce a nar-
rative that attempts to resituate Germans as the unfortunate victims of the Nazi legacy and constructs a post-reunification ideal of acceptable Germanness. By reversing the traditional jeremiad narrative structure, this film creates a haven for the “sons of Nazism” as well as the “sons of separation” in which they can practice sport-focused, unified Germanness.

THE JEREMIAD: AN EXPLANATION

The jeremiad itself is a common narrative structure. Named for the works of the biblical prophet Jeremiah, the jeremiad is a form that spans the breadth of history, from *The Odyssey* to the autobiography of Frederick Douglass. The structure is, in principle, fairly simple: a moral/cultural problem is identified as a result of abandoning the ‘father’s house.’ In light of this perceived problem, the jeremiad “calls for ‘cultural revitalization’ of [the dominant order’s] authentic but jeopardized values” (Shulman, 1996, p. 298). The narrator is presented as the ‘good son’ who follows the morally superior ways of the father in order to rehabilitate and revitalize the family or society afflicted by this problem. In this way the figure of the jeremiad can serve to reinforce group identity – elaborating what it means to be “a real Jew,” “a real American,” or “a real German.”

However, while this narrative structure may be fairly common, it proves rather controversial in the German context. How can a society even try to defend its father’s house when the foundation itself is inseparable from the atrocities of Nazism? True, Germans can attempt to recollect pre-Nazi pasts—such as the Berlin government’s plans to rebuild the 15th-century *Stadtschloss* (City Palace), damaged during World War II and destroyed under the East German government—but the weight
of National Socialism still rests heavily on the nation’s shoulders. A socio-historical narrative that fails to include some mention of the Third Reich is vastly incomplete, but one that glorifies the rise of Nazism is even more unacceptable. Thus, new narrative structures are found, created, or modified off of existing ones, contributing to cultural texts like *Das Wunder von Bern*.

**Das Wunder von Bern**

*Das Wunder von Bern* may seem like an unlikely choice when discussing the weighty topics of German post-war narratives and identity. It sentimentally recounts the unexpected West German win of the 1954 FIFA World Cup, the first World Cup competition in which Germans were allowed to participate after the end of World War II. Alongside the narrative of the well-known football championship runs the story of a fictional family from Essen. Eleven-year-old Matthias Lubanski has lived his entire life without a father, cared for by his mother, older brother, and sister. His father, Richard, a German soldier taken captive by the Soviet Army, returns home in 1954, unaware that Matthias exists. The film chronicles the father’s difficulties in adjusting to West German life and the domestic sphere of the family. At first, he rejects Matthias and his naïveté, subjecting him to harsh, draconian punishment; eventually, however, he comes to accept his son (and, thus, the new West Germany) through the medium of sport. *Das Wunder von Bern* is ultimately a feel-good, touching recount of 1954’s “miracle,” but it is because of this quality, not in spite of it, that the film can be studied as a cultural document constructed through a distinct narrative structure, achieved by the reversal of the jeremiad.

Before Richard first arrives home, the family dynamic, while
not perfect, has an atmosphere of comfort and resilience, a broken family that survived through its unity. At dinner, the remaining members—Matthias, his brother, his sister, and his mother—speak openly, even when the elder son recounts his refusal to take a job set up for him in the difficult post-War economic climate. A lamp above the dinner table warms the actors’ complexions and highlights the colors in their costumes, surrounding them simultaneously by an ocean of greyish darkness. Warm lighting and colors are often used to separate these four family members—especially Matthias—from their father. Richard’s return home after eleven years’ imprisonment in a gulag brings with it an explicit shift in the film’s color palette: in the scene in which Richard first arrives on a train full of prisoners, the colors are cooler, greyer, more washed out, accompanied by terse and troubled dialogue (he calls his daughter by his wife’s name). Christa, Matthias’ mother, wears a blue-grey skirt suit, while Richard is clothed in the greyish, unkempt prisoners’ uniform. The scene is set against the black of the train, a cloudy sky, and the charcoal grey siding of a nearby building. In the following scene, around the dinner table, shares these cool, grey colors while presenting explicitly what was implied before: when Richard sternly snaps at his older son to “speak when [he’s] asked to”, the harshness and brutality of his behavior sufficiently establishes the character as a violent figure, a stark contrast to Matthias’ innocence (Wortmann 2003).

At this point, it is obvious that the film cannot argue for a jeremiad return to the father’s harsh ways. Richard’s involvement with the Nazis and his cold behavior—especially towards Matthias, whose innocence I will analyze later—imply that it is the father who has strayed from the correct path. Richard’s brutality escalates into violence, specifically against Matthias in two instances. After Matthias admits that he had lit a candle in church for his “father figure” (as the older brother puts it) and “best friend” local and national player Helmut Rahn, Richard brings the child onto the street and slaps him, stating that Matthias was abusing the church and that “German boys don’t cry” (Wortmann 2003). The second
instance follows Matthias’ attempt to run away from home. Richard finds Matthias in the train station and drags the child home; he beats Matthias harshly with a belt until Christa intervenes. This second instance marks the height of Richard’s coldness and his strict conception of family discipline—a reference to how discipline functioned under the Nazi regime. This moment functions as a turning point in the narrative at which the jeremiad truly begins to reverse, and also serves to cast a frown on concepts of masculinity bolstered by Nazi ideology and Prussian military traditions, so that more appropriate (sport-related) masculinities can take its place.¹

In Das Wunder von Bern, the ways of the son—who commands the reversed jeremiad structure—are embodied in the practice and values of football. The film takes pains to establish Matthias’ love of the sport, shown through his attachment to Rahn (who calls the child his “good luck charm”), his intense following of the local team’s games and the World Cup, and his participation in the neighborhood children’s makeshift football matches. At one point, Matthias says to his father that “Mom said [he – the father] used to play football” (Wortmann 2003). Although Richard does not admit to having ever enjoyed the sport, this moment denotes Richard’s potential to return to something purer, to leave behind the violence of both Nazi militaristic brutality and life in a POW camp that have marked his experience of being Matthias’ father. Football is presented as the redemptive turn away from qualities of Germanness that had been exploited to an absolute degree of destruction, and in turn, as a way to recover the right kind of “Germanness,” one that could be celebrated nationally and internationally—athletically competitive though stripped of the severity and order of the Third Reich.

Later in the film, Richard attempts to reconcile with his family by preparing the main course of dinner (later revealed to be

¹ Hitler, always favoring Munich to Berlin and known as the Bohemian Corporal, harbored incredible disdain for the Prussian way of life, but nonetheless exploited Prussian discipline and military culture for the benefit of National Socialism.
Matthias’ pet rabbits) and giving gifts to his children at the table. Lit in a warm orange glow and devoid of the blue-grey callowness that had colored his earlier presence, Richard gives his son a new football, showing his recognition of the sport’s importance to his son. Although the slaughter of the rabbits is a misstep, to say the least, Richard soon makes the ultimate step in returning to the ways of the son, as embodied in football. A later conversation between Richard and a priest transitions into a sequence in which he finds the son’s old football and plays with it, handling it with expertise and with an overhead kick that sends it flying through the makeshift goal posts.

This scene sets Richard firmly back on the path towards redemption: the path of the son. The scene has a mystical quality to it, enhanced by religious undertones as well as the spectacle of Richard’s kick, especially taking into consideration the harsh conditions he had been subject to in the Soviet gulag. This is the first of the film’s “Wundern”—miracles—in that it simply should not have been possible. This moment emphasizes the healing power of sport—of the German national pastime—but it also produces critical disbelief. Beyond the emotive function of the on-screen action, one gains the slightest suspicion as the ball flies pasts the posts that, perhaps, the entire film is a chronicle of impossibilities.

Not long after Richard’s transformation, father and son are invited by Matthias’ mentor to join the champion German team on a journey on the Weltmeister train, traveling southward to Bern to attend the final match of the World Cup. On this journey Richard truly emerges from the coldness that was apparently forced on him by Nazism. This moment of emergence, signaled again by a warming of color and lighting, compounds the two symbols of redemption: the way of the son, via the presence of Matthias; and the sport of football, representing a restored, wholesome German identity. During the trip, Richard bursts into tears in reaction to a letter from his older son, who had left for East Berlin. This public display of motion demonstrates that the jeremiad has undergone
a total reversal. In reaction to his father’s tears, Matthias says that “German boys can cry now and then,” assuming the role of the comforter and accepting Richard back into the son’s house, tears and all, through the means of football (Wortmann 2003).

VICTIMIZATION AND REDEMING THE FATHERS

It is important at this point to discuss existing conceptions of post-war Germanness, specifically those that were contemporary to the film. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, social psychologist Harald Welzer (2005) conducted a study regarding German family narratives of World War II. According to Welzer, Germans—especially younger Germans—are “generally quite well informed about the historical events and can correctly define key terms such as ‘Auschwitz’ and ‘SS’,” but the study concludes that they experience a surprising disconnect when talking about their own family’s involvement in the mechanisms of the Third Reich (2005, p. 1). In fact, much of the family talk supports a narrative of victimization. For example, a seven-year-old interviewed in the study stated that “as one person, you couldn’t do anything. You could say, ‘I think it’s bad’, [but] you’d be locked up and probably shot” (p. 8). Sometimes, claims Welzer, the perspectives of German youths even led to an unwarranted heroization—clinging on to claims that one’s grandparents had continued to shop at Jewish stores, even if these family members had supported National Socialism. Even if family members admitted to having been Nazis, “there is almost always an immediate justification”—such as having been forced into the party or having faced unfortunate economic circumstances (p. 23). Welzer’s research design, comprised of 182 interviews with the members of 40 families from both East and West Germany, revealed that “1 percent [of respon-
dents] thought it was possible that [their relatives] ‘were directly involved in the crimes’” while “65 percent of participants believe their parents and grandparents ‘suffered a lot in the war’” (p. 26). In general, personal family narratives were characterized by either victimization or an erasure of blame that may have been justified.

