Arms, Letters, & the Humanities

Essays at the Nexus of Language, Culture, and Military Themes

Edited by John Pendergast

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Foreword

When I address current and prospective world languages students at West Point, I often convey that the faculty and I are honored to join them for a portion of their language journey—a journey that often starts with an intense curiosity about the world outside one's own community and culture—but, for many of us, is also a journey toward a better understanding of ourselves and our own communities. I inform the students that a significant portion of my own language journey took place at West Point between 1986 and 1990, where I studied Arabic and French in the same classrooms in which they will also explore the languages and cultures of the world. My overall language journey, however, started well before I entered West Point. It began through conversations with my mother, a French and Spanish teacher and later a World Languages administrator for the county school system, who cultivated a home environment that promoted exploring and understanding other cultures and languages as a way to better engage with the world and its citizens. In the late 1970s and early-to-mid 1980s, my journey oriented sharply toward the larger Middle East, as images and stories from the region pervaded the evening news, capturing so much of the country's attention and absolutely captivating my imagination. By the time I had been accepted to West Point and was preparing to report in the summer of 1986, my journey had taken on the tenor of a determined if not naïve quest to learn as much as I could about the languages and cultures of the Middle East, so that I could perhaps play some small part in helping the United States better engage in that region of the world.

Since completing my studies at West Point and being commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army, my operational experiences, career track as a Middle East-focused Foreign Area Officer, and scholarly pursuits at the master's and PhD levels have made it such that my language journey and career path have nearly always paralleled and often intersected or intertwined. Now, as the Head of the Department of English and World Languages, while I am still journeying myself, I have the honor of serving alongside a community of dedicated professionals who are on their own unique journeys but at the same time serving as mentors and

guides for the journeys of young men and women whom we endeavor to develop into intellectually curious, insightful, and self-aware leaders.

As John Pendergast describes in the Introduction, the roots of this edited volume are in an initiative among West Point faculty to assemble a larger community of scholars and educators who not only specialize in the analysis of language and culture, but who would be interested in fronting that analysis to better understand how conflict, military operations, and other activities we classify as "military" impact the broader human experience. For the scholars who contributed to this volume, West Point itself was a fitting site to assemble and was a natural host for the inaugural conference on Language, Culture, and Military. At West Point, the themes inherent in this volume are on display everywhere, as we live and breathe the nexus of language, culture, and military. Looking at our buildings or walking down our hallways, you will see the intersection in the architecture and in portraits, paintings, and statues that reflect the aesthetics, narratives, and symbolism of a certain time or place. At our library, memoirs, poetry, and letters relay the challenges of planning and executing battles and portray the human cost. You will read aphorisms from vaunted military leaders meant to capture or shape the mindset and behavior affiliated with a particular culture or from which narratives and tales have evolved that have shaped or deeply influenced an era. You will also observe the intersection in our daily lives, such as in our classrooms where the instruction we deliver in language, literature, and culture is vital to the preparation of future military leaders.

As our call for papers came together and centered on the idea of "the impact of military (or what one may conceive of as military) on the broader human experience," I found myself returning to a short poem entitled "The Last Laugh" by Wilfred Owen, an acclaimed World War I poet and young soldier:

> "O Jesus Christ! I'm hit," he said; and died
> Whether he vainly cursed or prayed indeed,
> The Bullets chirped—in vain! vain! vain!
> Machine-guns chuckled—Tut-tut! Tut-tut!
> And the Big Gun guffawed.
>
> Another sighed,—"O mother, mother! Dad!"
> Then smiled at nothing, childlike being dead.
> And the lofty Shrapnel-cloud
> Leisurely gestured—Fool!
> And the falling splinters tittered.

"My love!" one moaned. Love-languid seemed his mood,
Till, slowly lowered, his whole face kissed the mud.
And the Bayonets' long teeth grinned;
Rabbles of Shells hooted and groaned;
And the Gas hissed.[1]

What could be more intensely human and more intensely represent the central place of language in our social existence than a young person, while fading from this world, calling out for a spiritual savior, or childlike, calling out for Mom and Dad, or calling out for the love of one's life knowing that it is utterly in vain? At the same time, what a profound statement this is on the human experience in conflict—human agency, control, meaning in life—when gas, bayonets, shrapnel clouds and machine guns take on human characteristics and "hiss, grin, gesture, and guffaw," mocking or perhaps humiliating the three young human protagonists as they pass from this living world, with the war machines expressing the poem's eponymous "last laugh."

That one simple iteration of human poetic expression, while focused on three young, nameless soldiers, provides a launching point from which to branch out and explore a rich array of linguistic and other cultural representations of the impact of conflict and military affairs on the human condition. And that branching is what we see in the chapters of this volume that range from the West to the entire span of the world, from the English language to ten different languages, and from the exploration and representation of the individual to the collective. As I attended the presentations that ultimately became crystallized in the chapters of this volume, I could hear echoes of my own journey and better reflect upon and relearn lessons; I cannot help but think how great it would have been to have a collection of works like this one—assembled by well-travelled, expert guides—when I was much younger and impressionable. For instance, I think of a presentation that included a segment on the attempted erasure or muting of a community's language, culture, and history during conflict; I think of another that explored the deliberate fronting and manipulation of cultural markers, to include language, to shape a community's identity and trajectory moving forward.

I am delighted to say that our Department and West Point have gathered some of the great minds from within the disciplines of the Humanities for this volume and that it can now serve as a reference for the next phases of our collective

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1. *Wilfred Owen: The Poems*, Edited by Jon Silkin, Viking Penguin, 1985, p. 131.

and individual journeys, but more importantly, for the journeys of so many that come after us, some of whom are just embarking on their voyage. The volume's analysis of cultural production, to include language, provides valuable insight into how human beings around the world have conceptualized and given meaning to their experiences in or affected by conflict. It demonstrates the ways in which they have transmitted that meaning across space and time and the real effects of that meaning as it manifests in perception and in action. At West Point, such analysis will be of great value not only to educators but to the students who upon graduation will be charged with influencing, executing, and managing violence, conflict, and often, its aftermath, allowing them to draw from astute analysis and insight to be more aware of the complexities and considerations inherent in their charge. Well beyond West Point, the volume will serve as a model to demonstrate in concrete terms how the methods of inquiry in the Humanities help us draw important, informative, and relevant insights. Through the wisdom of these proceedings, some of its readers will be better-equipped Army leaders; some will be better scholars or educators; some will be better citizens; all will be better informed and more deeply discerning human beings. It is a true honor to provide the foreword to this volume and to contemplate the fascinating journeys it will help to recall, help to inform, and help to inspire.

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Editor's Introduction

John Pendergast

"War is what happens when language fails."

—Margaret Atwood, *The Robber Bride*

Conference Origins

The idea for establishing an interdisciplinary conference at West Point initially arose from the uniqueness of the organization of our Department of English and World Languages (DEWL). With all eight of the world languages that we teach under one roof, we differ significantly from departments in which many of our colleagues teach at other colleges and universities.[1] For example, it is common at other schools for Arabic professors to be in departments and interact regularly with colleagues who teach Middle East Studies, likewise for Spanish and Portuguese professors. In DEWL, however, our instructors share office hallways and classrooms with colleagues teaching Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. As a result, often while preparing to leave the room where I teach Nineteenth-century Russian Literature, I might encounter the instructor and students coming in for an Intermediate German class. It naturally happens that we strike up conversations in the hallway about current events, and within minutes, a lively exchange of ideas among scholars with perspectives formed from the study of Chinese, Arabic, Russian, and Portuguese is in full swing with those who study German, Persian, French, and Spanish.

Years ago, two DEWL Professors Emeriti Samuel Saldivar and Sheila Ackerlind, proposed that we organize those discussions into an annual departmental colloquium, which remains a relatively informal occasion where faculty present

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1. Before the project for the conference and edited volume began in 2023, the department had been known as the Department of Foreign Languages.

their ongoing research. At our colloquium in 2021, the idea arose that it would be enormously interesting to open up participation to other departments and perhaps to other institutions. During a meeting in June 2021, Professor of History David Frey and Professor of English Elizabeth Samet graciously consented to offer their expertise and from which a better sense of the possible conference took shape. The following spring in 2022, we decided to devote a full session of our colloquium to further discussion about how to proceed and how we view the relationships among language, culture, and the military. In March 2023, we released the call for papers.

      Our goal was for people to think beyond armed conflict itself and consider the important things that happen involving military service members and those outside the armed services both before and after war. The response was greater than we had hoped for. Although deciding which papers looked the most promising and came closest to our vision of the conference was extremely difficult, when we had reached our decision, it was remarkable to realize that the panels would include works in at least ten different languages; events and personalities from the medieval period to the present day; and perspectives reaching back to Classical Antiquity. We have divided this book into five parts, which correspond to the panels as they were presented.

The Present Volume

Part I, "Representations of the Soldier," celebrates the multifaceted depictions of the soldier in Spanish and Russian literature. For Grant Gearhart of Georgia Southern University, descriptions of military training formed an important part of the (soldier) knight's characterization in medieval biographies and were often adjusted for historical, political, and didactic purposes during the fifteenth century. In the first chapter, "Nuances of Military Training in Fifteenth-Century Spanish Chivalric Literature: Theory, Practice, Masculinity," he also links this training with preparing noblemen for leadership roles within the Castilian feudalistic political structure. The second chapter, "#Santillana #soldierscholar: Self-Promotion and Celebrity Creation in Medieval Spanish Praise Poetry," by Sherry A. Maggin of the United States Military Academy, reconsiders the use of classical exemplars in the Spanish medieval panegyric as a vehicle to teach, inspire, and praise peers and patrons, which in turn contributes to the creation of a "new" exemplar to emulate—the soldier-scholar—that becomes imbued with a certain celebrity status while also engaging in self-promotion of their own personal brand. The

final chapter of this part, "Tolstoy's Swaggering Soldiers in Sevastopol," by Holly Myers of the University of Delaware, offers contrasting descriptions of the Russian imperial soldier, comparing the "swaggering soldier" trope from the classic comedies of Antiquity to the vaingloriousness of Tolstoy's characters in his 1855 sketches about the siege of Sevastopol. Tracing the long historical use of this trope in the stories reveals a critical dichotomy between the soldiers' perception of themselves and what really happens in the fog of war. From Spain to Russia, noble and ignoble, this part of the volume demonstrates a broad, dynamic, and enduring representation of the soldier in major literary works.

In Part II, "War Literature," various scholars examine the transformative experiences confronted by both individuals and nations during times of war. The chapters explore the narratives surrounding individual and national identity as depicted in selected literary works. "No Savior in Sight: The Spiritual Shockwaves of Strategic Bombing in Gert Ledig's Novel *Vergeltung*" comes from Georgetown University PhD candidate J. B. Potter, who examines a profound novel from 1956 that provides insight into the harrowing aftermath of an American air raid on an unnamed German city during World War II. Through the lens of Christian concepts, the work unveils the sobering truth about the horrors of war, exploring themes of time, technology, and progress in the context of strategic bombing. Next, Marina Aptekman from Tufts University explores the transformation of the image of the Soviet-Afghan War in the Russian collective consciousness in "The Songs of the Soviet-Afghan Campaign in Post-Soviet Popular Culture: From Folklore to Propaganda," in which she compares contrasting mythologies of the conflict from the late 1980s to recent years. Aptekman highlights how literature, film, and popular culture have shaped these myths and their implications for post-Soviet Russia.

In Part III, "War and Film," the authors explore the representation of war in cinema, offering insights into the portrayal of conflict on the screen and its impact on global culture. Christopher Bains of the U.S. Air Force Academy delves into the boundaries of friendship and sacrifice in "Representations of World War I in *Jules et Jim*: Friendship and Sacrifice," examining how the title characters navigate their individual experiences amid the collective trauma of battle in Francois Truffaut's 1962 masterpiece of French New Wave cinema. In the next chapter, "From Opium War Heroes to Wolf Warriors and Peacekeeping Martyrs: Projecting Chinese Military Identities through Film," Scott M. Edmondson of the U.S. Air Force Culture and Language Center traces the trajectory of military identities in Chinese-produced media and their contribution to broader

discussions of Chinese national identity and international norms. Continuing the exploration, Elizabeth Oyler from the University of Pittsburgh considers the Japanese remake of Clint Eastwood's 1992 western, *Unforgiven*, in her essay titled "Sang-il Lee's *Yurusarezarumono* (*Unforgiven*, 2013): War, Memory, and History." Oyler examines the film's portrayal of war's devastation, colonization, and loss, while also addressing questions of responsibility and accountability in the face of historical trauma.

Part IV, "Military Sound and Image," investigates meaning beyond the written word in a range of genres and forms. The first chapter, "*Wozzeck* Goes to War: Berg's Adaptation as Commentary on World War I," by John D. Benjamin of the United States Military Academy, views the role war plays in an operatic adaptation by Alban Berg. The composer, a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I, brings personal experience and aesthetic nationalism to bear on a nineteenth-century drama by Georg Büchner. In the next chapter, "The Moral Complexity of Occupation: The Experience of Two Peasant Women, 1942," Alexander and Alice Nakhimovsky explore a corpus of oral narratives recorded from the late 1980s to 2010. They recount phases of the Battle of Stalingrad from July to November 1942, bringing to light otherwise unknown circumstances of life under occupation. In addition, a narrative is presented that characterizes unique perspectives toward Nazi occupation in Ukraine that deviate from common wartime narratives. Finally, in "Rebellion on Reel: The Iran–Iraq War in Films by Iranian Dissidents," Mahyar Entezari of the University of Pennsylvania looks at the relationship between film and war in Iran during the 1980s. It examines the approaches and abilities of dissident directors to depict and engage with the complexities of identity and normativity. Through the rich range of methodological approaches and wide variety of forms these essays put into play—including film, opera, illustration, and painting, as well as prose and drama—they explore the structure of meaning as central to a work's reception and thus ultimately its power.