How, then, does the character of the reversed jeremiad in *Das Wunder von Bern* fit into the narratives elicited in Welzer’s study? The answer to this question lies in the film’s construction of innocence, both the father’s and the son’s. The innocence of Matthias palpable from the beginning of the film, is easy to identify. The character borders on cliché, functioning as a likable foil to his father’s initial brutality. His innocence is also demarcated by his distance from Nazism. At eleven years old, Matthias is far too young to be personally culpable for any actions of the Third Reich. His only interests are football, his rabbits, and creating new cigarettes from the tobacco in disposed butts, which he then sells to help support his family. Skinny-legged, blue-eyed, and clad in *Lederhosen*, the character not only represents the innocence of a child but also a mythical, ideal, and innocent Germany, fixated on football and industriously making ends meet.

Richard’s innocence is, understandably, more complicated; however, it is heavily related to the narratives Welzer described. Although Richard is often portrayed as harsh, strict, and cold, he is not solely to blame in the eyes of his family. When talking to Matthias, Christa practically echoes the seven-year-old respondent from Welzer’s survey, quoted above: “One person alone couldn’t do a thing. You had to join them.” “It’s not my fault,” Matthias asserts, to which Christa replies, “Is it Dad’s fault?” (Wortmann 2003). Although Richard later mentions the hardships faced by the Soviets, the film focuses on German suffering. Notably, neither the fate of the European Jews nor that of any other victimized minority group is mentioned. Nazism and the war are presented as uncontestable outside forces. As a result, questions of Richard’s belief in the National Socialist ideology are not entertained in the film. Furthermore, when Richard, on the first day back on the
job, experiences a traumatic flashback, the film simply lets the 
moment hang silently over the story instead of confronting the 
issue, discussing it, or featuring another psychological episode, 
as if to excuse any guilt that could be attributed to Richard. His 
innocence, though problematic, allows for the possibility of the 
reversal of the jeremiad structure. The ways of the father are 
constructed as having been forced upon him by a ruthless and 
unstoppable power. Given the chance to be good, to follow 
the true, authentically German way of the son—embodied on a 
larger scale by football as the national pastime—the father can be 
redeemed.

THE FUNCTION OF THE 
REVERSED JEREMIAD 
IN CONTEMPORARY 
GERMANY

The question persists as to why the narrative presented in 
Das Wunder von Bern was politically salient for its time. 
According to Filmförderungsanstalt (German Film Board), 
yhe film was rather popular in its release year as the second most-
attended domestic film (behind Good Bye, Lenin!) and number ten 
most-attended film overall in Germany in 2003. Chancellor Ger-
hard Schröder, whose father died in the Wehrmacht, “not only 
anounced that he cried [during the film] but also urged his fellow 
German males to loosen their macho inhibitions and join him” 
(Bernstein 2003). It is a family film, created not for the actual fa-
thers of the past but instead for their sons and the families of the 
present day. This sentiment is reinforced by Christa’s explanation 
of the suffering the family underwent without Richard. It is a way
to deal with both what A. Dirk Moses (2007) refers to as “the feelings of ambivalence that many younger postwar Germans had toward their parents” as well as “the intergenerational transmission of moral pollution,” created not through family narratives but through a collective, internationally-endorsed understanding of the guilt of being German (p. 147, 139).

It is short-sighted to claim that Das Wunder von Bern and its reversed jeremiad simply function as a way to deal with societal memories of World War II. Such an assertion ignores the past twenty years of German history following reunification and the contemporary importance of football culture in Germany. Why revive the 1954 World Cup in 2003, when Ostalgie and reunification are the hot-button items? It is interesting to note that the film shows Richard’s older son, living in East Berlin, also watching the match. In that moment, the World Cup acts as a unifying force, uniting family sentiment across political difference. Captain Fritz Walter famously cries, “Let’s not talk about war, let’s talk about football,” which could just as easily be said for discussions regarding the successes and failures of reunification (qtd. in Heinrich, 2003, p. 1494).

Football, however, has also divided Germany: there was a match between East and West Germany at the 1974 World Cup (won by the East, although the West went on to win the title); the 1990 World Cup was played only by West German players; and now the German East “has no Bundesliga club and former top sides such as FC Magdeburg and Dynamo Dresden play in the lower leagues, still plagued by infrastructure problems and fan violence” (Bagratuni 2010). But this film pointedly does not mention, and structurally cannot mention, any of these issues. When the football announcer cries “Deutschland ist Weltmeister!” (“Germany is world champion!”), no directional prefix is added to the country’s name, rendering a historically positive Germany, reunified and redeemed.
German identity, Germanness, and German ways of understanding the nation’s difficult – and sometimes atrocious - past are fraught issues. The jeremiad and the reverse jeremiad are only models through which we can try to understand the ways in which cultural documents speak to identity. They are, of course, imperfect models. However, through the analysis of cultural documents such as Das Wunder von Bern, intersections between a past and present Germany come to the surface. In focusing on victimization and self-support, the film exhibits aspects of German society that ought not be ignored: the processes of redemption and the memory, the interconnectedness of multiple painful histories, a sense of a unified German people, and the troubles with and anxieties regarding manifestations of masculinity. Das Wunder von Bern is ultimately sweet and sentimental, but its resonance with the German public of the 2000s is telling of the country’s struggle to reconcile history with the desire for nationhood.

CONCLUSION
REFERENCES


Language Commoditytization in Ireland’s Gaeltacht

BY WILLIAM NOTINI

This paper examines the processes by which Ireland’s western Gaeltacht regions have become exotic, themed environments. I posit that two factors—political policy post-independence and putative ethnographic studies conducted in the first half of the 20th century—produced a conception of the west of Ireland, the Gaeltacht least of all, as an esoteric society separate from capitalist markets. This portrayal, asymmetric to socioeconomic and linguistic realities, was popularized by media outlets and exported to a foreign audience in order to develop the tourism sector. As a result, the populations living within the region adapted to outsider expectations, and in Irish speaking communities, tokens of linguistic vitality are semantically altered under the tourist’s gaze. I draw on two examples, the first from the Galway Gaeltacht and the second from the Donegal Gaeltacht, to demonstrate the role that tourism now plays, and the effect it may have on the revitalization efforts in the Gaeltacht, Ireland’s official Irish speech community.

AREAS OF INTEREST:
Linguistic Anthropology, Irish Studies, Rural Sociology, Gaeltacht Studies
The Irish language is an Indo-European Celtic language closely related to Scottish Gaelic spoken in Scotland and Manx spoken on the Isle of Man. Today, all three of these Celtic languages are endangered to varying degrees. To encounter Irish today in Dublin City Center would be unusual, excluding signage in Irish or novelty goods reading ‘Slainte!’ or ‘Cead Mille Failte!’

One is most apt to encounter spoken (as opposed to written) Irish in one of the remaining territories in the non-contiguous region known as the Gaeltacht (An nGaeltacht). In this paper I won’t attempt to offer an accurate account of the linguistic vitality² of the Irish language throughout Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht regions.

1. Irish tokens are indicated by italics and are written in standard orthography.
2. Henceforth ‘linguistic vitality’ of Irish in the Gaeltacht will be used in accordance with John Walsh’s definition as “the extent to which Irish is used by a Gaeltacht community as an everyday language of communication” (2011, 177).
in Ireland. Instead, I aim to demonstrate the ways in which the Irish language has become commoditized in the Gaeltacht region. Further, I will examine how this process of ethnolinguistic commodification has historically emerged out of language policies in the years following the creation of the Irish Free State (1922), and the way in which Irish language (and culture) have been framed by generations of researchers in the region. I argue that the combined effect of these two factors has been to crystallize the Irish Gaeltacht into an esoteric and/or exotic space in the ethnolinguistic imagination. I show how this earlier academic framing of the Irish language has fed into the advertised image of the Gaeltacht by the ever-growing Irish tourism industry. Finally, I argue that though the ethnolinguistic commodification of Irish perhaps raises awareness of the presence of the Irish language, it does not and will not aid in Irish revitalization for Ireland on a larger scale. In the latter part of this paper I use the Gaeltacht regions of County Galway and County Donegal as case studies. These brief depictions are in no way a comprehensive account of language attitudes and usage in the areas mentioned, but are supplementary evidence to augment the argument at large.

At first glance, census data can be misleading in trying to gain an accurate idea of Irish usage in Ireland. The 2006 census reports that 41.9% of the population ‘can speak’ Irish (Census, 2006, 13). This is a big number that tells us very little. The question ‘can you speak Irish,’ allows for slippage. The binary format of the question—allowing only a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer—grants the individual the ability to exaggerate his or her competence in Irish. Furthermore, it lacks the precision to gage just how often the language is spoken and in what context. Individuals answering ‘yes’ may be ‘potential speakers’ (having some
competence without ever being present in the social contexts where they might use that ability) as opposed to ‘actual speakers’ (speakers competent in the language who use it regularly in a casual context) (Ó Murchú, 2008). In the past few decades a series of amendments have been made to the census ‘language question’ to ameliorate these pitfalls. In 1996 the question was changed to include a measure of frequency of use. Again there were concerns that the figures were skewed since Irish was, and continues to be, compulsory for all schoolchildren in the Republic of Ireland. In 2006 a further filter was added to the question, asking people whether they spoke Irish daily and, if so, whether they use it inside or outside the school system. Having reduced the ambiguity in the census report, a more accurate depiction of Irish usage becomes plain. Only 1.8% of the population in 2006 spoke Irish everyday outside of the school system (Walsh, 2011; 29).

A quick analysis of the 2002 census report from County Dublin and Co. Galway put the differences in Irish usage within Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht regions in stark relief. There are no Gaeltacht territories currently in Co. Dublin while Co. Galway is home to 43,184 Gaeltacht residents or roughly 47% of the entire Gaeltacht population. The 2002 survey of Co. Dublin showed that 2.61% of people claim that they speak Irish everyday outside of the school system. In Co. Galway the number was significantly higher at 9.98%. In Co. Dublin 27.13% of the population said that they speak Irish within the school system while only 1.62% of that group spoke Irish outside of the school system as well. In Co. Galway 26.74% of the population spoke Irish in School with 3.49% of that group speaking Irish outside of the school system (Census, 2002).

Though the census shows similar results for the number of people speaking Irish within the education system in the two counties, there is a large discrepancy in the level of language maintenance outside of this particular institution. This is not especially surprising. An east-west divide in Irish language usage has its roots in the 17th century and can be traced through the
linguistic trends within the Irish Peerage of that era. Already in the 17th century upper class landholders were largely Anglicized. By 1670 only 9% of the Irish peerage were native Irish speakers, and those that remained were concentrated in the westernmost parts of Ireland, those on the east having been stripped of their land by the Cromwellian Conquest of 1649-53 (Ohlmeyer, 2012, 48). Irish language vitality east of the Shannon was thereby greatly reduced due to general language shift as well as the intentional eradication of its speakers.

Following Cromwell’s campaign there was little to no effort made for the resuscitation of Irish in the east. The Irish language lived on without prestige, marked as a sign of poverty and barbarism that existed ‘beyond The Pale.’ It wasn’t until the formation of the Gaelic League (Conrádha na Gaeilge) in 1893 that a major effort was made to reclaim Irish as a positive mark of ethnic membership. Though the Irish League did not fully adhere itself to the nationalist movement from the get go, it was committed, much like the Gaelic Athletic Association (Cumann Lúthchleas Gáel), founded 1884, to fostering an Irish identity that

3. All figures in Table One are retrieved from 2002 census report.
was self-consciously not British. Through linguistic and cultural promotion dispensed by these organizations and eventually by the Irish government, the Irish language became intertwined with a nationalist agenda seeking to eradicate British influence.

In the 1930’s, post-independence, Taoiseach Éamon de Valera, first Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of the Republic of Ireland and the dominant figure of 20th century Irish politics, enacted language policies aimed at establishing Ireland as a predominantly Irish speaking state in order to bolster Irish nationalism. These policies included the development of a standard dialect to be used for official documents and the imposition of Irish language as a compulsory subject in schools. The initiative for a monolingual Ireland in the 20th century failed for several reasons: advancement in international transportation and communication allowing for an increase in language contact; resistance by generations young and old; lack of rigor in school curricula; the waning of social contexts of Irish usage outside the classroom; and finally, a continuous wave of emigration.

Today Irish remains a highly symbolic and politically charged presence in non-Gaeltacht regions, and is considered by many to be crucial to the preservation of national identity and heritage, tdespite the fact that only in select small communities—most of which lie within the Gaeltacht—is the Irish language still in widespread use. It is important to note that much of the Gaeltacht is English-dominant and many of those territories that are Irish-dominant are under linguistic strain. In fact, as widespread laments in local media inform readers, Irish is now the third most spoken language in Ireland, trailing behind English and

4. Since 2007 each electoral division (ED) within the Gaeltacht is sorted into one of three categories: A, B, and C, which are stratified on the basis of number of daily Irish speakers. Only 24 of the 154 EDs (15.5%) in the Gaeltacht are listed as category A. An ED is listed as category A if over 67% of the speakers are daily Irish speakers. This number was established in 2007 after the Comprehensive Linguistic Study administered by the Gaeltacht Commission as a critical threshold number for an area being defined as Irish dominant (2007).
To aid the construction of an Irish national identity, the Fianna Fáil government in the 1930’s championed the rural west for its aesthetics, language, and religious conservatism. The Gaeltacht was a triangulation of these values, and thereby became an object that needed to be preserved for symbolic reasons.\(^5\) Indeed, by 1971 there were 24 separate public agencies that had a developmental role in Irish speaking electoral divisions – their— their first priority was not language maintenance but population maintenance (Commins, 1988; 16).\(^6\) The Fianna Fáil government post-1937 was “ideologically committed to as much self-sufficiency as possible,” which would find its center in the ‘bold peasantry’ of the west, placing an emphasis on the firm foundation of a tillage-based economy (Lee, 1989; 184). The emphasis on a tillage-based economy came into play on two levels. First, it was part of a political economic re-ordering of the nation. By encouraging farmers to switch from raising livestock to tillage, the Irish economy would cease to rely as heavily on exportation and therefore become less dependent on the British market. Second, it was part of an ethnolinguistic and cultural rhetoric that framed rural peasant communities as the source from which the Irish nation would grow. By establishing the rural west as the ‘proverbial’ heart of Ireland, the western regions took on a heightened role within the collective national narrative.\(^7\) The narrative was, to

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5. In 1926 the first Coimisiún na Gaeltacht drafted the boundaries of the Gaeltacht. Later in the 1950’s these boundaries were redrawn, minimizing the spread of the Gaeltacht. These boundaries have only recently been called into question on the grounds they do not accurately represent Irish speaking communities (Commins, 2006).

6. Soon after 1971 much of the developmental responsibility these organizations were held accountable for was absorbed by Údarás na Gaeltachta. (http://www.udaras.ie/en/faoin-udaras/rol/)

7. We see this fetishization of the Irish peasantry in the early work of W.B Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J.M Synge.
say the least, disassociated from the socio-economic reality that those same communities faced: rampant emigration, partially due to de Valera’s tillage policy; and dependence on welfare grants from Dublin (Lee, 1989; 187). In short, rural Irish speaking areas in what is now referred to as the Gaeltacht during the 1930’s served as the symbolic substance of the new government’s efforts to fashion an authentically Irish identity because of their geography, language, and modes of production (Hannan & Commins, 1992; 100-1). Ironically, the result of the policies established to support the ideology of a New Ireland, separate from Britain, worked to slow growth in those regions that were being celebrated as the seeds from which a New Ireland would supposedly sprout.

In terms of what some might have called progress, rural Ireland in the 1930’s was a pre-industrial and altogether ‘backwards’ society. Indeed, when the Sociologists Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball conducted their seminal study of County Clare in the 1930’s, originally published in 1937 as *Family and Community in Ireland*, they approached their research from within this framework. Arensberg and Kimball present one village in Co. Clare as the picture of traditional pre-capitalist agricultural community—the locus of a pre-modern and presumably untouched Irish culture (Hannan, 1979; 28). But as Peter Gibbon has shown, these communities were, at the time of Arensberg and Kimball’s work, already linked into capitalist markets. Gibbon points out that when Éamon de Valera, along with the writers and artists of the Gaelic revival imagined the ‘true’ Ireland, as W.B. Yeats did in ‘Kathleen Ni Houlihan,’ it was just that: imagined. He argues that the Arensberg and Kimball analysis ‘described and affirmed’ this ‘real Ireland’ much in the vein of the Gaelic Revival literary tradi-
tion of the Late 19th and early 20th century (Gibbon, 1973; 485). Adrian Peace takes Gibbon’s critique one step further:

The truly significant consideration about the County Clare studies is that they put the ethnic Irish on the agenda of Anglo-American anthropology by rendering the rural population as exotic and esoteric. The enduring impact of *Family and Community in Ireland* and *The Irish Countryman* derives from the romanticized portrait assembled out of esoteric, apparently irrational, behavior patterns – in much the same way as the Other was constructed in non-Western contexts by anthropologists of the same generation (Peace, 1983; 90).

Peace argues that the presentation of the rural Irish as cultural Other presents an example of a population that reveals ‘in the present’ a primitive, European historical past (Peace, 1983, 91). Nevertheless, the field work of Arensberg and Kimball established this imagined community of peasants as concrete in the sociological literature, and fed the myth that this type of insular ‘subsistence’ community was ‘alive and well’ not only in the Gaeltacht but in ‘far less remote County Clare’ (Peace, 1983, 385-6).

Though the Arensberg and Kimball study of Co. Clare has been widely criticized in the literature, its influence reached beyond scholarly circles and into the public eye when Dorothy Lange’s photographs of Ennis, Co. Clare were published in Life Magazine in 1955 under the title “Irish Coun-

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try People.” The greatest motivator for Lange’s choice of Ennis was her ‘fascination’ with Arensberg and Kimball’s 1937 study (Carville, 2009; 205). For the majority of Americans with Irish roots (which, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, amounted to
well over a half a million by the 1950s\textsuperscript{8}, representations such as Lange’s photographs, postcards (e.g. John Hinde), and films like “A Man of Aran” or “The Quiet Man” (both featuring western rural landscapes) were the way in which they understood their ‘cultural home’ (Rains, 2003, 197). At the same time, the production of these wider-circulating representations of Irish rural life bore the imprimatur of the Irish government. The majority of ‘travelogue’ films, like those mentioned above, were commissioned and produced by Bord Fáilte, The National Tourism Development Authority (Rains, 2003).\textsuperscript{9} As early as the 1950’s, the bucolic west of Ireland was already being marketed through media representations for a nascent tourism sector whose target demographic was immigrants and their descendants.