Part V, "War's Influence on Language," considers the discursive impact of armed conflict. The first chapter, "De-Russification Attempts in Revolutionary Kyiv of 1917," from Roman Tashlitskyy, looks at the Ukrainian grassroots movements to preserve the Ukrainian language in the wake of Russian subjugation and colonization after the Russian Revolution. These movements have a particularly timely legacy given the de-Russification processes that have risen following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine starting in 2022. The second chapter, "Language

in the Crossfire: The Dynamic Shifts in Ukrainian Communication and Word-Formation During 2022–2024," by Svitlana Melnyk and Larysa Kysliuk, looks at the broad array of terms and concepts that have gained popularity in direct reaction to the war in the past two years. Conversely, Joan F. Chevalier, in her chapter, "Russian Propaganda About the Conflict in Ukraine: A Cognitive Semantic Analysis," considers the discursive impact of the war in Ukraine from the perspective of Russian media outlets to explore the broader impact of war on disinformation and propaganda. For a comparative perspective, in "The U.S. Army as 'Kingly Army'? A Social Semiotics Study on *Wangshi* in Chinese Internet Discourse," Lillian Li-Hsing Ho looks at the phenomenon of describing the U.S. Army as *wangshi*—an unlikely moniker used antagonistically to describe the American military. Collectively, these essays explore the powerful impact of war on language to upend lexicons and transform discourse.

War, Language, and Culture

The war in Ukraine provided the impetus for several of the papers in the conference that are included in the volume. The fact that a number of prominent democracies around the world have not explicitly supported Ukraine calls into question the argument made by many in NATO that this is a war of ideology: democracy versus authoritarianism. If we listen to the ways that Russians themselves talk about the war and their reasons for expending blood and treasure, we can see that this is actually a war of culture. The Russians argue that, among other things, they are fighting the forces of Russophobia. Such wars of culture are entirely to the point of this volume, inspiring one of West Point's participants, Professor Elizabeth Samet, to share an example from Plutarch at the start of the conference. As she noted, some scholars have called into question the veracity of some portions of the story, but whether or not it is entirely true, Plutarch provides a fascinating illustration from Antiquity of the role that language and culture can play in the outcome of battle.

Plutarch relates the episode during the Athenian expedition to Sicily, which ended disastrously in 413 BCE:

> Most of the Athenians perished in the stone quarries of disease and evil fare, their daily rations being a pint of barley meal and a half-pint of water; but not a few were stolen away and sold into slavery or succeeded in passing themselves off for serving men. These, when they were sold, were branded in the forehead with

the mark of a horse,—yes, there were some freemen who actually suffered this indignity in addition to their servitude.

But even these were helped by their restrained and decorous bearing; some were speedily set free, and some remained with their masters in positions of honour. Some also were saved for the sake of Euripides. For the Sicilians, it would seem, more than any other Hellenes outside the homeland, had a yearning fondness for his poetry. They were forever learning by heart the little specimens and morsels of it, which visitors brought them from time to time, and imparting them to one another with fond delight. In the present case, at any rate, they say that many Athenians who reached home in safety greeted Euripides with affectionate hearts, and recounted to him, some that they had been set free from slavery for rehearsing what they remembered of his works; and some that when they were roaming about after the final battle they had received food and drink for singing some of his choral hymns. Surely, then, one need not wonder at the story that the Caunians, when a vessel of theirs would have put in at the harbour of Syracuse to escape pursuit by pirates, were not admitted at first, but kept outside, until, on being asked if they knew any songs of Euripides, they declared that they did indeed, and were for this reason suffered to bring their vessel safely in. (Plutarch 307–9)

It is unlikely that a knowledge of poetry by today's prisoners of war would have the same effect on their captors as the Athenians' knowledge of Euripides had on theirs. It is certain, however, that knowledge of the language and culture of both allies and adversaries has always provided an advantage to those who seek to influence or avoid hostile relations and will always offer keen insight into understanding their aftermath. It is our hope that the essays in this volume will make a lasting and substantive contribution to that knowledge.

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PART I

Representations of the Soldier

Editor
Rebecca Jones-Kellogg

Nuances of Military Training in Fifteenth-Century Spanish Chivalric Literature

THEORY, PRACTICE, MASCULINITY[1]

Grant Gearhart

Georgia Southern, Armstrong Campus

For even if we are naturally suited for doing something,
In order to succeed in that work, we must practice it over time.

Pietro Monte, Book 3, *Collectanea*

Broadly speaking, anytime a knight participated in a tournament, swam across a river, jousted, threw a pole, pursued a wild animal, or wrestled a fellow trainee, he participated in an exercise that helped prepare his mind and physique for the rigors of a martial life. In the Middle Ages, knights learned their craft from other knights and masters-of-arms from an early age; and, throughout the knight's life individual and group training taught complex skills such as group tactics, weapon handling, and horsemanship (Jones 80). In certain instances, training activities enabled knights to evaluate their abilities relative to their peers, serving as a concurrent measure of manliness. For example, practicing exercises that improved coordination and equilibrium would help an unsure wrestler become stronger and more fluid while grappling. Likewise, a novice rider would notice his weaknesses while riding alongside a more skilled horseman, but he would also gain an understanding of the capabilities possessed by skilled riders.

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1. Translations from the original languages to English are the author's unless otherwise noted.

On the Iberian Peninsula and in medieval Castile, knights were encouraged to listen to and be inspired by stories about honor and bravery, as noted in Don Juan Manuel's fourteenth-century *Libro de los estados* (*Book of States*, 1330): "[Young knights] should do what they can so that they may enjoy reading the chronicles of the great deeds and the great conquests, and of the deeds of arms and the knights that performed them" (557).[2] Similarly, young boys and men needed supervised training from an early age to acquire knightly martial skills; furthermore, it was recommended that they sustain ongoing training even as seasoned warriors (Mechikoff 56). "There was a distinct purpose in educating nobles to be fit, healthy, and fearless," argues Robert Mechikoff, because "in sports and war, the combination of physical skill and intellectual acumen . . . could mean the difference between winning and losing, between life and death" (59).

Mechikoff describes medieval knights using a modern term: "combat athlete" (59).[3] According to the modern definition, combat athletes engage in physically dangerous activities that occur in the midst of life-threatening situations. As a result of their occupations, they must meet expectations of physical fitness and training to satisfy the requirements of their professions.[4] In the Middle Ages, of course, such a designation did not exist; nevertheless, the modern combat athlete's profile aligns with the expectations of real (as opposed to fictional) medieval knights. Like combat athletes, the knight's level of commitment to training was embedded in the chivalric mindset because, for them, performing one's physical fitness through feats of endurance, strength, or martial skill was a cornerstone for displaying manliness. The knight's training and education were frequently the initial presentation of his exemplarity for writers aiming to illustrate their ideal warrior image.

Not everyone writing about chivalric education and training in Castile, however, was in agreement with how young boys and men should view training and what goals they should pursue. The disparities in the examples studied here illustrate that chivalric theorists from fifteenth-century Iberia based many of their arguments about the training of knights on the opinions of older military writings, but that they were not always in agreement. Additionally, various authors

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2. "deven fazer cuanto pudieren por que tomen plazer en leer las corónicas de los grandes fechos et de las grandes conquistas, et de los fechos de armas et de cavallerías que acaecieron." For further commentary on why knights should consume chivalric stories, see Mahoney (25) in reference to Alfonso X's *Siete Partidas* (2.21.10), and Gómez Moreno (373).

3. Sometimes referred to as "tactical athletes." See, for example, Keith Loria (2018) and Jennifer Xu et al. (2022).

4. See Xu et al. (2022).

(discussed at greater length later) wrote about knights from a strictly theoretical point of view, while others chose to deal with pragmatic problems related to how knights learned and maintained their martial skills. This aspect of the "chivalric debate" from fifteenth-century Spain has been overlooked by scholars who have instead focused their attention more closely on topics related to ceremony and courtly protocol, eligibility for investiture, laws regarding chivalric practices and culture, and the debate about arms versus letters.[5]

Attitudes and Perspectives

Understanding the literary and cultural context in which these authors wrote requires an exploration of the attitudes toward military training present in their epoch. Although a technical treatise from Antiquity, Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus's *Epitoma Rei Militaris* (also *De re militari*) was a widely read and studied Latin work during the European Middle Ages; and, its medieval reiterations had adapted to the chivalric landscapes in which it was studied, thereby making it a resource for those readers (Fallows, *Chivalric Vision* 8). Vegetius's work was heavily influenced by another military writer from Antiquity, Sextus Julius Frontinus (Roca Barea 76). Frontinus's *Strategemata* served as a guide of military excellence based on how historical figures conducted different aspects of warfare, but it lacks much reflection on training purposes and practices. Vegetius, however, expresses a zeal for military training and combat readiness in every book of the *De re militari* (Allmand 257), making his contribution to outlooks on military matters unique. From the outset, Vegetius remarks extensively on training, affirming that military skills and competence in battle are more beneficial than possessing a sheer numerical advantage: "[A] small force which is highly trained in the conflicts of war is more apt to victory: a raw untrained horde is always exposed to the slaughter" (2–3). In particular, Chapter 23 of Book II extols the need for constant physical training. Of somewhat obvious importance is the need to train novice soldiers, but Vegetius exclaims that veterans, too, need to drill in order to maintain their battle readiness, "for length of time or number of years does not transmit the art of war, but continual exercise. No matter how many years he has served, an unexercised soldier is forever a raw recruit" (57). As warfare in the Middle Ages evolved, this outlook towards training struck a chord with medieval readers and chivalric theorists (Allmand 17, 23, 32).

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5. For discussions on this debate, see Cruz, Fallows (Chivalric Vision), Heusch, and Rodríguez Velasco.

Compelling evidence in medieval Iberia suggests that *De re militari* had a significant impact on chivalric thought, a connection made more intriguing by the conceivable birth of Vegetius on the Peninsula (Allmand 1; Milner xxxii). Arguably the earliest noteworthy source written in Castilian to adopt and transmit Vegetius's teachings was the thirteenth-century monarch Alfonso X's *Las Siete Partidas* (*The Seven Laws*, c. 1256), a complex law code that outlined the precepts of Castilian society at the time. According to Alfonso's *Segunda Partida* (*Second Law*, Title 21, Law 2), knights should be

> capable of endurance, in order to suffer the great privation and labor which would come upon them in war and battle . . . practiced in the use of weapons, that they might the better know how to conquer and kill their enemies, and not be easily fatigued by doing so . . . their limbs should be well made, in order that they might be strong, powerful, and active. (418)[6]

Building endurance, training with weapons, and developing general physical prowess are concepts found throughout the *De re militari*;[7] additionally, it is this precise section of the *Segunda Partida* where Vegetius's name appears as a source in Alfonso's text.[8] Training held a greater significance for both Vegetius and Alfonso X than merely ensuring military efficiency. It also symbolized a commitment to fulfilling the duty towards defense and the responsibility of aiding society in its own protection (Allmand 97).

In addition to Alfonso X, other prominent thinkers in and around the Iberian Peninsula were commenting on the topic of chivalric education and behavior. The thirteenth-century Catalan philosopher and chivalric theorist Ramon Llull, for example, advocated for specific training exercises meant to prepare and maintain knights for their vocational duties in his treatise *Libro de la Orden de Caballería* (*The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, c. 1274). These include horseback riding, hunting, and fencing, among others:

> Riding a horse, participating in behours, tilting lances against the quintain, going about armed, taking part in tournaments, holding Round Tables, fencing,

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6. "Que fuessen lazradores, para sofrir la grand lazeria, e los trabajos q en las guerras, e en las lides les acaesciessen … [Q] fuessen vsados a ferir, por que sopiessen mejor, e mas ayna matar, e vencer sus enemigos, e non cansassen ligeramete faziendolo … Que fuessen bien faciona dos de miembros, para ser rezios, e fuertes, e ligeros" (70–71).

7. See Allmand (102), especially fn. 74.

8. "A wise man, named Vegetius, while discovering this subject, said concerning the order of knighthood…" (418); "E sobre esto dixo vn sabio q vuo nome Vegecio, q fabla de la orde de caualleria…" (71).

hunting deer, bears, wild boar, lions and other things similar to these are the office of a knight, for by all these things knights are trained for feats of arms and for upholding the Order of Chivalry. Hence, to scorn the training and the usage of that which better prepares the knight to practice his office is to scorn the Order of Chivalry. (47)[9]

Llull's comments—in particular the last sentence—illustrate his penchant for knights to include certain exercises as part of their lifestyle in addition to other activities. Llull himself began as a "carefree knight" but would later eschew his military life and become a Catholic theologian and writer (Fallows, "Introduction" 1). While his treatise on chivalry would have surely been intended, at least in some respect, as direct guidance for knights themselves, his true audience was most likely those in charge of teaching, namely the clerics of the time (Fallows, "Introduction" 5). Much of his work connects the physical world to the spiritual and stresses that knights honor the practices of the Catholic faith. As first-line defenders of that faith, Llull makes it clear in the passage above that knights must be physically ready when called upon to perform their duties.

Don Juan Manuel, a contemporary of Llull, sought to offer concise guidance to his readers in his *Libro de los estados* on how boys destined to be knights should be prepared, stating that a knight-to-be should learn "to hunt and traverse mountainous landscapes, and handle short lances and arm himself, and learn all the games and elements that pertain to chivalry" (558).[10] In order to accomplish this, he provided detailed instructions on how a child should be taught certain skills. He argues that young children beginning to walk should first become comfortable astride large animals such as horses "so that later when the children begin to walk, they should occasionally be placed astride the beasts [horses]" (557).[11] Alongside this recommendation, he emphasizes a vital point—"and the men holding them from behind" (557)—implying to his readers that having a mounted infant alone would be inherently absurd.[12] Initially, this may seem like an obvious detail,

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9. The English version is a translation by Noel Fallows from the Castilian version by Cortijo Ocaña: "El caballero debe montar a caballo, justar, correr lanzas, ir armado, hacer torneos y tablas redondas, esgrimir, cazar ciervos, osos, jabalíes, leones y las demás cosas semejantes a éstas que son oficio de caballero; pues por todas ellas se acostumbran los caballeros a los hechos de armas y a mantener la orden de caballería. Así, pues, menospreciar la costumbre y el uso de aquello que bien permite al caballero cumplir bien con su oficio es menospreciar la orden de caballería" (75).