The creation and maintenance of an idealized image of Irish identity, whose symbolic reservoir was western Ireland, and the Gaeltacht region in particular, had become crucial both to the formation of a domestic ethnonational identity as well as the growth of a budding tourism industry. Filmic and photographic representations were carefully manufactured and shipped abroad as entertainment media, but also as advertisements to bolster the Irish tourism sector. This transaction of media calls into being fosters an audience that comes to understand its identity as tied to Ireland. By 1960, the number of tourists arriving from the United States had doubled, and the rural west had to adapt in the anticipation of visitors lured by their bucolic branding (Rains, 2003).

The increased arrival of tourists into Ireland, which now each year exceeds over half of the residential population of the Republic of Ireland (Failte Ireland, 2012), no doubt had, and continues to have an impact on the landscape of those places.

8. According to the 1950 census report Irish immigrants were the fourth most common country of birth for foreign-born populations.

9. Stephanie Rains (2003) makes the point that though in the 1950’s the percentage of visitors from the United States was very slim when compared to the total numbers, the amount of revenue brought in by an American visitor was remarkably high (p. 199).
frequently visited. In the west, one can point to the increased number of villages boasting colorful walls or murals (Slater, 1998), or rock formations positioned between houses as constructed presentations of authenticity for the tourist to consume while passing by in a car (Casey, 2006; 157).

If the process of branding the Gaeltacht involves the projection of the exotic or the authentic, the Gaeltacht is its prime example. In 2011, 933,000 tourists visited Co. Galway, and across the board, jobs in the tourism and transportation sector increased by 76% from 2009 to 2011 (Failte Ireland, 2011). Irish tourism in the west, as opposed to in Co. Dublin, is dominated by driving-culture, in which the focal point of the driver frames the landscape through which the tourist is travelling. The tourist will soon become aware that he or she has entered any given Gaeltacht ED because the street signs are exclusively in Irish. It is important to note that the street signs are not aestheticized, as are the signs written in Irish over entrances to gift stores. Ruth Casey (2006) notes that the display of ‘Siopa Dúnfarraíg’ on a storefront incorporates ‘the local vernacular aspect and a contemporary style of presentation’ (p. 171). Like the manipulation of architecture, color, or garden space, Casey’s example demonstrates a marketing technique employed to allure the driver. The font and language of the sign indicate authenticity while the meaning of the signage is inferable to the foreigner due to its conventional placement above the door.

A similar but distinct phenomenon occurs when the non-Irish speaker encounters an Irish language street sign in the Gaeltacht. The street sign itself does not encourage the passerby to stop for a picture by actively advertising the scene as a commodity. However, the sign has a dual effect on the non-Irish speaking driver. The first is linguistic alienation and potential confusion, as not all Anglicized place-names are cognates of their Irish equivalents. The tourist in this way has entered a ‘foreign’ territory. In fact, without the comprehension of the actual text, the sign loses its ability to

10. ‘Dunfairraig Shop’
signify its intended referent and instead functions as a signifier of the exotic. The second effect is that the sign becomes a focal point or foreground for the landscape beyond it, and therefore projects its exoticism onto that landscape, framed by either the camera or the windshield. While the first effect distances, the second entices, the experiential consumer. The difference between the street sign and the text on a store front is that the store’s motivation is in one way or another driven by capital creation while the street sign inevitably becomes an object of consumption merely with the presence of an outsider.

Street signs bearing only Irish text are a manifestation of the political boundaries of the present day Gaeltacht, and no doubt an artifact of pride for locals who feel they have an identity distinct from the rest of the country (2011, 195). There is, however, a tension between the use of Irish as an indicator of intra-community solidarity and its role in the consumed tourist landscape. Take, for instance, a tourist’s experience on Inis Mór, an island off the southern coast of the Connemara Peninsula in the Galway Gaeltacht region. Inis Mór is the largest Aran island and also the one most frequented by tourists. In 2002, 89.41% of residents on Inis Mór claimed that they were Irish speakers while 91.57% of the population claimed that they speak Irish daily (Census, 2002). Necessarily this means that a small percentage of the island’s population who do not identify as Irish-speaking still use the language daily. This is an unusually high level of linguistic vitality in comparison to other Gaeltacht regions.

To get to Inis Mór one takes a ferry either from Galway City or from the more remote docks at Rossaveal; there are city buses that transport passengers from Galway City to the docks. Or, if the tourist has rented a car already, there are several car
parks at Rossaveal where one can keep one’s car for the a small price of (5€) while one is on the island. There are a series of four or five ferry trips per day that take tourists to the island for (25€). When the passengers get to the island, they are encouraged to partake in one of the modes of transportation available to tour the landscape and see historical sights. Mini-buses, horse drawn carriages, and an army of bicycle rentals wait for the passengers to disembark from the ferry.

In the space between catering to an island-outpost theme designed for the tourist, and the maintenance of an identity separate from the branded landscape, a paradox arises for the resident of Inis Mór, reflected in Irish language usage. The residents of Inis Mór have maintained a level of autonomy from the dense tourist population by cultivating the Irish language, evidenced by the high rate of daily speakers. The residents can communicate freely without having to involve tourists in the dialogue. At the same time however, this exclusion becomes a tourist attraction in and of itself as the tourist cycles by or stops for a quick pint in one of the few pubs on the island, before popping into the Aran Island Sweater Warehouse to purchase a scarf (50€). In this way, Irish speakers become part of the branded landscape. Fáilte Ireland’s report on the ‘Aran Island Visitor Experience’ (2011) found that, of visitors that would strongly recommend a trip to the Aran Islands to others, when asked why they would recommend a trip to the Aran Islands, 16% of visitors found that encounters with local people ‘enhanced their experience’ (Fáilte Ireland, 2011p. #).

On Inis Mór, as in other parts of the Galway Gaeltacht region, the Irish language plays a complex role, affirming the identity of its residents while also displaying itself as an experiential commodity to foreigners creating a semi-consciously themed environment. Experiential tourism is facilitated
by modes of transportation, which allow the tourist to absorb the commoditized landscape before rolling on, whether by car or bike (2011, 198). This begs the question as to whether the commoditization of the Irish language is a positive trend for its future, especially in areas like Co. Galway where levels of tourism continue to grow. 6,000 new jobs were created in the tourism sector in the past year, and Co. Galway shows improvement in its revenue report in tourism since 2010 (Kelly, 2011). Further, the levels of tourism so far have not been seen to negatively affect the outright numbers of Irish speakers and the frequency of use. In fact, the presence of tourists may in fact increase Irish usage as speakers seek to maintain an audibly separate identity from the visitors, perhaps even to exclude outsider populations. However, growing tourism that exploits linguistic diversity does threaten to upset the community that it targets through the building of housing complexes and hotels, a trend that is currently taking place in Co. Galway, via the inevitable effects of language contact.

In contrast to Co. Galway’s growth in the tourism sector, Co. Donegal showed no such improvement in the 2011 annual revenue report (Failte Ireland, 2011). In a conversation with the King of Tory in July of 2012, Patsy Dan Mac Ruairí complained about the lack of tourism in the area. He spoke about funds he was negotiating for in Dublin to promote the industry. He mentioned a larger ferry similar the one that ships out of Rossaveal, better roads, and a landing strip for small planes. The northwest Donegal Gaeltacht region actively pursues the use the Irish language as an attraction to promote tourism. The sign one sees upon arriving at Tory Island reads ‘Fáilte a Toraigh.’11 A local hotel in nearby Glassagh, Teac Jack, hires only Irish speakers, no doubt to appeal to the Irish-speaking locals, but also to create an environment for visitors. The factor that seemed to prevent Glassagh and, to a greater extent, Toraigh from becoming a successful tourist attraction was the lack of a that it did not have a solid transportation infrastructure. Northwest Donegal is a far more remote location than the

11. ‘Welcome to Tory Island’
Aran Islands, just miles off the coast of Galway City. Further, I observed that only elderly members of the community seemed to speak Irish in casual conversation at the pub in Teac Jack. Younger locals, who seemed to hold negative attitudes towards the Irish language and the region in general, corroborated this observation. Irish, when it is not marketed in a way that elicits noticeable gains, may seem redundant to a younger generation growing up in a depressed economy. The fact that the community in Glassagh is attempting to brand itself as linguistically exotic, and that such a marketing technique has failed to produce any meaningful gains could exacerbate frustration towards the language and the town. Though further research is necessary to confirm the observed age gap in daily Irish usage in Glassagh, the limited data collected do suggest that on the younger members of the community have a more negative perspective on the Irish language, suggesting a lack of cross-generational language maintenance.

In 1997 Údarás na Gaeltachta, responsible for the preservation of Irish across generations, established the subsidiary company GaelSaoire as part of the ‘Irish Language Sector,’ to promote tourism in the Gaeltacht. The mission of this subsidiary is to market cultural vacations in destinations where Irish is or was the community language. While GaelSaoire’s stated mission is to benefit language maintenance and revitalization, its promotional materials are printed in English and its campaigns market communities in which Irish language vitality is little or none (2011, 321). It seems more likely that tourism, to which so much funding has been allocated in the form of marketing and road maintenance for easier travel, is an effective method of capital gains. However it fails as an effective use of resources for the promotion of the Irish language. It follows that the ‘Irish language sector,’ in the context of tourism, is an appendage that only serves to shape the Irish language into a commodity to be consumed by Irish and non-Irish

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12. Gaeltacht Authority
13. For more information regarding GaelSaoire (‘Irish Holiday’) see: http://www.gaelsaoire.ie/
speakers alike.

In many of the western, coastal, Gaeltacht towns, tourism is a crucial contributor to the local economy. The extent to which tourists arrive has much a great deal to do with transportation infrastructure. On one hand, the Irish language gives Gaeltacht towns an advantage over others because of a perceived exoticism, established through deliberate branding. However, the establishment of new housing accommodations and language contact—symptoms of tourism growth—potentially threaten the linguistic vitality of the community. On the other hand, a lack of tourism—as is the experience on Toraigh Island and in Glassagh—can lead to a depressed economy, which may itself lead younger generations to develop negative language attitudes towards Irish as an emblem of socioeconomic marginalization. Such attitudes make cross-generational maintenance unlikely. Language and its interaction with experiential, as opposed to commercial tourism plays a significant role in today’s Gaeltacht, and will continue to do so unless the definition of the Gaeltacht changes, as current proposals aim to do. The Gaeltacht Bill, passed in summer 2012, proposes that Gaeltacht boundaries should be defined by linguistic vitality and not by geographic boundaries. The speed with which the bill was passed, and the mechanism for assessing linguistic vitality, remains controversial.

If the parameters as to what is considered an official Gaeltacht shift from strictly geographic parameters to linguistic parameters, including areas less historically idealized and aestheticized, then Irish vitality—free from a socio-geographical border—may very well benefit. Tourism and commoditization of language may be a viable solution for the local economies economic struggles of Oceanside communities, but do not present a solution to the linguistic struggles, let alone promote the overall growth of the language itself.
REFERENCES


Finding the Aryan Race

How Heinrich Himmler and the Ahnenerbe Fabricated the Ancestry of the German People

BY ALLISON JUNGKURTH

This paper is concerned with the history of war films, focusing on the rise and development of the genre following World War I and the early practice of historicizing trauma and depicting the experience of veterans through the medium during the interwar period. On this foundation, this work explores the emergence of the Great War veteran as a driving character in American cinema. Focusing on Depression-era filmmaking and the early 1930s “Golden Age of Turbulence,” this paper explores the significance and function of the veteran character, specifically the extent to which his traits, actions, and misfortunes serve as both active and passive social and political critique. The study here involves navigating the events and conditions both general and specific surrounding a film’s production and release, as well as its legacy in film history. This paper argues that in utilizing veteran films as historic documents, exploring how these productions both reflect and originate cultural values, one is able to examine certain peripheral, personal perspectives that would otherwise be masked by standardized, national narratives of history. Furthermore, an examination of cinema’s early and lesser-known depictions of war veterans can be beneficial in understanding later, more iconic efforts, as well as the present and future roles of the genre.

AREAS OF INTEREST:
Media Historiography, Cinema Studies,
Great War History, Cultural History
Having become a unified country in only 1871, Germany had little chance to define itself as a young nation before entering – and losing – the first World War (1914-1918). As a result, postwar Germany quickly fell apart; war reparations, extreme economic inflation, and an ineffective government left Germans desperate for a sense of security. In this vulnerable context, the National Socialist German Workers’ (Nazi) Party met a receptive public audience in their campaign to remove blame for the country’s destitution from German leaders’ shoulders and place it on Jewish and minority groups, as did both Adolf Hitler’s (1889-1945) assertions that Germans were destined for prosperity and global supremacy as well as the Third Reich’s contrived rhetoric about the historical and biological superiority of the German master race. The Nazi Party looked like the solution to Germany’s frustrations, and in many ways it was: whatever conflicts Germans felt regarding their history, future, or national identity, Hitler of-

ffered a solution.

Beneath the military spectacle and systematic destruction of the Third Reich was a field of scholarship employed to resolve these conflicts of identity. Hitler’s solution was to pave over the country’s undesirable circumstances and impose his own vision of Germany onto the land, while his propaganda teams worked to impose his vision onto German society’s thoughts, words, and history itself. In 1935, Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), head of the Schutzstaffel, or SS, founded a new department within the SS called Das Ahnenerbe, or the bureau of “ancestral inheritance.” This department was formed to explore scientific questions important to the Third Reich, including racial theories; as its title indicates, a major focus of the Ahnenerbe was to investigate and archive the pure and noble lineage of the German Volk, or society.2

Hitler’s fascist rhetoric depended on defining an ironclad sense of unity among the German people, so it was essential for the Nazi campaign to establish that Germans were connected through more than geography. They accomplished this primarily by excluding those political or racial groups that could be identified as different. To unite those who remained, however, the Nazis had to produce convincing evidence of the existence and superiority of a German race, despite the absence of solid historical or scientific support for their claims. The Ahnenerbe’s task was to scientifically define the existence of the master race – the Herrenrasse – and it managed to do so through a large amount of mythmaking and just enough academic credibility to make their evidence convincing. This paper aims to trace the mythology and pseudoscientific scholarship that the Ahnenerbe used to fabricate the history of the Master Race in the early twentieth century. Specifically, it will examine the motivations that led Himmler to send an expedition to Tibet in 1938 in an attempt to find the Aryan race and legitimize the Ahnenerbe as an academic institution.

In order to form a picture of the elite society from which the Germans descended, Himmler employed a wide variety of scientists to investigate every aspect of the Aryan race. Archaeologists and engineers studied primeval settlements and architecture, botanists speculated on the possibility of exactly replicating the ancient Germans’ diets in modern society, and zoologists traced the evolution of horses and livestock to determine how they might reverse evolution and restore the old, original “Germanic” breeds that were available to their Aryan ancestors. The research teams assembled by the SS engaged in genetics, linguistics, anthropology, geography, cartography, and trans-continental exploration to collect information proving the origins and existence of the Aryan race, but above all, the scholars dealt in mythology and mythmaking: philologists and experts in legends and folklore regarded old place-names and details from fairytales as documentation of the history of German culture.

Scholars often manipulated information or expanded pieces of partial evidence to fabricate a cultural context that matched the Third Reich’s visions of elite Aryan destiny. Discoveries in line with the Nazi philosophy pleased Himmler and led to promotions, but the scholars’ ambition to please produced a field of far-fetched connections and pseudoscience. For this reason,

4. The SS had the same plan for the German people: families were encouraged to keep detailed records of their “Nordic bloodlines,” and Aryan couples were encouraged to have as many children as possible. Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 142. Eric Ehrenreich’s book *The Nazi Ancestral Proof: Genealogy, Racial Science, and the Final Solution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007) provides more information about the Nazis’ plan to breed out racial impurities and restore the Aryan race in Germany.
5. Pringle makes a note that the records of the Ahnenerbe refer to many different and specific departments, but the availability of the work they produced is limited, so there is little evidence that several of these departments existed in more than just paperwork. Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 143.
foreign scientists disregarded the *Ahnenerbe*’s work, and even Hitler deemed the department’s projects unimportant.⁶ Desperate for validation before the global scientific community and in the eyes of the German public, Himmler pushed harder for an impressive breakthrough in research and ultimately commissioned SS-funded expeditions to collect evidence in Sweden, Finland, and finally, Tibet in search of the kingdom of the Aryan race.

Despite the money and pressure Himmler threw at his scholars, academically, they were fighting a losing battle. Though it was effective as propaganda to convince an accepting audience, the research that they produced would never be solidly credible because it was founded on partial understanding and pre-formed conclusions. The *Ahnenerbe* turned to elements of mythology to fabricate their answers because the factual answer, though simple, was unsatisfactory; historically, there is no common origin of the German people. The residents of Germany have an especially disjointed history that challenges the existence of the kind of unifying German ancestry that promoted by the Third Reich. Before 1871, the occupants of the region of central Europe that is now Germany and Austria were nomadic tribes or feudal principalities, hardly the noble and biologically pure Aryan race the Nazi leaders liked to imagine. The first known ancestors of the German *Volk* were the Goths, Saxons, Vandals, Lombards, Franks, and other Germanic tribes who roamed Europe in the fifth century AD. In *The Aryan Myth*, Leon Poliakov explains that German ancestry is actually very diverse by European standards. Tribes from many regions of Europe came together in the center of the continent and blended their genes and cultures until the country was politically united in 1871, and the German people became a single nation, – though hardly one of pure and common

⁶. In Hitler’s view, the early tribal residents of Germany had a barbaric and embarrassing history compared to the contemporary societies of Greece and Rome, so he preferred to look ahead to the German Reich of the next thousand years, not the last thousand. “Why do we call the whole world’s attention to the fact that we have no past?” he once complained. Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 66.
ancestry.\textsuperscript{7}

Rather than considering the idea of German diversity, the leaders of the Third Reich – including Himmler and Hitler – focused on texts that supported their own visions of Germany. In \textit{Germania}, one of the earliest texts describing the Germanic tribes, Tacitus (AD 56-117) describes for Roman readers the barbarian tribes living east of the Rhine and north of the Danube River. There are several reasons to doubt the credibility of Tacitus’ account of the early Germans: commentators remark that in praising the brave and chaste Germanic tribes, Tacitus was indirectly criticizing his own licentious native Roman society, so the traits he attributes to the Germans are probably only a critical mirror image of Tacitus’ view of the average Roman.\textsuperscript{8} Additionally, his accounts of the Germans as both active and prone to “lie buried in sloth”\textsuperscript{9} are contradictory, and according to historian Heather Pringle, Tacitus “was clearly lacking in intimate knowledge of his subjects” and rather, “gathered his information from older texts and from stories from tribesmen living in the Roman capital.”\textsuperscript{10} Nevertheless, his portrait of the Teutonic tribes as “aboriginal, and not mixed at all with other races” and “free from all taint of intermarriages with foreign nations” strongly influenced the study of German history and Heinrich Himmler’s personal vision of German identity, as we will later see.\textsuperscript{11} Diverse nomadic groups came from all regions

\textsuperscript{7} Although this leaves the German \textit{Volk} without a homogenous lineage, Poliakov points out that the Germanic tribes’ widespread origins lend a sense of possessive entitlement to German students’ perspective of Europe; if their ancestors lived beyond the German borders, modern Germans have a right to expand beyond their borders as well. Leon Poliakov, \textit{The Aryan Myth: a history of racist and nationalist ideas in Europe} (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1974), 71.