10. "Caçar et correr monte, et bofordar et armarse, et saber todos los juegos et las cosas que pertenecen a la cavallería."

11. "Que luego que los niños comiençan ándar, que deven a las veces subirlos en las vestias."

12. "Et omnes empós ellos que los tengan."

but its inclusion highlights Don Manuel's careful consideration of the subject, underscoring its significance to him. Noting this safety precaution emphasizes that knights should be role models, act responsibly, and serve as protectors; thus, Don Manuel reinforces the noble ideals associated with knighthood. His attention to this detail not only reveals his meticulous thought process but also reflects his commitment to instilling these values in his readers, ensuring they understand the serious responsibilities of knights.

   Don Manuel prescribes a weekly training program that includes one day for hunting and one day for study, with advice on sleep and diet included as well. In particular, he notes a few essential details about hunting that merit attention. First, he explains that on Sundays, after Mass, the trainee should hunt regardless of the weather, making sure to "wear a thick and heavy coat, and a lot of clothing" in order to remain warm, but also "to condition the body to endure the weight of armor when it must be worn" (558).[13] Then, while hunting it is important that the knight carry his lance in the right hand and use the left arm for his raptor, as this would "train the arms: the right to be able to strike, and the left to defend with a shield" (558).[14] Don Juan Manuel's treatise reflects a scrupulous consideration of detail. Together with Llull, these descriptions of training activities imply a systematic and progressive method for engaging in exercise and skill development (Mechikoff 56).

   The lasting impact of Vegetius continued to shape and inspire works on battle and war in the later Middle Ages, including Honoré de Bouvet's *Arbre des batailles* (*Tree of Battles*, 1386–87). The fifteenth-century Castilian translation of this work (as *Árbol de Batallas*, c. 1441–47), attributed to Mosén Diego de Valera, remarks on the importance of consistent practice with arms: "[K]nights … should in thought and deed be occupied only with the practice of arms" (88).[15] Broadly speaking, due to their economic standing, noblemen were at risk of living lives replete with sloth and gluttony instead of pursuing their God-given obligation to defend the faith (Keen 51). The message, therefore, was that it was necessary to maintain a training regimen in order to keep the knight fit and ready for the hardships of armed conflict.

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13. "Et vestir gámbax gordo et pesado, et mucha ropa; lo uno, por se guardar del frío, et lo ál, por acostumbrar el cuerpo a sofrir el peso de las armas, cuando le acaeciere."

14. "Et esto deve fazer por acostumbrar los braços: el derecho, para saber ferir con él, et el izquierdo, para usar el escudo con que se defienda."

15. "E los cavalleros no deven en cosa tanto pensar ni trabajar como en se hazer ábiles en las armas." The English translation of this passage comes from Coopland (Bonet 131).

Despite the apparent dedication to training during the fifteenth century in Castile, chivalric philosophers and knights faced a conundrum: some sports imitating battle had the potential to draw focus away from actual wars, tempting knights to prioritize personal ambition over their duty to God and king. This type of desire mostly manifested itself in the jousting and tournament circles where a knight's prowess was recognized and celebrated by onlookers. It is worth noting that jousting offered excellent physical benefits for knights, including equestrian skills, balance, and strength. However, it could—and did for some—become the only preoccupation. Instead of focusing their energy toward defeating a mortal enemy, certain knights devoted themselves exclusively to personal glory in the joust.

The Roman Catholic bishop, diplomat and author Alonso de Cartagena was highly critical of knights who fell into this way of living and became an outspoken opponent of jousting. His views on the need for training, however, are mixed. Depending on the circumstances, he was both a proponent and critic of physical training. He shares Llull's view that young men-at-arms must learn the skills of their profession (Fallows, *Chivalric Vision* 27–28). Additionally, his *Tratado de la guerra* ("Treatise on War," c. 1430–1434) borrowed extensively from *De re militari* and recycled certain views on training expressed earlier by Vegetius, such as recognizing that "technical skill is more useful in battle than strength" / "Saber conviene que en la pelea más aprovecha uso que fuerza" (Vegetius 59; Cartagena, *Tratado* 452). Vegetius notes that achieving technical mastery is especially important for young military men, noting "jumping and running should be attempted before the body stiffens with age" (5); a point Cartagena would later echo: "[E]l saltar y el correr, antes es de tentar que el cuerpo por edad se haga grueso" (Cartagena, *Tratado* 448).[16] Developing this type of dexterity, according to both Vegetius and Cartagena, respectfully, is essential for the soldier's development: "For it is speed which, with training, makes a brave warrior" / "La ligereza tomada por ejercicio muy noble hace el guerrero" (Vegetius 5; Cartagena, *Tratado* 448). Both stressed the importance of consistent drilling as a way to ward off weakness. Vegetius, discussing the urgency to return to training as soon as winter weather subsided, argues for an immediate renewal of exercises: "[T]hey were made to train on the exercise-field, so that no interruption to routine might weaken soldiers' minds and bodies" (58). Cartagena paraphrases this idea: "When knights do not train with arms, they lose skill with

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16. I do not include a separate English translation of Cartagena's words here since Milner's translation of Vegetius into English would be virtually the same as a separate English translation of Cartagena. I follow this approach in the examples below where Vegetius in English is nearly identical to Cartagena in Spanish.

them, their hearts (will) become lazy, and their bodies become weaker" (*Tratado* 451).[17] Finally, Cartagena highlights a key difference between a knight and a laborer pointed out earlier by Vegetius: "Si el saber de las armas cesase, no habría diferencia del caballero al labrador" / "If training in arms ceases, there is no difference between a soldier and a civilian" (*Tratado* 452; Vegetius 59).

Cartagena, however, believed that training was important up until a certain point. He observed that chivalric culture had become entranced by the literary models of knights found in chivalric stories, particularly ones such as Lancelot and Tristam where heroes engaged in vainglorious pursuits (Fallows, *Chivalric Vision* 14, 16). Furthermore, he argued that arms and armor were only minor elements of knighthood: "[Knighthood] does not consist in praising knights for having a haul of weapons nor in changing the technique of their cuts and spending time trying find and name new types of armor such that if our ancestors awoke they would not recognize such names" (*Doctrinal* 255).[18] This point of view shaped his writings on chivalry and focused his conception of training toward the knight's most practical applications: defending the Catholic faith and extending the realms of Christendom (Fallows, *Chivalric Vision* 21). In Iberia and specifically Castile, that meant completing the initial goals of the Reconquista, which were to wage holy war in an effort to eliminate the Muslim presence on the Iberian Peninsula. From Cartagena's point of view in the *Doctrinal de los caballeros* (*Doctrine of Knights*, c. 1444), the continued existence of the Kingdom of Granada meant that there were substantial opportunities for knights to engage in real combat against a sworn enemy of the faith as opposed to dueling within one's ranks (Fallows, *Chivalric Vision* 33):

> But what can we tell ourselves, when we see a land full of money and of arms, and at peace with Granada? Should the nobles fidgeting to exercise their arms pit their armies against relatives and those who should be friends, or in jousts and tournaments, of which the one is loathsome and abominable and a thing which brings dishonor and destruction, and the other a game or test only, not the principal activity of a knight?[19]

17. "cuando los caballeros no continúan las armas, mal usan de ellas, adeja toma los corazones, y [los] cuerpos de ellos se enflaquecen."

18. "No consiste el loor de los caballeros en tener muchas armas ni en mudar tajo dellas e poner su trabajo en fallar nueva forma de armaduras e poner nombres nuevos que si nuestros anteçesores se levantasen no los entenderían."

19. The English translation comes from Devaney (45). "Mas que diremosnos que veemos el rreyno lleno de platas e de guardabraços e estar en paz los de Granada, e el fermoso meneo de las armas exerçirse en ayuntar huestes contra los parientes e contra los que deuian ser amigos, o en justas o en torrneos, de lo qual es lo vno es aboresçible e abominable e cosa que trae desonrra e destrucyçion, lo otro vn juego o ensaye mas non prinçipal acto de la cauallería" (Cartagena, *Doctrinal* 255).

Cartagena states that "the strongest do not emerge from tournaments or competitions with arms. True strength is known through dangerous deeds and the threat of death done on behalf of the common good" (*Doctrinal* 255).[20] He believed that once initial training was complete, knights should apply their skills to practical military matters instead of chivalric pastimes such as jousting, even though the accepted view at the time was that jousting and even tournaments helped knights maintain and enhance their martial skills (Fallows, *Chivalric Vision* 27).

While Cartagena deviated from Vegetius and other contemporary perspectives on the issue of physical training, Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo—a fellow bishop and one of his students—argued extensively that it was a pathway to noble virtue. Sánchez de Arévalo's *Suma de la política* (*Political Summation*, c. 1455) stresses the nobleman's need for training in two of his six precepts for knighthood, stating that the man-at-arms "should be very agile at walking, jumping, running, and fighting. He should also be strong in order to carry ladders and other equipment, to endure the ways of war"; and also that "he should be accustomed to and exercised in the ways of war, because when not exercised they slowly dissipate" (277).[21] Like many before him, Sánchez de Arévalo draws frequently from Vegetius. For example, one reason that a nobleman should be proficient with arms is to be able to defend one's honor. Sánchez de Arévalo recalls Vegetius on this point in his guide for King Enrique IV, the *Vergel de los príncipes* (*Garden of the Princes*, 1456–57): "As Vegetius says in his *De re militari*, no one dares offend someone who is strong, violent and skilled with weapons" (*Vergel* 318).[22]

Sánchez de Arévalo's *Vergel de los príncipes* further stresses the importance of sports and physical training for royal boys and men, noting that exercising with weapons "is the father and originator of all the virtues" (319).[23] In this particular text, he specifically outlines three areas of focus: arms, hunting and riding, and

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20. "en los torrneos e en las prueuas de las armas no se paresçe qual es fuerte. Ca la fortaleza verdadera en los fechos terribles e peligrosos de muerte que por la republica se fazen se conosçe."

21. "deve ser muy ligero para andar, saltar y correr y luchar. Otrosí fuerte, para levar escalas y otros cargos, para sufrir los travajos de la guerra" / "deve ser acostumbrado y exercitado en travajos de guerra, ca los no usados ligeramente fallecen." The other four precepts are: to be spirited and full of heart; to be discreet and prudent; to be capable of striking blows that wound; and, to be well armed but poorly dressed, carrying weapons that are stronger than they are beautiful (Sánchez de Arévalo, *Suma* 277).

22. "De lo qual dice Vegecio en el su Re militari, que ninguno osa ofender a quien sabe ser fuerte, terrible e esperto en armas." The quote is not a direct translation from *De re militari*, which states in the Preface of Book III: "No one dares challenge or harm one who he realizes will win if he fights (63)." Alfonso de San Cristóbal's Castilian translation of *De re militari* from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (and therefore preceded Sánchez de Arévalo's writing) states "Ca non ha ome que ose sosañar nin fazer sin razón al que entiende que será mayor quél si con él peleare" (363).

23. "es padre e engendrador de todas las virtudes."

music. It has been suggested that Sánchez de Arévalo selected these topics of focus because they were favorite pastimes of Enrique IV, and that Enrique might have even selected these topics for Sánchez de Arévalo to rationalize the king's focus on them with his knights in court (Penna lxxv). Of these three topics, though, wielding arms, and hunting and riding involved physical work and were simultaneously forms of exercise and leisure because they "provide health benefits for human bodies," and also because they "emulate a dangerous experience, and recall the virtue of strength . . . when something is challenging and difficult, it is more enjoyable and virtuous" (*Vergel* 326).[24] Sánchez de Arévalo believed that this type of physical training was imperative for creating and maintaining an urban militia that was combat-ready but likewise morally sound: "Without arms, and without military training, men who live good lives would be subject to evil influences. Therefore, it appears that excellence in training arms conserves life, and frees men from such a despicable yoke and subjugation of enslavement, and situates them in perfect and delectable freedom" (*Vergel* 318).[25] Making use of physical education, performing specific exercises, training with arms while mounted and dismounted, hunting, and wrestling were all desired and encouraged to help the nobility achieve its goals of having a standing cavalry prepared and able to defend landholdings and cities (Devaney 56). These acts were also opportunities for military men to assert their masculinity (Karras 10–11).

Decades later, in his *Diálogo sobre la educación del Príncipe Don Juan, hijo de los Reyes Católicos* (*Dialogue about the Education of the Prince Don Juan, Son of the Catholic Kings,* c. 1490), Alonso Ortiz supported earlier precepts about training:

> It is certainly necessary to care for one's self through appropriate exercises befitting a free man and in a way that he does not become lethargic as a result of being lazy. Just as industriousness exercises the spirit by engaging intelligence and willpower, training works out the body's limbs through physical activity, and those healthy movements become virtuous acts that prove advantageous in the future. (166–67)[26]

24. "da buena sanidad a los cuerpos humanos"; "muy çercano al peligro, e a la virtud de la fortaleza … quando alguna cosa es muy trabajosa e difícile, tanto es mas delectable e mas virtuosa."

25. "Ca syn las armas, e syn el exerçíçio militar, los omes que bien biven serian sieruos de los malos que tuviesen potençia, por lo qual pareçe la excellençia de este exerçíçio de armas, pues conserva la vida, e libra a los omes de tan vil yugo e subjeçion de seruidumbre, e ponelos en perfeta e delectable libertad."