\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{10} Pringle, \textit{The Master Plan}, 16.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus’ Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich} by Christopher Krebs, W.W. Norton & Co. 2011, traces the importance

100
of Europe to settle centrally in the region that became Germany, and although they did not retain their distinct tribal identities over time, the fact remains that the German people evolved from a wide range of ancestors, certainly not from an elite homogenous race. The greatest similarity that the Germanic tribes shared, and the quality that has identified the Germanic peoples with each other throughout history, is the similarity of their languages.

Language continues to be an essential factor in tracing ancestry and solidifying group identities. It was the most important tool in developing our modern theories about the origins of the European people. In 1767 English naturalist James Parsons (1705-1770) investigated the origins of the European people by comparing their languages and geographical locations to gather an idea about early migration to the European continent. Parsons compared similarities in the names of numbers among European and Asian languages and determined that Bengali, Persian, English, Irish, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, Danish, and German share a common ancestral language spoken at one point by a single group of people that later dispersed, migrated, and mixed with other societies to produce the diverse races and languages that exist now. Scientific audiences disregarded Parsons’ book, The Remains of Japhet, a book which examines the affinity and origins of the European languages, because Parsons twisted Biblical evidence to suggest that the common ancestral language was originally spoken by Japhet, the son of Noah and supposed father of all European and Indian peoples. Parsons combined a scientific proposal with mythology and earned scorn from his peers. They questioned

of Germania to German nationalists from the first to the twentieth century.


13. Poliakov explains that according to the Bible, the different peoples of the world are the descendants of Noah’s three sons, who repopulated the earth after the great flood. Ham fathered the Africans, Shem fathered the Jews and Semitic peoples, and Japhet fathered the rest of humanity. Through his research, Parsons provided evidence to support the Biblical story that Europeans and Indians share this common ancestor. Poliakov, The Aryan Myth, 7.
whether a naturalist, whose previous publications included acute observations of leaves and animals, was qualified to investigate the linguistic connections and origins of the European peoples. Although Parsons’ conclusions were unsatisfactory to the scientific community at the time, his groundbreaking method of tracing linguistic roots inspired later studies and led to the discovery of the Indo-European language family: another English scholar, a linguist named Sir William Jones (1746-1794), performed a similar study and arrived at a similar conclusion in 1786, affirming Parsons’ work and introducing a new theory regarding the biological history of the human species.¹⁴

The biology of humans was a new and exciting field of science in the nineteenth century. With the expansion of European colonialism came the development of anthropology. “In the nineteenth century, science followed the flag,” writes Christopher Hale. “As the European nations conquered the world, it was realized that the new colonies offered a unique scientific opportunity. They would be transformed into vast laboratories of human types, and of different races.”¹⁵ As explorers set out to chart the globe, they brought naturalists and anthropologists with them to observe the environment and the unfamiliar societies of people. The global race for discovery was not only to claim geographical territory for one’s country, but also to claim groundbreaking discoveries in science.

Having become a unified nation in only 1871, Germany was a late arrival in the race to colonize the world. By the time Bismarck had unified the German principalities and started to speak of claiming some Lebensraum, or room to live and expand outside of the new German borders, the British Empire had extended its territory around the globe. Competition was fierce, but the Germans entered the game with determination and made their colonial presence known both militarily and in the field of anthropology. German anthropologists distinguished between

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¹⁴. Hale, Himmler’s Crusade, 27.
¹⁵. Ibid., 90.
Naturvölker, peoples of nature, and Kulturvölker, peoples of culture. They believed that because natural peoples were supposedly untainted by culture or the burdens of history, they represented an opportunity to study humankind through completely objective observation of behavior and physical attributes. It was as if they were studying a new animal species; this was the chance to study race entirely in terms of appearance. People without culture were simple and physical beings, distinguished only by geography and their natural visible attributes.\(^\text{16}\) With this understanding, colonialist anthropologists left home with calipers to measure skulls and plaster to make facemasks so that they might bring back as much data as possible. With the same perspective and purpose, the young anthropologist Bruno Beger would embark for Tibet in 1938, although his project would carry a more direct purpose: to determine whether the Tibetans were fellow descendants of the Aryan race.\(^\text{17}\)

Though Sir William Jones coined the original concept of the Aryan race, however, the mystical character of this elusive race was established in another field of literature that, although less credibly or scientifically conceived, strongly influenced the European understanding of ancestry and identity. A genre of literature combining elements of geography, history, and occult storytelling gained popularity among Western readers in the late nineteenth century.\(^\text{18}\) The Tibetan legend of Shambhala, a hidden

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16. Ibid., 92.
17. Ibid.
18. *The Occult Roots of Nazism* by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, as reviewed by William Grimstad, presents a “thorough and level-headed inquiry” into the occult and nationalist groups that preceded the formation of the Nazi Party. A supplement to the post-war literature that has sensationalized the Nazis’ interest in supernatural forces, Goodrick-Clarke’s book examines the incidental influence of mysticism and a new field called “Ariosophistry” that emerged in the 1910’s. Although the writers and societies promoting these ideas laid the groundwork for Hitler’s party in the 1920’s and 30’s, Goodrick-Clarke puts their influence into context and reveals that to the political party as a whole, occultism was not nearly as important as its racist and nationalist interests.
Himalayan kingdom akin to Atlantis, intrigued travelers who dreamed of a magical society in the mountains. One dreamer in particular, Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), published a series of books fabricating the spiritual and mystical character of the Tibetan people, a society she claimed to know intimately (but most likely had never visited). She claimed that the inaccessibility of the Himalayas formed a “veil of Isis,” shielding a powerful “race of Masters” from discovery by the rest of the world. Her most famous book, *The Secret Doctrine*, combined “bogus Tibetan wisdom and evolutionary science” into a grand depiction of the origins of humanity.19 Blavatsky’s history of the world included seven root races that rose and fell like great empires; the inhabitants of Atlantis were the fourth of these races to emerge, and when Atlantis began to sink into the ocean, an elite group of priests escaped into the Himalayas, where they passed their wisdom on to a later species, the Aryans, whose descendants became the Anglo-Saxons.20 Blavatsky’s theory depicted the Germans as direct descendants of a race superior enough to receive wisdom from Atlantean priests themselves; furthermore, the idea that they had migrated from northern India at least coincided with Jones’s theory of the Aryan Indo-European tribe. *The Secret Doctrine* struck a chord in German and Austrian society and set a precedent for the racism of the twentieth century, as well as for the presentation of myth and pseudoscience as decisive and definitive facts.

Heinrich Himmler similarly combined his belief in mythology with the elements of history that supported it. As mentioned above, Himmler was deeply impressed by the portrait of the German people presented in *Germania*. The image of a strong, blonde hero in touch with nature and defending his homeland was inspirational. In *Himmler's Crusade: The Nazi Expedition to Find the Origins of the Aryan Race*, Christopher Hale dramatizes Himmler’s first reading of *Germania* and suggests that the short, studious man was probably thrilled to align himself with Tacitus’

19. Ibid., 25.
heroic characters. Himmler grew up in a family obsessed with its own ancestry, and he applied this passion for documentation and German history to his projects for the SS. In 1935, Himmler established the Ahnenerbe, an academic bureau dedicated explicitly to exploring the biological and cultural “ancestral inheritance” of the German people – or, as they saw it, the history of the Aryan Race.

The Ahnenerbe worked towards a predetermined conclusion and resorted to pseudoscience to prove the superiority of the Aryan race. Himmler’s interest in mythology led him to commission much research in the field, and scholars eager for promotions and Himmler’s approval scrambled to produce results as supportive of the Nazi philosophy as possible. In 1936, Himmler sent an expedition to the Bohuslän region of southeastern Sweden to examine a range of primeval carvings in the cliff faces there. The eager researcher leading the trip was Herman Wirth (1885-1981), an Ahnenerbe officer with a passion for ancient symbols and legends of the lost continent of Atlantis. Wirth filmed and made plaster casts of the cryptic carvings on the rocks and proudly shared these records with Himmler and other audiences in Germany. He insisted that the symbols were the ancient language of the Aryan race, which had originated in Scandinavia and invented these symbols as the world’s first system of writing. Moreover, Wirth claimed to be able to read it. His presentation of a single piece of objective evidence with the addition of mythology and outlandish conclusions was typical of the Ahnenerbe’s methods.

The process was repeated when Himmler hired young Finnish scholar Yrjö von Grönhagen (1911-2003) to travel throughout Finland recording folksongs, local legends, and

21. Hale takes a certain level of dramatic liberty throughout his book to the point that it is sometimes unclear which scenes are confirmed events and which have been imagined by the author. In any case, Himmler’s diaries and comments to fellow Nazi leaders support the notion that he was moved by his readings of Tacitus, Madam Blavatsky, and others.
23. Ibid., 66.
magical incantations in the hope that these stories and customs were preserved remnants of the mystical culture of the ancient Aryans. Grönhagen had published an article in Frankfurt about *The Kalevala* (a title that literally means “The Land of Heroes”), a famous Finnish book based on the folksongs of the Scandinavian people. The idea that Northern European legends and myths might hold clues to the ancient culture of the Aryans appealed so strongly to Himmler that he recruited Grönhagen from afar to investigate Finnish folktales more thoroughly, in the name of the SS. Grönhagen responded enthusiastically, eager to prove that Finns and Germans were kin in the scope of cultural and racial inheritance.

Mythology and occultism are especially dangerous because the decision about what pieces to include or disregard is entirely dependent on the understanding or preference of individuals. Then, through publication and propaganda, half-formed thoughts are spread to the wider population until they are accepted as fact. The inaccuracy of a legend’s content is not as important as the ways in which the story evolves over time and its influence on the cultural groups who preserve it. The fact that a tale changes over time is not problematic until its details become important guidelines for very real scientific and political policies, as was the case in Nazi Germany.

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24. Himmler was influenced by the writings of Rudolf John Gorsleben, a German who in 1925 founded the Edda Society on the premise that the *Edda*, a famous book of ancient Norse songs, was in fact “the richest source of Aryan intellectual history.” Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 79.

25. If the Aryans included those races who spoke languages in the Indo-European linguistic family, then Finns were a curious outcast among European nationalities. Finnish has very few similarities to German, English, French, or any of the related European languages; scientists have therefore questioned the origins of Finns specifically, concluding that their ancestors were more directly related to those of the Hungarians or the Mongols, rather than the speculative Aryan tribe. Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 82-3.
Beyond the myths previously introduced by Madame Blavatsky, popular interest in Tibet had grown in Germany following the publication in 1933 of Ernst Schäfer’s (1910-1992) first book, *Mountains, Buddhas, and Bears*. In this book, Schäfer recounts his adventures during his first expedition to the Himalayas led by American naturalist Brooke Dolan (1908-1945) in 1931-2. The thrilling tales of hunting and exploration made him something of a national celebrity in Germany, and his second trek with Dolan in 1934-6 earned Schäfer further admiration from readers and the scientific community. Schäfer received a job offer from the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, Dolan’s home institution, but after two expeditions under Dolan’s leader-

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Wirth’s excursion to the Bohuslän region and Grönhagen’s research in Finland involved a large amount of mythology and manipulation to fit their evidence into the targeted Nazi philosophy. Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 64.
ship, Schäfer was eager to lead his own mission to central Asia.

While Schäfer was in the United States deciding how to proceed, in Germany, Himmler was looking for heroes to join the SS and to provide some prestige to his academic endeavors. The Ahnenerbe was hardly a world-renowned institution: the scholars dealt largely in myth, as the previously mentioned European expeditions represent, so there was much manipulation involved in making the fragments of legend resemble facts that support a fabricated history and social philosophy like such as that of the Nazi Party. Himmler regularly struggled to catch Hitler’s attention with his academic projects, and the international science community tended to disregard the scholars of the SS just as Hitler did. The more solid evidence they could present to defend the existence of a master race, the better: Himmler was eager to make the Ahnenerbe appear as legitimate as possible. A sponsored trip to Tibet would secure Ernst Schäfer’s loyalty to the SS, provide potentially groundbreaking evidence regarding the history of the Aryan race, and attract the kind of international attention that Schäfer already had and Himmler was desperate to bring to his academic projects.

The final team assembled for the 1938 expedition included zoologist Ernst Schäfer, anthropologist Bruno Beger (1911-2009), geophysicist Karl Wienert (1912-1992), and entomologist Ernst Krause (1899-1987), the last of whom would also serve as the official photographer for the journey. Each man was chosen for his academic merit and potential to bring glory to the SS: Schäfer’s fame had already been established through his previous adventures and publications. Beger had studied the field of anthropology under Hans F.K. Günther (1891-1968), a famous pioneer in the study of race, and despite his young age, Beger seemed a promising new addition to the field. Himmler had high hopes for the racial evidence that Beger would discover in Tibet, – as did Beger himself. Wienert was an accomplished student of geomagnetic research, a scientific field that Germany genuinely led at the time.

26. Ibid., 66.
Wienert had studied under Wilhelm Filchner, an explorer who had plotted magnetic fields in remote mountain ranges including the Himalayas, so his presence on the expedition added almost as much prestige to the mission as Schäfer’s. Krause’s assignment as photographer would prove most useful upon the team’s return to Germany, when the images of their research and adventures would display to the world the glory and achievement of Himmler, the Ahnenerbe, and the Third Reich.

Tibet in the 1930’s was an independent state, but was one positioned between the greater powers of China and British India. British political officers stationed in the north Indian

27. Schäfer himself was an ardent admirer of Filchner as a man who had managed to pursue a genuinely scientific career in Nazi Germany. Although he benefited from SS sponsorship, Schäfer hoped to remain an independent and respectable scientist, rather than one who yielded to the games of politics. Hale, Himmler’s Crusade, 123-4.
region of Sikkim fostered friendly relations with the Dalai Lama, the head of the Buddhist religion, and other national leaders in order to preserve the Tibetan state as a buffer zone protecting for India from Chinese and Russian influence. Allegiance with British officials was an important element of Tibetan politics in the 1930’s. A prolonged conflict between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, the second leader in the Buddhist hierarchy, resulted in the Panchen Lama’s exile to China in 1923 and in the early 1930’s, caused political tension between Britain, Tibet, and China when the Panchen Lama negotiated his return to Tibet. In 1935, British official F.W. Williamson led a mission from Sikkim to Lhasa to determine the status of Chinese influence in Tibet and establish Great Britain’s interest in and dedication to Tibetan affairs; however, because Great Britain was unwilling to commit officially to a position on Chinese interests, British involvement remained cautious regarding Lhasa, the Dalai Lama, and the Kashag, the Tibetan central government.28

Schäfer originally meant to enter Tibet through China, as he had done with Dolan before. However, in the summer of 1937, Japan had launched an aggressive invasion of China, and the Yangtze River, Schäfer’s intended route, had become a “major battleground.” As Germany had signed a treaty with Japan in 1936, China was an especially dangerous place for a team of Germans – Japan’s new allies.29 This meant that Schäfer had to acquire permission to reach Tibet through British India. In 1938, as suspicion of Hitler and Nazi Germany rose in Europe, officers in London were reluctant to grant free movement in British territory to a group of German scientists, and the officers in Gangtok were similarly protective of the border into the secure buffer state they had invested so much energy in maintaining. Again, however, the desire to avoid conflict made the British leaders cautious and

lenient. Suspicious but eager to stay on at least neutral terms with Germany, authorities at the Foreign Office in London granted the team permission to travel as far north as Sikkim. To proceed into Tibet, however, the team needed permission from the Kashag, and although the British office in Gangtok had forwarded Schäfer’s request to Lhasa, there had been no response.

On April 21, 1938, the team boarded a German steamship and sailed across the Mediterranean en route to India. Transferring first in Sri Lanka, they took another ship from Colombo to the coastal Indian city of Madras and still another, north to Calcutta. During the journey north through India, Schäfer and his men encountered political obstacles; British officers in Calcutta, Darjeeling, and Gangtok remained reluctant to allow them passage, despite the official permission from London. Nevertheless, Schäfer’s team persevered and settled in Gangtok, conducting research and awaiting a chance to enter Tibet.30

In Gangtok, Schäfer admired the mountains and surroundings of Sikkim. “More colorful,” he wrote, “than the Buddhist dances, more fantastic and mysterious than the men who are at home in the jungle of Sikkim, is the natural setting of the mountains which offers us only wonder and awe.”31 Bruno Beger engaged with the locals and collected as much anthropometric information as he could. British officers remained suspicious of Beger’s behavior, and indeed, the specimens subjects having their eye color, skin tones, and the lengths of their skulls measured were uncomfortable as well. Beger, however, was accustomed to working with cautious and less-than-willing participants. Not surprisingly, the individuals that Beger approached were often startled by his requests to measure the lengths of their skulls, the widths of their noses, and any number of other proportions. Even more frightening were his attempts to make face masks or molds of a subject’s entire head; this process required mixing gypsum, water, and disinfectant into a thick clay; coating a model’s face, hands, or head in the mixture and letting it this layer dry (for hours, often with straws inserted into the nostrils as the only outlet for breathing); and then removing the plaster and later recreating the portrait by pouring rubber into the casts.32 While they were stationed in Sikkim, Beger realized that he could use the medical supplies he had brought from Germany to earn the trust of local specimens. He traded bandages, medicine, and medical attention for the locals’ cooperation to sit and let him measure their features.33

Finally, having sent a letter and several gifts directly to Lhasa (therein avoiding the interference of British mediators), in December, Schäfer received a reply from the Kashag and with it

32. Hale, Himmelt’s Crusade, 171.
an official invitation to Lhasa. “To the German Herr Dr. Schäfer Master of 100 Sciences,” read the letter, “Although we know that if we allow you to enter, others might come the next time, it nevertheless appears from your letter that you intend only friendship. Knowing this, we grant you permission to enter Lhasa and stay there for 14 days,” on the condition that the team does not “do any harm to the Tibetan people” or kill any birds or animals.34 The rule against hunting meant that Schäfer’s personal research would be limited, but Beger and the others were eager to continue their work in the capital city, their target destination.