26. "es cierto que es oportuno cuidarlo con ejercicios beneficiosos, dignos de un hombre libre y de manera que él no se entorpezca por culpa de la pereza. Tal como la solercia ejercita el espíritu dirigiéndolo hacia la inteligencia y la voluntad, así el ejercicio hace los miembros del cuerpo aptos a cumplir las acciones exteriores, o los movimientos saludables a los actos virtuosos a ventaja del próximo." The text was originally written in Latin and is dated around 1490, but before 1497 when the prince died at age 21.

Writing near the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, when the messages and attitudes expressed through these chivalric edicts had become more codified, Ortiz stressed that training was especially essential for those aiming for military careers. He did warn, however, that in all cases physical exercise must be done in moderation, as any excesses might corrupt one's soul:

> Above anything else if the youth directs his spirit toward military deeds. For this reason, it is recommended that they train through hunting and on foot in order for their muscles and limbs to acquire agility and robustness. All of this must be accomplished with discretion so that nothing is done in excess … those that dedicate themselves too much to physical pursuits weaken the spirit. (167)[27]

These perspectives prove that, for (young) men-at-arms, physical education and training were a serious but complicated part of a knight's life in fifteenth-century Iberia. They had to train in order to learn their craft and to become knights, but they always ran the risk of engrossing themselves in the chivalric sporting culture for its own sake.

Overall, the extensive exploration of military training and chivalric education in late medieval Iberia reveals a deep-rooted emphasis on preparing knights for both the physical and moral demands of their roles. Influential figures, such as Vegetius, Alfonso X, Ramon Llull, Don Juan Manuel, and others, highlighted the necessity of rigorous training regimes centuries earlier, and their points of view gave way to later theorists such as Cartagena, Sánchez de Arévalo, and Ortiz to develop and debate the precepts of physical education and preparation of knights. Combined, they underscore that the effectiveness of knights was not solely based on their physical prowess but also on their ability to endure and excel in combat situations through continuous practice and discipline. The works of these thinkers show a consistent theme: the integration of physical training with chivalric virtues and societal responsibilities. This combination was deemed essential for maintaining readiness and fulfilling their duty to defend their faith and kingdom. Ultimately, these historical perspectives on training underscore a broader cultural and military philosophy that valued the harmonious development of the body, mind, and spirit. What accompanied this conversation were certain didactic writings that addressed specific aspects of physical education and training.

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27. "Sobre todo si el joven dirige su alma hacia las hazañas militares. Por lo tanto, es aconsejable que vengan ejercitados en la caza y a pie para adquirir agilidad y robustecer los miembros y ejercitar los músculos. Todo se cumpla con discreción para que nada resulte excesivo … los que se dedican con mucha frecuencia a los trabajos corporales debilitan el alma."

These and other chivalric theorists commented on the cultural ramifications of both overtraining and undertraining, noting that knights could easily lose their focus—indeed Cartagena argued that they already had—on fighting enemies of Christianity on the Peninsula; others such as Sánchez de Arévalo supported training as an activity that facilitated physical and spiritual well-being. Alongside this debate were didactic writings that addressed specific aspects of physical education and training.

Didactic Narratives on Training

Distinct medieval narratives, ones guided by clear didactic principles, highlight the often overlooked systematized nature of physical training in the Middle Ages. These texts cataloged key concepts and offered precise instructions for executing diverse fighting maneuvers and techniques. The architects of these concepts, referred to as "masters of arms," curated, gathered, and conveyed knowledge pertaining to physical training and combat techniques through a diverse collection of treatises on the martial arts, commonly referred to as *Fechtbücher*, or "fight books."[28] These texts and the techniques they taught were indispensable to the education and entertainment of young men throughout the European Middle Ages (Coblentz 55). The Iberian Peninsula, in fact, also produced narratives on the martial arts that played a significant role in instruction on fighting techniques and developing combat strategies. These texts were unique within the contemporary literary context because they were neither poetry nor prose fiction, genres that at the time were celebrated for their elegance and entertainment value. These works were also not historiographic and did not recount the valorous deeds of noteworthy subjects from the past. Nevertheless, they represent another intersection of military and literary ideals.

The author of one such work was King Duarte I of Portugal, an expert horseman who argued in his treatise *Livro do Cavalgar* (*The Book of Horsemanship*, ca. 1430) that performing military skills well was considered manly: "[Men] should look and act like men, and not like animals less useful than the ones they ride" (55).[29] Primarily a discussion of equestrian topics, the book was also an excellent example of the desire to develop pedagogical training principles at the time. Duarte mirrors Vegetius's point of view on riding, which states that men "should above all be physically able to mount a horse while cuirassed and girded with all his arms in highly impressive style, to ride heroically, wield the lance

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28. Many of these that have survived come from German masters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See Anglo, *The Martial Arts* (12), and also Forgeng's essay "Owning the Art."

29. From the Portuguese version: "e parecer sejam homẽs, e nom bestas mais sem proveito que ellas" (11).

with skill and shoot arrows expertly" (Vegetius 46). Duarte agrees that excellent horsemanship is essential for success in war, but also that it is a cornerstone for the nobleman, noting that "those who practice this art receive great advantages in jousting, tourneying, playing at cane-games, wielding a spear and knowing how to throw it, and likewise in all other equestrian arts that are widely practiced in noble households" (51).[30] Riding was an important skill for a knight-in-training to master because it reinforced his ability to fight while in the mount, particularly when carrying a lance for jousting.

Don Juan Manuel prescribes a formula for developing riding skills in *El libro de los estados*, stating that once a trainee sees that "they can control a horse, they should begin walking little by little until they grasp that they can control it without fear, and then later each day do more, until they dare to spur any horse" (557–58).[31] Duarte also views horseback training as an essential and masterable skill, explaining that through proper instruction and practice neophytes can improve: "[W]hen we see that people of equal or greater shortcomings acquire this art and practice it quite adequately, we should readily recognize that, if we have will and knowledge, the ability will not fail us, since people can do it who have less aptitude than ourselves" (55).[32]

Duarte offers precise instructions on how to teach during training, rather than merely noting the importance of training. Since the goal of every cavalier is to ride with confidence, Duarte argues that this can be achieved through systematic pedagogical principles. He suggests praise over admonishment as the cornerstone of teaching, noting that even the most seemingly egregious error should be handled so as not to discourage future progress:

> [Y]ou should know that to teach a boy or someone else who is just starting this art, at the very beginning he should be given a very healthy mount that is free of vices, and it should be well adjusted in the bit, girths, stirrups, and saddle. You should not give him instructions except to stay tight on the horse's back and hold himself well however he finds most suitable. Whatever he does wrong, you should not correct him much, but minimally and gently. If he does well, you should

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30. From the Portuguese version: "Recebem os que desta manha husam grandes vantagçes em justar, tornear, em jugar as canas, reger algça lança e sabêlla bem lançar" (6).

31. "Et desque vieren que se puede tener en cavallo, dévenle fazer andar poco a poco en él, fasta que entienda que sin recelo lo pueda remeter, et después, cada día faziendo más, fasta queu se atreva a poner espuelas a cualquier cavallo."

32. From the Portuguese version: "E quando virem que os taaes como elles e mais derribados em seus fallycimentos a percalçam e husam della assaz razoadamente, bem devem conhecer que, se voontade e saber houverem, que o poder non lhes fallecerá, pois podem os que pera ello menos tẽe que elles" (10–11).

praise him generously—as much as you can without lying. You should continue this way with him for a time until you see that he is coming to enjoy learning and practicing, and wants to receive correction and teaching. From then on, start explaining to him how to hold himself strongly, for this is most necessary, always minding what I have said: more praise, less blame. If he happens to fall, or loses a stirrup, or some other contrary thing, and you see that he feels it greatly, you should excuse it as much as possible, so that he does not lose the hope and will that is of great value for this and all other things. (84)[33]

By addressing the confidence of the rider-in-training, Duarte acknowledges the need to develop poise and self-assuredness, another aspect of practice rarely observed in medieval discourses on the topic. Just as tangible skills for riding and wielding weapons are developed through drill, self-assurance for real (young) men also needs to be nurtured. This point of view spotlights the gap between the issues real knights faced versus the impeccable models they read in fanciful literature. In the real world, as evidenced by Duarte's text, men must think carefully about how they prepare future generations of knights; additionally, trainees must adhere to consistent practice routines if they hope to develop their athletic skills.

Duarte was not alone in writing didactic texts on training in the fifteenth century. In fact, the Iberian Peninsula was one of the centers of expression and exchange of martial philosophy and personal combat skills in medieval Europe (Gearhart 24). Its masters of arms began to compose combat treaties around the middle of the century and remained very active through modern times (Anglo, *The Martial Arts* 12). Two later works in particular—Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza's *Libro que trata de la philosofía de las armas y de su destreza de la agresión y defensión cristiana* (*Book on the Philosophy of Arms and Their Skill in the Aggression and Defense of Christianity*, 1582) and Luis Pacheco de Narváez's *Libro de las grandezas de la espada* (*Book on the Triumphs of the Sword*, 1600)—illustrate the results of the evolution of the Spanish combat styles and their pedagogical principles that developed earlier (Anglo, *The Martial Arts* 66, 71).

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33. From the Portuguese version: "He de saber que pera ensynar hũu moço ou algũu outro que novamente aprenda esta manha, que logo no começo lhe devem dar algũa besta muyto sãa, sem malícia; e seja bem corregida do freo, cylhas, strebeiras e sella. E nom lhe mandem al senom que sse aperte com ella e se tenha bem per qual quer guisa que mais achar geito. E cousa que mal faça, nom lhe contradigam muyto, ante pouco e paso corregam. E sse fezer bem, largamente o louvem quanto com verdade o poderem fazer. E aqueste geito tenham com el pera algũu tempo ataa que vejam que el vay filhando folgança em aprender, husar e querer receber enmenda e ensyno. E dally avante vãalhe declarando o gesto que terrá pera se teer forte; por que esto he mais necessario, guardando sempre o que disse: de o gabar mais, e culpar menos. E sse acertar a cayr, ou leixar a estrebeira, ou algũa outra cousa contraira, se vyr que o sente muito, el o desaculpe o melhor que poder, assy que nom perca esperança e voontade que pera esto e todas outras cousas muyto val" (49–50).

One writer in particular who was active at the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries merits closer attention. Pietro Monte, a lesser-known Spaniard, remains somewhat of an enigmatic figure in the history of western martial arts whose profile has begun to come into focus due largely to the scholarship of Sydney Anglo and Jeffrey Forgeng. Both agree that Monte was Spanish and, although he lived in Italy towards the end of the fifteenth century, that he had deep ties to the Iberian Peninsula (Anglo, *The Man* 262; Forgeng, *Pietro Monte's* 4). Monte authored a handful of treatises on arms and combat written in Latin, but he also composed the *Libro del exercicio de las armas*, of which the surviving copy—archived in the Royal Library of the San Lorenzo Monastery at the Escorial Palace—is fragmented and corrupt. The *Libro del exercicio de las armas* presents the same teachings found in the first two chapters of Monte's magnum opus: *Petri Montii exercitorum atque artis militaris collectanea in tres libros distinca* (1509), often referred to simply as the *Collectanea*.[34]

Monte believed that young soldiers should receive a comprehensive education that included reading and writing, "so that we can read and understand histories and the deeds of other men, and by our own hand create even better ones, and to use our literacy to help us understand secret matters" (208). Monte argues for reason and intellect to be central parts of training:

> The body by itself cannot adapt so quickly to doing various things. If we are to engage in an exercise merely on the basis of daily practice, it will require considerable sacrifice of time. And if we do something solely on the basis of practice, being unable to test it by theory or by reason, we do it merely by nature and indistinctly. But when we have the intellect for our guide or keeper, committing our attention there, once we know one exercise it instructs us in many others. And above all it rightly teaches us to consider what we are going to do from the outset, and for this we should remain temperate, shunning vices and sins. (193)

Alongside touting intellectual formation, much of Monte's treatise is related to physical training. He lists specific skills that men should pursue, including learning to swim and wrestle, as well as different types of vaults and practice with a variety of weapons; also, he encourages hunting, which teaches orienteering, how to handle different animals, how to care for equipment, and ultimately builds

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34. Although scholars have debated whether or not Monte's *Libro del exercicio de las armas* preceded the *Collectanea*, Forgeng concludes convincingly that the *Libro del exercicio de las armas* came first and was then later expanded and translated into Latin to become the Collectanea (*Pietro Monte's* 8–13).

endurance for heat and cold. All of these approximate the conditions and situations possible during a military campaign (208). To illustrate his point, Monte provides the example of a knight from Murcia, Alfonso Fajardo, who the author describes as "a good speaker, handsome and valiant in body," noting that "as a youth he never found anyone who could beat him in running, jumping, wrestling, or throwing, on foot or on horseback" (216). According to Monte, these abilities gave Fajardo confidence in real battle, who attests to it in the *Collectanea* through its author: "When I was going to combat, in skirmishing or battle, against few or many, I could scarcely imagine that my enemies could overcome me, however greatly they outnumbered me" (216).

Monte echoes what had been a growing preoccupation with the general lethargy amongst the nobility, driven particularly by sinful desires. During the Middle Ages from the twelfth century on, the excerpts on training from Book I of Vegetius's *De re militari* receive notable attention due to concerns over complacency: too much sleep, wine, and women (Allmand 19). The fourteenth-century French knight and chivalric theorist Geoffroi de Charny spoke directly about this concern in *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*, stating that "those who want to achieve this honor [of knighthood] should not set their minds on the pleasures of the palate, neither on very good wine nor on delicious food . . . and desire for such things makes it more difficult for them to endure, and their hearts and bodies find it less easy to bear the lean fare in food and drink which the quest for such honor requires" (61). For Monte, the soldiers of his day also suffered from the same temptations at the expense of physical training and exercise: "But nowadays few soldiers pay attention to learning about exercises, horses, and such things. At every stage of life they are raised in delicacy and idleness, and what it is [*sic*] worse they are continually ruined by overindulgence in food and drink, and devote themselves to perfumes, clothing, and fancy residences" (209). Monte illustrates his point again through the voice of Fajardo, who states that "as soon as I began to abandon all [discipline], observing little devotion, coveting other men's women and other riches, it seemed that not only men and brute animals but even the stones detested me; and just as I had triumphed at first, from then on I was defeated by everyone" (216–17).

Perhaps Monte's most explicit advice for training appears in *The Appraisal of Men*.[35] In a similar vein as Don Juan Manuel centuries earlier, in this text Monte

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35. One of Monte's later works with the Latin title *De dignoscendis hominibus*, this was a derivative of Monte's *Libro del exercicio de las armas*. See Anglo (*The Man* 263).

prescribes very detailed instructions on training, which include how to prepare one's body prior to public displays of physical acumen, activities that were central to displaying manliness (Karras 21). He recommends, for example, restricting food consumption several days before a contest; limiting foods in general when performing exercises of agility; when vaulting, increasing the height of the platform gradually, but always beginning on a lower step until having gained a certain level of proficiency; wearing extra clothing to create resistance (so that, once removed, the body feels lighter); training arm muscle in order to be able to support vaults and tumbling; when practicing with weapons, using heavier ones than what would actually be used during a real fight; and, finally, when wrestling, always grappling with a stronger partner in order to become accustomed to defending against such an opponent (Monte 274–75). This list is emblematic of the attention to detail Monte devotes to his position on training and exercise for knights and noblemen.

For Monte, proper exercises are what separate this class from others because strong peasants or craftsmen who have no training or practice with arms will fear the realities of combat, but "almost everyone who learns to play in arms and then uses them in combat or battle is reasonably courageous" (209).[36] What separates one class from another, therefore, is the caliber of the training. Birthright was not simply enough to ensure a battle-ready combat force, in particular at the highest ranks; knights were fashioned from the nobility and, as a result, had access to education and training that others did not. Yet, as Monte expresses, chivalric theorists were concerned with the current apathy of noblemen towards the institutions of chivalry and knighthood.

Conclusion

Young knights in training were encouraged to be aggressive and to emulate their mentors as they learned the martial skills that would later serve them in combat, be that in the sporting arena or on the battlefield (Karras 28–29). Physical training played a central role for developing military prowess, but the chivalric theorists from medieval Iberia were not always in complete agreement on methods and approaches for this. Reliance on past models and philosophies eventually resulted in sophisticated treatises on training, prompting authors to connect physical activities with the concepts of virtue and being manly. Appealing to their status as men was

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36. On the idea that training is what separates soldiers from citizens, see also Vegetius (59) and Cartagena, *Tratado de la guerra*, specifically Rule 133 (452).

a strategy to prevent apathy amongst the nobility, a trend that preoccupied these writers because knights remained the essential military personnel for the defense of cities, territories, and kingdoms.

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#Santillana #soldierscholar

SELF-PROMOTION AND CELEBRITY CREATION IN MEDIEVAL SPANISH PRAISE POETRY

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In the spring of 2022, the Prado Museum in Madrid, Spain, opened the exhibit *El Marqués de Santillana. Imágenes y letras*, in conjunction with the National Library of Spain. Highlighting the fifteenth-century paintings of Jorge Inglés and incorporating manuscripts from the Marqués's famous library, this exhibit was accompanied by a series of talks and conferences in celebration of "un distinguido caballero-humanista," Íñigo López de Mendoza, the Marqués de Santillana (*El Marqués*). It is not entirely surprising that a museum and library in the twenty-first century would select Santillana, a fifteenth-century Castilian nobleman and poet, as the focal point of an exhibition, as he was a great patron of the arts and a well-established poet in his own right. The Marqués de Santillana indeed has much to offer scholars as subject of study: his involvement in the politics of the time as a knight, his poetry and literary criticism, and his impressive library and reputation of cultivating an interest in letters among the nobles of the time period. Furthermore, he is routinely recognized as one of the earliest examples of the union of arms and letters and served as an exemplar of this union for his contemporaries and future generations.

To date, studies surrounding these topics have focused on the arms and letters debate in late medieval Castile, discussions on fifteenth-century humanism in Spain, and the Marqués de Santillana as poet, literary critic, member of

the Mendoza clan, and owner of a vast and influential library.[1] In most cases, scholars mention Santillana as the soldier-scholar exemplar in their introductions to discussing Santillana's literary excellence or in their larger discussion of arms and letters. For example, in his study of Santillana, Rafael Lapesa states that "la feliz coyuntura de caballería y letras había de ser eje en la vida del Marqués de Santillana" (1). In studies of the arms and letters debate in Castile, Joseph Pérez acknowledges that Santillana possessed "idéntica maestría ora la espada, ora la pluma" (413), and Peter Russell notes that he "was described as the first man of that age of such high rank who had brought together learning and chivalry, the cuirass and the toga" (50). Julian Weiss recognizes that "the finest embodiment of the ideal of arms and letters was the Marqués de Santillana, whose famous library is the most important evidence for the fondness for book-collecting amongst the aristocracy" (12). Katherine Elliot van Liere, in her discussion of sixteenth-century humanism, names Santillana as the "best-remembered spokesman for the pursuit of *armas y letras* in the sense of vernacular literature" (78).

It would seem an accepted fact that Santillana is considered a model soldier-scholar. However, few studies have looked in detail at *how* Santillana was established as an exemplar of arms and letters.[2] This line of inquiry offers the possibility not only for expanded understanding of Santillana and the topos of arms and letters but may offer new insights into understanding the conferring of fame and renown both in medieval Spain as well as today. It also invites the opportunity to employ new critical approaches, including those not frequently utilized by medieval Hispanists and other scholars.

Returning to the Prado exhibition, it presents an interesting question: beyond medievalists, especially medieval Hispanists, who are likely inherently interested in him and already undertaking the aforementioned research, what does Santillana offer to the public of today? Moreover, how do we encourage our students to engage with him and similar figures from centuries past? What new approaches are available to us to reimagine medieval and early modern heroes and famous men and women for the students of today?

Mobilizing more modern critical models to examine the medieval period is not entirely novel, as many researchers have taken a fresh look at medieval

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1. For arms and letters in medieval Castile, see works by Tatiana Bubnova, Amparo Alba Cecilia, Anne J. Cruz, Jeremy N. Lawrance, Joseph Pérez, Nicholas Round, and Peter Russell. For studies on the Marqués de Santillana, see works by Rogelio Peréz-Bustamante, Regula Rohland de Langbehn, David William Foster, Rafael Lapesa, Helen Nader, José Amador de los Ríos, and Mario Schiff.

2. See Carlos Moreno Hernandez and Sherry A. Venere.

texts through the lenses of feminist, queer, and cultural studies, respectively. For example, in the essay, "Cultural Studies on the *Gaya Ciencia*," Mark D. Johnston proposed using cultural studies, a contemporary critical model, to examine the fifteenth-century cancionero lyric. From the outset, Johnston recognizes that "the claim that cultural studies can help understand fifteenth-century Castilian *gaya ciencia* may seem implausible to anyone familiar with the focus on contemporary questions that characterizes most cultural studies" (235–36), but he believes that this can "encourage us to rethink our own involvement in the teaching and study of Castilian literature" (235). Throughout the essay, Johnston systematically lays out the paths of inquiry that such an application might take, including considering the *gaya ciencia* in contexts such as relationality and subjectivation, among others.

Addressing cancionero poetry in terms of relationality, Johnston asserts that we must avoid strictly focusing on the literary text so as "to understand how composing lyrics was a 'signifying practice' whose 'meaning' was not limited to literary values but included the whole inventory of 'symbolic capital' suggested in Baena's inventory of courtly skills and virtues" (238–39). He continues that "cultural studies can help us regard the *gaya ciencia* instead as a complex practice involving diverse interests, causes, and effects, which we engage from our own equally complex circumstances" (239). Students today who encounter these poems do so in a vastly different context than when these poems were written and we have the opportunity to engage them in reinterpreting the texts and this can extend into reevaluating medieval figures, as will be discussed shortly.

In the context of subjectivation, Johnston highlights how poets are able to represent individuals as social types reflecting norms of behavior, asserting that

> these types or norms called into play by the text would be the object of "cultural studies" on courtly love or politics in the *gaya ciencia.* In short, texts like these offer one kind of evidence for studying the formation of collective and individual identities, by abstracting the social forms through which individuals sustain themselves subjectively. (251)

Through the lens of cultural studies or other modern critical models, a new window to examining a universal topic like identity opens and invites reinterpreting these identities not only in their own social contexts, but those of today as well. As he concludes, Johnston acknowledges the possible resistance to this contemporary critical approach on the part of medieval Hispanists, as well as scholars of cultural studies, recognizing the potential disconnect between the "there and then" of

medieval Castile and "here and now" of today. For his part, he contends that the use of cultural studies for this time period and the cancionero lyric offers the opportunity to consider aspects like the value of culture and literature, the production of cultural ideology, and a continued expansion of medieval Hispanic studies beyond literature, all the time keeping in mind how this can positively impact our teaching of the period.

Similar to Johnston's introduction of cultural studies as a model for examining the people, practices, and literary texts of fifteenth-century Castile, I propose the lens of celebrity studies as another useful critical approach to research and teach the topics and texts of medieval Spain. In his 2011 *PMLA* article, "Knowing the Performer from the Performance: Fame, Celebrity, and Literary Studies," Leo Braudy asks the following questions:

> Of what use is this area of study to literary and cultural studies? How, if at all, does it change our understanding of texts we thought we knew well, and how does it open our eyes to texts, in the most general sense, we had previously ignored or been unaware of? How, in other words, does such an approach open new questions and modify or recast old ones? (1070)

This essay answers Braudy's questions by demonstrating the use of fame and celebrity studies to the medieval period through the introduction of the Marqués de Santillana as a potential medieval celebrity and an examination of the process of his celebrity creation, specifically focusing on the poets who led and benefited from it. The field of celebrity studies and the related ideas of self-branding and the role of the (social media) influencer offer new opportunities to examine the formation of the Marqués de Santillana as the preeminent pre-Renaissance exemplar or star, if you will, of arms and letters.

Celebrities are ubiquitous in today's society. Who we call a celebrity has since expanded to include the likes of movie stars and athletes to politicians and social media influencers. Everyone, including our students, is surrounded by them on a daily basis. Not only are these figures everywhere, including on our screens, they have the ability to exert considerable influence, and, therefore, maintain and increase their fame. Despite the vast centuries separating the two, the varied opinions on the birth of celebrity, and the connection between concepts of fame and celebrity, examining the panegyric poetry written to honor Santillana through the concept of modern celebrity opens new avenues for study. Such avenues include medieval fame and how this relates to fame in the modern age, or the

use of the exemplary figure index/catalog of heroes and those we want others to emulate today. Furthermore, this type of approach has the potential to positively influence our teaching of the Middle Ages and its texts to students who experience and participate in twenty-first century celebrity and influencer culture.

Medieval Fame and Modern Celebrity: Santillana as Celebrity

When discussing the Middle Ages, few people would likely use the term "celebrity," preferring instead to use terms like fame and glory. What then is the relationship between medieval fame and modern celebrity? The most widely recognized definition of the term "celebrity" is by Daniel Boorstin, who defines a celebrity as "a person who is known for their well-knownness" (67). While this definition does require that there be recognition by others, therefore making celebrity a collective rather than individual process, it is sufficiently broad to encompass centuries. Studies have traditionally conceived of the idea of celebrity as a distinctly modern concept, with some early roots in the mid-nineteenth century when the term first appeared in print referring to someone as a celebrity and coming into its own during the twentieth century with the rise of mass media culture.[3] However, Simon Morgan has proposed that "celebrity culture is not simply a twentieth-century phenomenon: by using the insights of modern celebrity theory we can identify particular historical moments when an identifiable celebrity culture existed, for example in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (95–96). Similarly, Antoine Lilti, author of *The Invention of Celebrity*, places the birth of celebrity in the eighteenth century with figures like Voltaire. Although his approach is consistent with Boorstin's requirement of a figure recognized by the public, he makes a clear distinction between glory and celebrity, cautioning against conflating the two terms. According to Lilti, "[G]lory designates notoriety acquired by someone who is judged to be extraordinary because of his or her achievements, whether these are acts of bravery, or artistic or literary works…. Glory is essentially posthumous (even if it may be sought after), and concerns posterity" (5–6). Celebrity, on the other hand,

> is not commemorative; instead, it espouses the rapid rhythm of current events. Whereas glory designates a community's admiration for an individual considered to be exemplary, a dead hero, who incarnates certain intellectual, physical, or moral virtues, the source of celebrity is quite different: it is the curiosity elicited among contemporaries by a singular personality. (6)

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3. See Joshua Gamson.

For Lilti and others who have highlighted figures from the eighteenth century as celebrities,[4] those famous men and women prior to the eighteenth century had glory conferred upon them by the generations that followed whereas figures like Voltaire and Marie-Antoinette were famous in their own time.

However, we can move the timeline even further back, to the medieval and early modern period because, as Brian Cowan notes, while there are distinctions between fame, glory, and celebrity, "there were ways of discussing forms of famousness and the making of public figures long before people began identifying these phenomena as celebrity and such people as celebrities" (*News, Biography, and Eighteenth-Century Celebrity*). He continues that "it would be misleading to assume that modern celebrity supplanted traditional glory. Both forms of fame recognition can coexist, as they did during the eighteenth century." Returning to Braudy, his discussion of fame in *The Frenzy of Renown* shifts the timeline of celebrity much further back to recognize the themes of celebrity and celebrity creation as far back as Classical Antiquity. Braudy closely links modern celebrity and the concept of fame, where fame is essentially a pre-modern version of what we today call celebrity.