Although the team looked ahead and strongly hoped to later apply their research to promoting the Aryan culture, the scientific study they conducted in Tibet appears to have been objective. In Geheimnis Tibet, or Secret Tibet, a record of the Ahnenerbe expedition published in 1943, Schäfer explains his personal motivation for leading a new expedition to the Himalayan state. “After my second expedition to Tibet, I recognized in the exact and fundamental sciences a failure to clearly answer scientific questions regarding Tibet,” he writes. “I saw neither the resources or the opportunity to clearly present my own biological findings and so in the meantime, the most important and interesting questions remained unsolved.”35 Geheimnis Tibet and the accompanying

34. Hale, Himmels Crusade, 200.
35. “Nach Abschluß meiner zweiten Tibet-Expedition sah ich die Notwendigkeit ein, bei allen wissenschaftlichen Fragen, die eben Tibet berühren, an einen grundlegenden Neuanbau zu denken, da das Fehlen des lapidaren und fundamentalen Wissens auf den Gebieten der Basis- und Schwesterwissenschaften nur zu deutlich in die Erscheinung trat. Da ich weder Mittel noch Wege sah, meine eigenen biologischen Ergebnisse klar einzuordnen und
film of the same name reflect Schäfer’s scientific intentions and present the journey as a series of academic encounters.

Beger remained a dedicated anthropologist as he traveled. As the team passed from one mountainous kingdom to another, he noted the symbols present on the buildings, the clothing of the people, and the hairstyles of the women. Noticing that women in several different regions braided beads into their hair, for example, he remarked that the distinctions between Himalayan communities were becoming increasingly blurred, at least from an anthropological perspective.\(^{36}\) He also continued his pursuit of anthropometric measurements over the course of their journey. In an interview with Christopher Hale, Bruno Beger gave his account of the expedition’s accomplishments: in addition to the 40,000 photographs and reels of footage Krause captured (and later turned into the film *Geheimnis Tibet*), the team brought back “enormous numbers” of plant and insect specimens. Beger himself collected 2,000 Tibetan cultural artifacts, plaster casts of the heads, faces, and hands of 17 people, physical measurements of 376 people, and hand and fingerprints from another 350.\(^{37}\)

The connection between the tall, blonde, blue-eyed Aryans of Himmler’s imagination and the Tibetans that Beger examined in search of the Aryan race is not immediately apparent. This paper has covered the thought processes that led to the Ahnenerbe’s journey to Tibet, but the association still sounds farfetched. Readers will naturally question whether, upon meeting the dark Tibetans (who bore little resemblance to the pale heroes of Tacitus’s *Germania*) and observing their Buddhist customs (which seemed completely foreign to the adventurous, chosen representatives of German culture), the members of the expedition team ever doubted their mission to investigate this Asian society for clues to the pure ancestry of Germany. From my own research, I can only suggest

\[^{36}\] Ibid., 202.

\[^{37}\] Hale, *Himmler’s Crusade*, 298.
that the scientists remained optimistic that their findings would be important to the Ahnenerbe. The journals of Schäfer and Beger reveal the extent to which they were able to associate Tibetan culture with the German Volkskultur – the people’s culture – that Hitler and Himmler hoped to establish. En route to Lhasa, Beger noted approvingly that he saw swastika symbols painted on houses to ward off evil spirits. “There are also drawings,” he wrote, “that look like the Germanic ruins” the Ahnenerbe had examined in Europe.38 Schäfer was unsettled by the Tibetans’ dedication to Lamaism; the Nazis had enforced policies to ban Christianity (and religion in general) from German society, preferring to focus the people’s spiritual dedication to the nation or the Führer himself. In this way, Tibetan society’s worship of the Dalai Lama reflected German dedication to Adolf Hitler, so the societies did share cultural similarities (even if the religion/cult comparison was a dangerous similarity to admit to the authorities at home).39 Schäfer and his men were scientists, and as they traveled to Lhasa and its surrounding villages – after befriending the Dalai Lama and extending their two-week stay to several months – the team recorded photographs and honest observations about Tibetan culture. Nevertheless, there was always an the endgame: to apply the information and skills learned abroad to support the German master race back in Europe.

39. Schäfer’s discomfort with the Tibetans’ religious fervor reflects his quiet diapproval of the development of Nazism in Germany; although his ambition kept him from openly criticizing the Nazi leaders, he did sometimes clash with Himmler in arguments that ultimately prevented Schäfer from forming another SS expedition to Asia. Hale, Himmler’s Crusade, 260.
RETURN TO BERLIN

When they returned to Berlin at the end of 1939, Schäfer and his men published their findings and received official commendation for their accomplishments. But by then, World War II had broken out, and the SS looked for ways to quickly employ the team members according to their areas of expertise. Schäfer, for example, as he recorded his experiences on the expedition in his forthcoming book, began plotting with Himmler for another journey to the Himalayas, this time for clandestine political and military purposes. In September, Great Britain had declared war on Germany, and access to Lhasa — including the friendly diplomatic relationships Schäfer had forged with the Kashag — provided an opportunity to establish a strategic German presence in central Asia that was, close to the British presence in India and Germany’s Japanese allies. Wienert, Geer, and Krause received military assignments around Europe and resumed their scientific careers after the war. Beger received popular acclaim in Germany after returning from Tibet and became a well-respected anthropologist and race expert. In 1943, he arrived at Auschwitz to select ideal specimens to be included in the “Jewish Skeleton Collection” that was then in development. Inspecting a line-up of relatively young and healthy prisoners of the death camp, Beger measured and pulled out 115 individuals of varying ethnic backgrounds — including four from central Asia — to be exported to the Natzweiler death camp, killed, and placed in an ethnographic exhibit of exemplary human skeletons. The assignment was a barbaric application of Beger’s professional expertise in anthropometric studies, but by that time, the Nazi Party had rewritten the

40. Despite the initial interest shown by Himmler, Schäfer never managed to secure another assignment to Tibet. Bureaucratic disagreements among Hitler, Himmler, and other SS leaders confused Schäfer and placed him in a difficult diplomatic position until he was eventually sent to serve on the front in Finland; the SS never showed real interest in his Asian experiences again. Hale, Himmler’s Crusade, 319.
rules of humane treatment – or rather, had rewritten the rules of what it means to be human – and as a scientist, Beger remained proud of his experiences to the end of his days.

Reflecting on her 2002 interview with Beger, Heather Pringle finds more questions than answers about the nature of the Ahnenerbe. At 90 years old, of age, Beger still spoke with enthusiasm about his work in Tibet, sharing pictures and artifacts that remained displayed around his home near Frankfurt. Over the 60 years following the end of the Third Reich, international scientists disproved the theories of racial purity that guided Beger’s work, and the world had condemned the Holocaust as one of the greatest tragedies in history. Yet, the SS anthropologist still held the same fundamental bias against Jews as a “mongrel race.” Pringle identifies him as a “true believer,” one of Himmler’s young followers who would always believe that their work for the SS had been in line with the natural hierarchy of humanity and in the best interests of the German people. But what had convinced other men, like Ernst Schäfer, to support the Final Solution? “Why had they lent their names and their reputations to the Ahnenerbe, cloaking it in scholarly credibility?” she asks, “What had persuaded them to forsake the traditional scholarly pursuit of the truth, distorting their research to fit Nazi party doctrine?” Why were they willing to support a government that they must have recognized as “corrupt, cruel, and murderous?” Pringle admits that the limits of history prevent us from truly understanding the motives of the SS, but she speculates that it was a combination of unfettered ambition and prejudice.

The Third Reich was a government and nation so full of frustration at the events of the previous decades that it looked for excuses to place itself above the rest of the world. Nazi leaders justified their right to act freely towards others by declaring their own racial, cultural, and almost supernatural superiority, similar to

42. Ibid., 322.
43. Ibid., 324.
44. Ibid., 325.
the Divine Right of Kings invoked by monarchs centuries before. The major obstacle to absolute control over the law, people, history, and future of Germany was the moral conflict of mistreating – imprisoning, torturing, killing – fellow human beings, and the solution lay in mythology. Artificial and convenient interpretations of anthropological studies described an elite ethnicity and justified mistreatment of “inferior races.” Fabrications disguised as the results of science experiments led to promotions for the researchers and paved the way for nationally sanctioned, systematic murder. “In this strange and terrible world, myths were the building blocks of genocide,” writes Christopher Hale. “They had this power because Himmler’s passions” – his interests in European legends, ancestry, and genetics – “were myths that masqueraded as science.” The pseudoscientific processes through which the Ahnenerbe scholars conducted their research blended fact and fiction so closely that they were, in effect, able to write the facts as they understood them (or wanted them to be). The 1938-39 SS Expedition to Tibet is an example of the lengths to which the Nazis went to prove their legitimacy and to make their inherited Aryan superiority real, rather than the extravagant fiction it really was. As Hale states at the beginning of this paper, “myth is never harmless;” it is a field of history subjective enough to cater to fiction and conform to powerful ideals like the Third Reich’s, and when combined with science, the facts and fictions of mythology are powerful enough to produce very real and devastating consequences.

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