If one wants to examine the concept of celebrity in prior centuries, one must determine the ways in which famousness was discussed, regardless of the term used (Cowan; Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*) to identify the moments in which an "identifiable" culture of celebrity or famousness of a person existed (Morgan 95–96). Moving the dial back as Braudy does, there are some scholars who have explored celebrity prior to the eighteenth century, examining the renown of actors, royals, and other nobility.[5] And though few scholars have studied celebrity prior to the invention of the printing press, there are those who see medieval biographies, the cult of saints, and medieval chivalry as examples of medieval celebrities.[6] For example, Nigel Saul suggests that "it is tempting to say that the first English celebrity was not the Georgian dandy or metropolitan courtesan, but the questing knight who caught the attention of the heralds and onlookers watching him show off his prowess in arms" (22). Indeed, medieval knights cultivated reputation, renown, and glory. Many had charisma to engage the public, qualities that, according to Saul and others, are hallmarks of the celebrity.

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4. See Brian Cowan and Nicola Vinovrški.

5. See S. P. Cerasano, Elizabeth Skerpan-Wheeler, Alejandro García-Reidy, and Jennifer Holl.

6. See Aviad Kleinberg and Nigel Saul. Though not specific to one individual, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel's work on fame in medieval Spain provides an extensive study how fame and glory were represented in literary texts.

In terms of medieval Castile, Santillana, while not exactly a questing knight, certainly cultivated the reputation and renown of a learned scholar and poet, fierce military knight, and savvy political statesmen. As a nobleman of fifteenth-century Castile, the Marqués de Santillana was fully engaged in the politics of his time at the court of Juan II of Castile, where he distinguished himself by his military excellence. However, an even more distinguishable part of Santillana was his identity as an impassioned writer and scholar, who amassed an impressive and coveted library, commissioned vernacular translations of classical and foreign texts, and gained distinction as an author for his work in the genres of poetry and prose. Not only recognized posthumously by scholars as the ideal fifteenth-century exemplar of the soldier-scholar as previously mentioned, Santillana also enjoyed this recognition in his own time.

Juan de Mena, court poet of Juan II, honored Santillana in the panegyric, "La Coronación del Marqués de Santillana," shortly after Santillana's victory at the Battle of Huelma (1438). It should be noted that thought panegyrics were a common form of eulogies and indeed would be written about Santillana after his death, Mena, so inspired by Santillana, elects to eulogize the Marqués while he still lives and endeavors to highlight his greatness for the court and others to see. Though this poem leans heavily on praising Santillana's martial prowess, Mena also spends ample time praising Santillana's scholarly and literary pursuits, highlighting the marqués through comparison with famed literary and military heroes. The main theme of the poem and its commentary has traditionally been interpreted as a lesson in morality as "the Marqués is, for Mena, the microcosm of perfection, or the best *exemplum* for man to emulate" (Chaffee 613). That Mena composes a poem to Santillana and places him among the company of great men of valor, intelligence, and poetic art, nevertheless, also speaks to the status of Santillana as a celebrated figure whose achievements should be recognized and indeed emulated by others. This makes it possible to consider him a celebrity of sorts.

Two other panegyrics, composed in honor of Santillana upon his death and to be discussed in further detail later in this essay, similarly celebrate the Marqués as one whose achievements should be lauded and whose examples others should follow if they would like to achieve similar greatness. Santillana also featured in historical biography collections of illustrious men, such as Fernando del Pulgar's *Claros varones de Castilla*, which highlights Santillana's marriage of arms and letters: "[T]ovo en su vida dos notables exercicios, uno en la diciplina militar, otro en el estudio de la ciencia. E ni las armas le ocupavan el estudio, ni el

estudio le impedía el tiempo para platicar con los caballeros y escuderos de su casa" (97). Therefore, the public image of Santillana, as demonstrated in these texts, mark him as a celebrity in medieval Castile: one who is famous for his deeds and actions, is well-known to others, and is recognized at the very least at the court of Juan II.

Creating and Marketing the Celebrity: The Catalog of Exemplars

In reviewing the various definitions of celebrity, Olivier Driessens summarizes Cashmore and Parker's definition, that "a celebrity is understood as a product, a thing that is produced and that can be consumed, worshipped and adored" (547). This dissemination and attempt at turning a well-known individual into a product are key components in the field of celebrity studies (Holl 60). The product in the case of the poems studied here is the Marqués de Santillana, specifically in his role as the hero of arms and letters. While Santillana no doubt contributed to his celebrity status through word and deed, others also sought to establish him as the soldier-scholar model. In terms of the building up of this celebrity product, one's image is often elevated through comparison with other, established celebrities. This practice is certainly not exclusive to the modern era, as people have been promoting themselves and others through comparison in both Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Braudy explains that "throughout the history of fame, the new hero both imitates and supersedes the grandeur of the past by being garbed in its most striking attire—Alexander as Achilles, Augustus as Alexander, Charlemagne as Augustus, Napoleon as Charlemagne" (*Frenzy of Renown* 195). These grand figures—well-known in their own times—also became posthumous celebrities who served and continue to serve as inspiration to others. These figures do not remain static as they are interpreted and reinterpreted to serve new ends. Braudy continues, "[A]s new situations arose, those who sought precedents for new actions rediscovered figures from the past and made them famous to serve the interests of the present" (*Frenzy of Renown* 207). This ability to reinterpret the famous figures of the past for new interests of the present remains a tool in the creation and marketing of men and women who will become celebrities of their own time periods.

One of the most common tools in this practice is the exemplary comparison, which is

an explicit comparison or contrast with a specific named or otherwise identifiable figure from myth, the Bible, history or historical legend, or literary tradition, which serves an exemplar against which another figure and its emotions, actions or appearance is measured. (Sayce 2)

Classical heroes, intellectuals, military leaders, and other figures featured prominently as exemplars almost as soon as subsequent generations could employ them. This popularity continued as medieval authors used these classical exemplars as a teaching tool. Many medieval authors collected these classical figures in catalogs, either as standalone collections or as catalogs within their texts, where they were often employed to provide readers with an instructive model to emulate or avoid (Curtius 548–49). The three panegyrics in honor of Santillana make extensive use of the exemplary comparison, promoting him as a new brand of fifteenth-century citizen: not just a soldier, not just a scholar, but as a soldier-scholar. Their poems set Santillana apart as one of the first Castilian nobles to be extensively lauded in medieval poetry. They celebrate Santillana by placing him firmly in the company of exemplars of the past, including those previous celebrities of either arms or letters, to introduce him as a unique product: the soldier-scholar, exemplar of arms *and* letters.

These poems demonstrate how later medieval and pre-Renaissance Spanish authors rediscover the more epideictic function of exemplars and expand their use in the medieval catalog as tools of promotion and identity fashioning. In praise poetry, poets use the well-known strategies from classical rhetoric of abundance, amplification, and enumeration in these catalogs, hoping to applaud and magnify the accomplishments of a monarch or noble by placing them in the company of well-known models, including many classical heroes, scholars, and other figures. We can then think of medieval catalogs as a repository of celebrities who serve the same function as many celebrities do today. We consume their stories, praise their achievements, and use them as models for inspiration and emulation. Returning again to Braudy, he asserts that medieval writers actively searched past literature for the figures they might use to frame the interests of the present, and that writers were "especially equipped to confer fame in the present because [they know] the greats of the past" (*Frenzy of Renown* 237). For the authors of these panegyrics in fifteenth-century Castile, the interests of the present were the creation of a new exemplar—a hybrid of a military knight and nobleman who also cultivated an interest in letters, both as a scholar and an author, something that was commonly the role of clerics.

In their efforts to establish Santillana as a celebrity, the poets use the exemplary comparison, inserting their version of the medieval catalog into their poems to compare Santillana to a wide range of exemplary heroes, soldiers, intellectuals, and authors. Poets such as Mena, Manrique, and Burgos include classical exemplars like Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Aristotle, Virgil, and others who witness the greatness of Santillana and, at times, join in the poets' praise of him.

By its nature, a catalog includes more than one entry. These poets present exemplar after exemplar, resulting in a grand accumulation of figures. They use them as tools to praise their subject and to establish the context in which their new celebrity should be interpreted. Diego de Burgos's *El Triunfo del Marqués de Santillana* offers a good example of how this accumulation of exemplary figures sets the context for interpretation of Santillana as the soldier-scholar celebrity. Burgos, Santillana's secretary, is commissioned upon the death of the Marqués to write a eulogy by one of Santillana's sons, the new Marqués. He dedicates almost one fifth of his lengthy panegyric to a catalog of exemplars, describing the celebrity attendees at the celebration of Santillana and allowing some to praise Santillana directly. In doing so, Burgos demonstrates what Braudy means about writers reimagining past exemplars for present needs. While other exemplars like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar may have also married arms and letters to a certain extent, Burgos wants to set Santillana apart as the true superstar of arms and letters. He is not going to just simply employ a few straightforward comparisons with these more well-known exemplars, who thus far would have been the best examples when seeking a soldier-scholar celebrity. In fact, Burgos brings together more than one hundred exemplars of arms and exemplars of letters, using their presence as well as their voices to pay witness to Santillana's excellence, and to welcome him among their celebrity ranks as the star soldier-scholar, during his red-carpet arrival, if you will, to the afterlife.

The poem includes seventy-five exemplars of arms and forty-four exemplars of letters, the majority of which are drawn from Antiquity. Prior to directly praising Santillana, Burgos has Dante, the poet-narrator's guide on this otherworldly journey, introduce and describe the exemplars gathered for the crowing of the Marqués. In choosing his exemplars to witness Santillana's excellence and then offer their own eulogies, Burgos intentionally treats the exemplars of arms and the exemplars of letters separately to emphasize Santillana as an authentic example of the soldier-scholar. After the lengthy descriptions of who is in attendance, the exemplars of letters laud the Marqués. Plato opens by praising Santillana's excellence in letters and invites his fellow exemplars to join him:

este es aquel, feliçes varones,
a quien la divina sabiduría,
arte y natura complieron de dones
del fruto más alto de filosofía. (st. CXXIV)

Homer suggests that Santillana "bebió de la Fuente del santo Elicona," and that
"que yo, si viviese, / a gloria ternía su pluma imitando de él aprender" (st. CXLIV).
Cicero praises his eloquence, and Sallust states that Santillana has surpassed the
Romans in prose. Burgos incorporates more recent examples from the Italian
Renaissance, like Dante, who claims that "que si tengo fama, si soy conocido, / es
porque él quiso mis obras mirar" (st. CLVIII). Burgos uses the figure of Juan de
Mena, Santillana's contemporary and author of a previous panegyric to Santillana,
to close the exemplars of letters to reinforce that Santillana is recognized for his
excellence in his own time.

   The exemplars of letters are followed by the exemplars of arms. The Trojan
prince and hero Hector opens, pointing out the well-knownness of the Marqués in
arms as "la bélica gloria del fuerte marqués, / sus fechos famoso en caballería, / son
así grandes que todos sabés" (st. CLXVII). Such is his prowess in arms that Hector
continues, noting "si yo toviera / en Troya tal braço, jamás no cayera, / mas trono
de reyes aún duraría" (st. CLXVII). Subsequent military exemplars echo Hector,
praising various aspects of his military excellence. Scipio, famed Roman general,
praises Santillana's dominance over the enemy. Roman emperor Trajan declares
that Santillana's military excellence was his crowning achievement. Alexander the
Great and Julius Caesar, as antecedents of the soldier-scholar exemplar, also share
in their praise. Alexander praises Santillana's military prowess, indicating that his
enemies look upon the Marqués with fear. Caesar, highlighting both aspects of
Santillana's excellence, praises his ability to excel in the sword by day and the pen
by night. Here Burgos also incorporates more contemporary examples, like the
medieval Castilian heroes, Fernán González and Rodrigo (or Ruy) Díaz de Vivar,
better known as El Cid. Both are the sort of regional exemplars who would have
preceded Santillana and who highlight how well-known he is for his skill in arms.
For example, Fernán González calls him "egregio marqués, a quien se conoce / por
todos ventaja de gran mejoría, / por çierto su mano osada" (st. CCII).

   Burgos employs these exemplary figures along with many others as tools,
choosing well-known exemplars of arms and exemplars of letters of ancient and recent
past to focus on each aspect of Santillana's excellence separately. More importantly,
he has the exemplars gather together in the same place, which they typically would

not do given the traditional separation of arms and letters, to show the uniqueness of Santillana's union of the two. Mena and Manrique's use of the exemplary catalog is similar to that of Burgos, including both exemplars of arms and exemplars of letters at their celebrations of Santillana. Each exemplar they include makes the context of the soldier-scholar more accessible through their own well-knownness and reinforces the overall case for interpreting Santillana in this context of the emerging soldier-scholar figure. For all three poets, the more exemplars with which they can associate and compare his achievements, the more amplified the achievements become. By including these catalogs of celebrities, the poets contribute to disseminating and marketing Santillana as the product of the soldier-scholar where they engage in creating and promoting a new type of celebrity.

In our modern world, we can perhaps draw a comparison with the use of hashtags in a social media context. In principle, the hashtag is essentially an organizing tool, tagging a post for a specific topic to be searched by those interested in that topic. Hashtags may also serve as guide for interpretation, serving to contextualize the subject of the post, just as in the medieval catalog. In her examination of the pragmatics of hashtags on X (formerly Twitter), Kate Scott argues that hashtags may not necessarily be "part of the message proper, but rather information about the intended context for interpretation" where "the inclusion of a hashtag allows the poster (formerly tweeter) to make certain contextual assumptions accessible to the reader" (13). Hashtags serve as a highlighting device to "make certain contextual assumptions highly accessible, and thus guides the hearer to the intended overall interpretation in the most efficient and economical manner" (14). Given character limitations and video or image-heavy content of social media, hashtags provide a way to communicate meaning and to clearly establish the context for the post via compact word clues. The hashtags may at times even include words that magnify the context of a post, building upon themselves and amplifying the subject.

In terms of comparing these panegyrics with something akin to modern-day social media, these poets would have no need to use the exemplary catalog as hashtag for economical purposes. Poems that included medieval catalogs, in fact, would have broken character limits many times over. However, we may draw a parallel between the various exemplars in these catalogs and the hashtag in terms of establishing the particular context in which we should interpret the text. Just as the hashtags are an effort to ensure a specific contextual interpretation for a post, each exemplar makes the context of the soldier-scholar combination more accessible

for the reader through figures they would be familiar with as premiere models of arms or letters. The extensive list of figures in these exemplary catalogs is an effort to firmly establish the context for interpreting Santillana. The more exemplars, or hashtags, with which they can associate and compare his achievements, the more amplified the achievements become. In a modern context, we might imagine the following hashtags for these poems: #armsandletters, #soldierscholar, #Virgil, #AlexandertheGreat, #Caesar, #oakandlaurels, #swordandtoga. Thus, extensive exemplary comparisons reinforce the overall case for interpreting Santillana as the premiere example of the emerging ideal of arms and letters.

Self-Promotion Through Celebrity Sponsorship

In *The Frenzy of Renown*, Braudy states that "in great part, the history of fame is the history of the changing ways by which individuals have sought to bring themselves to the attention of others" and that "from the very beginning fame has required publicity" (3). This idea of fame as individuals inviting the attention of others through publicity ties in with the idea of a celebrity as a product to be marketed to and consumed by others. In addition to bringing the product of Santillana to the attention of others, these poets endeavor to draw attention to themselves as well. Beyond simply praising Santillana as the new celebrity soldier-scholar, these poets also market their own skills and expertise and advocate for their positions through their subject's promotion. For example, as these late medieval poets praised Santillana, their catalogs of exemplars demonstrated their own vast classical knowledge and expertise. Knowledge of Antiquity and the ability to call upon these exemplars for their poetic needs was seen as an essential skill for any *letrado* of the time period. Thus, through their use of the catalog, they were able to praise their subject while simultaneously boosting their own social standing and prominence.

Each of these poets belongs to a specific class, a *letrado* or a *caballero*. In their time, they sought to portray the qualities of their respective types and demonstrate their usefulness. Here we may perhaps draw a parallel to the modern concept of self-branding and to the social media influencer. In discussing the rise of the social media influencer, Khamis et al. point out that self-branding "involves individuals developing a distinctive public image for commercial gain and/or cultural capital" (191). They continue, stating that "central to self-branding is the idea that, just like commercially branded products, individuals benefit from having a unique selling point, or a public identity that is singularly charismatic and responsive to

the needs and interest of target audiences" (191). Influencers use social media as their text to amplify their personal brand in the eyes of their audience of followers, often through their sponsorship and elevation of a product, industry, or the like. Similarly, the three poets who honored Santillana sought visibility, status, and capital in the world of the royal court and society of noblemen. The product they sponsored was Santillana and they conducted this sponsorship through the praise poems and catalog of exemplars.

In their poems celebrating Santillana, these poets developed their personal brand through their writing and sought to gain greater influence with their audience by meeting their needs. For example, in the case *El Triunfo del Marqués de Santillana*, the marquéss's son commissioned a eulogy to do justice to the prestige of his father. Burgos, as a *letrado* whose patron has passed away, needed to secure his future employment with the marquéss's son. Therefore, in his poem, he uses Santillana's death and his current patron's commission to write a eulogy that displays his skills as a *letrado*, including showcasing his classical knowledge and his techniques and skills as a writer. With his poetry, Burgos is attempting to increase the visibility of his brand, the *letrado* figure, and his ability to serve the specific needs of his audience, the marquéss's son and other nobles.

In the case of Gómez Manrique, Santillana's nephew and author of the third panegyric, we have a knight and nobleman who had similar intellectual and literary aspirations as those of his uncle. Manrique's brand, his unique selling point, is the soldier-scholar, like the celebrity he is celebrating in his *El Planto de las Uirtudes e Poesýa por el magnífico señor don Ýñigo López de Mendoça, marqués de Santillana, e conde del Real, compuesto por Gómez Manrique, su sobrino* (1458). In his defense of the soldier-scholar, the image of Santillana frequently recurs in his writings, and with each mention, Santillana's status as an exemplar of arms and letters is reinforced. Similar to Mena, Manrique praises Santillana during his life. In his *Suplicación al magnífico señor Marqués de Santillana, su tío*, written for Santillana, Manrique established Santillana as a mentor in his own study of letters as he sought to emulate his uncle (Manrique, *Cancionero*). Upon Santillana's death, he addresses his fellow knights and noblemen, and his cousin, Santillana's son in particular, in *El Planto de las Uirtudes e Poesýa* (Manrique, *Cancionero* 366–418). For Manrique in particular, the motivations to firmly establish the soldier-scholar as the new ideal tied directly into his own aspirations to be considered well-known in this area. In his elegy, he strives to further legitimize himself as a soldier-scholar, especially in the sense of letters as he displays his literary abilities,

including knowledge of classical figures and elegiac poetry. Moreover, in this work, Manrique continues his defense of arms and letters and paints the combination of the two as a practical skill for all knights and in the best interest of the court (Nader 83). As Gómez-Bravo notes in her study of textual agency in fifteenth-century Castile, "Manrique's poetic production reveals a sustained attempt to display the cultural worth that a noble with key positions at court and city would deftly transform into socio-economic advantage and vice-versa" (195–96).

In Manrique's poem, the Seven Virtues and Poetry, personified here as maidens in a desolate, inverted *locos amoenus*, offer their tearful laments on the death of Santillana and in doing so, compare him with other great champions they have lost. As opposed to the previous two poems where the poet-narrator is guided by another and observes the honors that Santillana receives, Gómez Manrique takes a much more active role in his poem and interacts directly with the maidens. Indeed, after the laments of the Virtues and Poetry, Manrique himself shares his own lamentation of his uncle, comparing him with the likes of Hector, Cato, and Julius Caesar. In his, Manrique specifically highlights Santillana's ability to balance both arms and letters:

> Él los días despendía
> en toda cauallería;
> las noches estudiaua,
> trabajando procuraua
> onrras e sabiduría. (lines 1093–1100)

Furthermore, Manrique uses his uncle, *un sabio guerrero*, to point out the positive result of the combination, calling back to Santillana's victory at Huelma, which was celebrated in Mena's "La Coronación":

> Para no dubdar en esto,
> a este varón modesto
> el saber no le turbó
> quando Huelma conbatió
> e la tomó muncho presto. (lines 1106–10)

In his marketing of Santillana as the soldier-scholar *par excellence*, Manrique ties Santillana's excellence to a concrete event, similar to how modern celebrities are known for specific events, roles, etc., offering something tangible to those who are reading the poem.

His defense of the soldier-scholar can also be seen in his introduction to his collected works. In the *Carta-proemio* written for the collection, he asserts that a study of letters in no way diminishes excellence in arms, writing that "que commo quiera que algunos haragnes digan ser cosa sobrada el leer y saber a los caualleros, commo si la cauallería fuera perpetua rudeza condepnada, yo soy de muy contraria opinión … que las sçiençias no hacen perder el filo a las espadas, ni enflaquecen los braços nin los coraçones de los caualleros" (25–28, 53–55). Later, Manrique once again calls upon Santillana as exemplar and celebrity, citing him as the premiere example of the soldier-scholar:

> El muy magnífico y sabio y fuerte varón don Ýñigo López de Mendoça, primero marqués de Santillana, de loable memoria, mi señor e mi tío, puedo bien aprouar esta mi opinión commo vuestra merçed bien sabe, pues lo conosçió y vio sus altas obras en que manifestaua su gran prudençia y sabiduría, non syn grandes vigilias adquerida, e oyó sus grandes fazañas, algunas d'ellas más de esfuerço que de ventura aconpañadas, en las quales se conoce la verdadera fortaleza y se afina commo el oro en el crisol. (94–105)

Here he directly addresses Rodrigo Alonso de Pimentel, for whom he is preparing the collection, and notes that Alonso de Pimentel already knows of the greatness of Santillana. Not only does Santillana serve as the proof of the success of the combination of arms and letters, by declaring that Alonso de Pimentel knows this well, Manrique further reinforces the idea of Santillana's well-knownness during the time period. Manrique's advocacy for the combination of arms and letters, his own brand, and the repeated use of Santillana as a celebrity soldier-scholar is a clear example of self-promotion and is similar to what we see in the influencers of today as they attempt to legitimize and grow their own brands.

Conclusion

In his essay, Mark D. Johnston suggests that the poets of fifteenth-century Castile would have been equipped to establish how individuals could be representatives of a particular social type or norm, opening up the opportunity to potentially study the texts of this period within the lens of cultural studies and topics like identity formation and subjectivity. Celebrity studies is yet another lens that we can use when seeking new approaches through which we can examine medieval and pre-Renaissance texts. The Marqués de Santillana clearly stands out among his peers

as a soldier-scholar at a time when others were actively campaigning against the pursuit of the union of arms and letters. As the Middle Ages waned and the pre-Renaissance began, the fifteenth-century and figures like Santillana are evidence of a significant shift in the role of the noblemen and anticipates not only the model we see in Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528) but also in figures like Garcilaso de la Vega and Miguel de Cervantes of Spain's *Siglo del oro*. As one of the few noblemen who developed himself as a knight and statesman as well as an author and scholar, the novelty of Santillana during this time period cannot be overstated and from the outset, his contemporaries recognized his uniqueness.

Juan de Mena, Diego de Burgos, and Gómez Manrique sought to construct a new exemplary model for the society of the time and future generations with Santillana as its celebrity spokesperson and representative. Through their panegyrics, they established Santillana as an undisputable example in favor of the union of arms and letters, one who was supported by myriad past celebrities of military, scholarly, and artistic achievement. In doing so, they simultaneously leveraged these texts and others as an opportunity to grow their own influence in fifteenth-century society. Mena and Burgos hoped to increase their capital as poets to serve the nobles and the royal court whereas Manrique's efforts seek to grow the prominence and acceptance of the soldier-scholar ideal. Similar to the modern-day influencer, these poets increased the visibility of their brand through the marketing of Santillana as the celebrity soldier-scholar.

This reexamination of the Marqués de Santillana and those who wrote texts in honor of him through the more modern concepts of celebrity and self-branding not only provides us with a better understanding of medieval and pre-Renaissance literature and society but also shows us a way to connect with twenty-first century students who are exposed to celebrities, social media, and influencers on a regular basis. For example, the opportunity to present medieval and pre-Renaissance texts in the modern frameworks of celebrity and self-branding may open new opportunities for discussions like the impact of fame on society and how one develops this quality of "well-knownness" for both themselves and for others. Furthermore, this approach offers medieval and pre-Renaissance scholars new avenues to explore such as the similarities that exist between pre-modern fame and modern celebrity and between early modern self-fashioning and the more modern notions of self-branding and the social media influencer. Overall, the frameworks of celebrity and self-branding provide more contemporary contexts with which we can examine medieval and pre-Renaissance Spanish texts in a new light. By

considering these poems and other panegyrics in the traditional approaches to the time period as well as the more modern forms of self-promotion, celebrity, and social media, we have the opportunity to gain insight into the worthiness of the poems' subject for emulation as well as the efforts of the poets to showcase themselves as experts and influencers.

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1.3

Tolstoy's Swaggering Soldiers in Sevastopol

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Leo Tolstoy's *Sevastopol Sketches* (1855), set during the Crimean War (1853–1856), represent a turning point in Russian war writing toward a new approach— grounded in realism, concerned with the truth, and oriented toward the prosaic—that he would express, some two decades later, in a more developed form in *War and Peace*.[2] His *SR* are significant not only for being among his earliest experiments with war writing but also for the collection's hybrid genre of reportage. The sketches relied on the author's personal involvement in the conflict, as he wrote and posted them for publication in quick succession to reach Russian readers eager for news of a war that loomed large in the public consciousness. In twentieth-century Soviet and twenty-first-century Russian war stories, we can still discern the influence of the shift that Tolstoy makes in the *SR*.[3] Victor Shklovsky points out that an evolution of Tolstoy's feelings about the war is evident within the *SR* themselves, which he attributes to Tolstoy's increasing frustration with what he saw firsthand while he served as an officer in the Russian Army in Sevastopol. We can see this evolution even more clearly in the way he employs Classical references and tropes, from a relatively uncritical invocation of them in the first sketch to a

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1. My thanks to the West Point Department of Foreign Languages for organizing the conference in which this paper was presented and for the feedback that I received from the audience members, my fellow panelists, and the anonymous peer reviewers.

2. Hereinafter, *Sevastopol Sketches* is abbreviated *SR*, according to the transliteration of the title in Russian, *Sevastopol'skie rasskazy*.

3. For example, in Soviet war literature after World War II, there was a rise in "documentary prose," a hybrid genre of "*nauchno-khudozhestvennaia literatura*," or scientific-artistic literature. One of the most famous examples of this genre is the work of Ales Adamovich, including *The Blockade Book* (co-written with Daniil Granin) and Khatyn. In the post-Soviet period, Svetlana Alexievich's "novels in voices," as she has referred to her own hybrid genre that also invokes realism, truth, and the prosaic, continues in this tradition.

total rejection of them as ultimately meaningless by the third and final sketch.[4] As this chapter argues, the Classical stock character of the swaggering soldier can be viewed as an overlooked but important element in the move that Tolstoy makes in *SR* to establish the inadequacy of old models of war writing and the need for a new approach.

Officer and Author at the Siege of Sevastopol

The nineteenth-century Crimean War, or the Eastern War as it was called in Russian, is not widely remembered today, but it marked a crucial watershed in military history and war writing. The war began in 1853 as yet another conflict between the Russian and Ottoman empires: Russia had been steadily expanding into Ottoman territory over the course of twelve Russo-Turkish Wars fought over five centuries. This time, however, France and Britain came to the Turks' aid, declaring war on Russia in 1854 to stop the so-called "Russian menace" and to limit Russia's growing power in Europe (Figes 70).

Today, the Crimean War is considered one of the first modern conflicts (Figes xix). The British and French militaries employed new technologies, including the modern rifled bullet, steamships, and ironclads, introduced a new style of industrialized trench warfare, and benefited from networks of railways and telegraphs in their assaults on outdated Russian defenses (Bektas 233–35). The new technology of photographic documentation supported a novel realism in war reportage, which did not eschew the gory reality of terrible conditions, meager or poor supplies, illness, and death (Teukolsky 84–85). The Crimean port of Sevastopol, which hosted the Russian naval base, endured an eleven-month siege from October 1854 to September 1855, before finally falling. In the Treaty of Paris, signed in March 1856, Russia was allowed to keep Crimea, including Sevastopol, but lost its right to put its navy or any warships in the Black Sea, as well as any claims to Turkish territory and Bessarabia.

Despite these indisputable defeats, as Gregory Carleton argues in his monograph on Russian and Soviet narratives of war, Russian commemoration of the Crimean War focused instead on the stories of individual Russians who sacrificed their lives in courageous acts of heroism and were held up as proof of the exceptional spirit of the Russian people. In Russian war writing, Tolstoy's *SR* are the most canonical Crimean war stories. They come out of his personal

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4. Here and elsewhere in the chapter, the term "Classical" is used to refer to ancient Greek or Latin literature.

participation as an officer and desire to address—through literature—his concerns about the Russian army.[5]

In 1852, Tolstoy enlisted as a junior artillery officer in the Caucasus, then requested a transfer to Crimea when the war broke out the following year (Bartlett 103, 107). In November 1854, Tolstoy arrived in Sevastopol, where he was promoted to the rank of second lieutenant and attached to the 3rd Light Battery of the 14th Artillery Brigade (Figes 276). Shortly thereafter, he was dispatched to the dangerous Fourth Bastion during a heavy enemy bombardment and was inspired to write a short sketch, "Sevastopol in December," which portrayed the Russian forces in a patriotic light (Bartlett 114). Czar Nicholas I had recently died of pneumonia, rumored to have refused treatment as a form of passive suicide, depressed by Russian failures in the Crimean War. The new czar, Alexander II, seized on Tolstoy's tale from the front, impressed by its depiction of Russian courage, and ordered it immediately translated into French to aid its circulation among the French-speaking Russian elite (Knapp 243–44, fn10). Tolstoy wrote a second, much longer sketch, "Sevastopol in May," posted in the mail on July 5, 1855 (Bartlett 115). He began writing his third and final sketch, "Sevastopol in August," in the middle of September while still at the front, having witnessed Russia's surrender, then finished it later that year in St. Petersburg after retiring from military service.[6] Despite the elements of fiction, the first two tales, which were published in the monthly literary journal *Sovremennik* while Sevastopol was still under siege, were read in Russia as dispatches from the front that offered a "radical departure" from the reports that appeared in the official Russian military organ, *The Invalid* (Knapp 213).[7]

Tolstoy's *SR* are a self-consciously realistic literary representation of war, with unglorified depictions of violence, chaos, suffering, and death.[8] Just as Tolstoy's letters and diaries from the period describe his interest in conveying

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5. Initially, Tolstoy hoped that his sketches from the Caucasus and Crimea would be contributions to a new military journal for war writing, further demonstrating his interest at this time in narratives specifically about war (Shklovsky 208–10, 213).

6. All three stories were first published in the monthly literary journal *Sovremennik* from 1855 to 1856: "Sevastopol in December" appeared in June 1855, signed L.N.T.; later that year, the journal's editor-in-chief decided to publish "Sevastopol in May" anonymously, because the censor had made so many edits without Tolstoy's permission; and "Sevastopol in August" was published in eight parts, from January to August 1856, and, for the first time ever, Tolstoy signed his full name, Count L. Tolstoy, to a literary publication.

7. As Tolstoy was writing within a system of strict censorship, when it would have been impossible to simply report the soldiers' miserable conditions and staggering loss of life at Sevastopol, the fictional elements in Tolstoy's sketches obscured the genre of reportage and likely made it possible for them to be published.

8. Philip Fisher, a renowned literary scholar but not a specialist on Tolstoy or Russian literature, has called the *SR* "the first realistic account of ordinary men at war" (198).

the reality of military life, his sketches say as much themselves: the narrator of "Sevastopol in May" famously declares, at the end, that the hero of his tale is "truth" (109). Tolstoy scholarship has recognized and investigated at length the ways in which, in these early sketches about war, Tolstoy resists the romanticism of the first half of the nineteenth century.[9] In *Young Tolstoy*, Boris Eikhenbaum uses the title "Struggle with Romanticism" for his section about *SR* (75). Largely in discussion of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Gary Saul Morson introduced his concept of "prosaics," a neologism he coined to describe "a way of thinking about human events that focuses on the ordinary, messy, quotidian facts of daily life—in short, on the prosaic," especially evident in novels and other forms of prose, as opposed to the approach of "poetics" that focuses on epics, lyrics, and tragedies ("Prosaics" 516). Although he does not use the terms Romantic or Classical, his Tolstoyan prosaics stand in contrast to the literary styles and forms familiar from these earlier periods. The romanticization of war in Russian literature predominated in the first half of the century, with idyllic depictions of Caucasian people and landscapes from Mikhail Lermontov—who also served as a Russian officer—and even Alexander Pushkin's calls to arms in poems such as "War" ("*Voina*" 1821).[10] The literary tradition of romanticizing the events of war into epic battles and idealizing its heroes into near or literal gods, however, extends back to ancient Greece and Rome. Among the Classical stock characters in war stories from Antiquity, one of the most pervasive is *miles gloriosus*, the swaggering soldier whose exaggerated boasting of brave feats belies his inner cowardice. Although *miles gloriosus* typically appears in comedies as a buffoonish (albeit villainous) foil to the hero, traces of the stereotype reemerge, intentionally or not, in Tolstoy's *SR*, which are generally viewed as part of his early experiments with a new approach to writing about war.

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9. Scholarship that is devoted to these three early sketches is less comprehensive than that on Tolstoy's later work. See Mørch on the chronotope of realism in *SR*; see also Knapp, Masolova, Orwin ("Dogmatic Narrator"), Shcherbakova, and Tapp for articles or chapters that focus exclusively on the *SR*. Maus has written a chapter on elements of satire in Tolstoy's prose, including the *SR*. Le Gouis compares "Sevastopol in May" to Butor's *La Modification*. See Orwin's "Courage in Tolstoy" and "Leo Tolstoy: Pacifist, Patriot, and *Molodets*" for chapters that engage seriously with a literary analysis of Tolstoy's war writing in the *SR*, alongside discussion of *War and Peace*. Eikhenbaum's *Young Tolstoy* (99-119) and Shklovsky's *Lev Tolstoy* (200-36) are early, foundational works of Tolstoyan scholarship devoted to the author's biography and ouvre; they contain sections on the *SR*. The vast majority of scholarship on Tolstoy's military writing, however, is focused on *War and Peace*; see, for example, McPeak and Orwin's *Tolstoy on War*, which, despite the volume's main title, is devoted to *War and Peace* and makes only passing references to the *SR* and other war stories by Tolstoy. For an overview of the significance of the military to Tolstoy's life and creativity, see Orwin's chapter "War and the Military" in *Tolstoy in Context*.

10. For an overview of the search for a new literary hero in nineteenth-century Russian literature, see Mathewson, pp. 14-20. The discussion of Tolstoy's heroes focuses exclusively on *War and Peace* (16-17).

The traits and tropes of the stock character *miles gloriosus* date back to some of the earliest extant writing about war and the military.[11] There are elements of this character in Homer's *Iliad* and other classical Greek examples.[12] The swaggering soldier belongs to the broader category of the *alazṓn*, for general "imposters" or "braggarts"—someone who pretends to be more than they are in reality (Frye 39). The *alazṓn* is marked by the use of fanciful, bombastic, pompous language that is in stark contrast to the more common speech of the other characters on stage. The Classics scholar Ioannis Konstantakos, in his two-part study of the military *alazṓn*, which came to be known as *miles gloriosus*, writes that the swaggering soldier

> boasts about his stunning feats in battle, unsurpassable warrior's courage, invincible muscular strength, and other manly and combative virtues. He . . . expresses himself in pompous speech and thunderous exclamations. . . . shows off his magnificent uniform and shiny weapons. . . . carries himself with a majestic poise, [and] puffs up his large body, and walks with enormous strides. However, this stately spectacle is only superficial, a mere linguistic and visual disguise which conceals [that] deep inside, the blustering officer is a faint-hearted coward and loafer. . . . He would do anything to avoid the battlefield, as well as any dangerous situation, dispute, or quarrel, which would call for a display of true courage. This inherent contradiction between appearance and reality is the very substance of the *miles gloriosus*. (Part I, 43–44)

The swaggering soldier functions as the hero's antagonist and counterbalance. He is "the enemy that threatens to subvert the main character's plans, one of the great obstacles that the protagonist needs to overcome," whose empty boasts must be revealed for what they are (Part II, 113).

The swaggering soldier character from middle and new Greek plays became so well known that it was adapted into Roman comedies. In 205 BC, the Roman dramatist Plautus even titled one of his comedies after the stock character.[13] In his play, the eponymous *miles gloriosus*—named Pyrgopolynices, which ironically means "capturer of towers and cities"—shows off his well-tended curly locks to women (De Melo 130). Pyrgopolynices makes outrageous and ridiculous claims, such as that he fought in a battle with Mars and the grandson of Neptune, and

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11. Many thanks to my University of Delaware colleagues in Spanish (Julia Domínguez) and Classics (Marcaline Boyd and Tyson Sukava) for conversations about *miles gloriosus* that led to this paper.

12. In Homer's *Iliad*, Paris may be seen as a *miles gloriosus*, as he is obsessed with beauty and women; he does not abide by honor (e.g., he steals another man's wife when he is their guest); and he is cowardly in battle.

13. For an English translation of Plautus's *The Braggart Soldier* side-by-side with the original Latin, see the Loeb Classical Library edition, with an introductory note by the edition's editor and translator, Wolfgang De Melo.

that he is himself a superhuman half-god, descended from the goddess Venus—a reference, too, to his physical beauty. However, in reality, Pyrgopolynices is a cuckhold, the hapless stooge of his lover's plot to leave him for another man. In the denouement, Pyrgopolynices is tricked into his neighbor's house, where he is beaten by the servants, after being stripped of all outer symbols of military might (e.g., his impressive sword, his shiny shield, his emblems, and even his cloak). Without these external emblems, Pyrgopolynices reveals his inner cowardice, crying and begging for mercy and agreeing to demands that he relinquish any claim to his lover.[14] After the Roman playwrights reworked the Greek models, European writers took up the figure, seen in Commedia dell'arte's stock character "Il Capitano," Shakespeare's plays, and Raspe's Baron Munchausen, among many others. The influence of Plautus and his characters on Shakespeare, in particular, is well documented, and the English Bard reincarnated the swaggering soldier in several of his characters (Coulter).[15] One of the most vivid examples is Captain Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well* (Richard). An officer in the French army, Captain Parolles, has gone to Italy to fight on behalf of the Duke of Florence in their war against Siena. He is extremely overdressed, very interested in seducing women, and laces his speech with fancy Italian phrases while spinning tales of his prowess as an extraordinary soldier—when, in fact, he is a great coward. In Italy, his fellow French soldiers catch and blindfold him. Thinking them the enemy, Captain Parolles is terrified and immediately reveals everything that they want to know. He survives, but his true cowardice is now known, so he must live without friends or his position in the army or court.

What has not been studied, however, is the legacy of the swaggering soldier character in Tolstoy's war writing. As Tolstoy was well-acquainted with the works of Shakespeare and the ancient Greeks and Romans, the general traits of *miles gloriosus* would have been familiar to him.[16] He studied Latin at university and there, or shortly thereafter, became interested in Greek classics in translation, including *Phaedo*, Plato's *Symposium*, and the works of Homer (Finch 206).

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14. For English-language scholarship on Plautus' comedy Miles Gloriosus, see Hall, Haywood, Konstantakos, and Tapp.

15. Nikolai Ketcher translated the 1623 comedy into Russian in the 1840s, amid renewed Russian interest in Shakespeare and several new translations. That same decade, even the famous Russian literary critic Vissarion Belinsky turned his attention to Shakespeare, lauding the psychological realism at work in his plays.

16. For more on Tolstoy and Shakespeare, see Griffiths and Rabinowitz' 1983 article and Akhmetova's more recent work, as well as Tolstoy's own 1904 essay, "O Shekspire i o drame," in which he famously criticized Shakespeare as not an artist, to which George Orwell responded in 1947 with his essay, "Lear, Tolstoy, and the Fool."

Donna Tussing Orwin, for example, has written about Tolstoy's interest in Plato, particularly as it relates to ideas of courage in battle.[17] Alexei V. Zadorojnyi has written about the influence of Plutarch on Tolstoy, primarily focusing on *War and Peace*, with detailed information about the volumes of Plutarch on the shelves of the library at Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy's family estate. Tolstoy himself would say his *War and Peace* was "like the *Iliad*" (Griffiths and Rabinowitz 97). Scholarship pertaining to the Classics' influence on Tolstoy's earlier writing is less robust,[18] but the timeline and content of his *SR* suggest that he could have been already writing Russian war stories with the ancient models in mind from the very beginning. In addition to the literary contexts, Tolstoy would also have had an awareness of the historical connection in Sevastopol between Antiquity and his present moment. Since Catherine II in the eighteenth century, Russians often emphasized the Greek aspects of Crimea, including the Ancient Greek colonization of the southern coast; the conquest of Crimea as part of the classical world had symbolic importance for a Russian Empire seeking to compete with European powers.[19] As Zadorojnyi notes, the "Crimean War energized classical references in contemporary journalism" ("Plutarch à la Russe" 172), but he then deals primarily with Plutarchian influences on *War and Peace*, about the much earlier War of 1812. Yet, it is in the second and third sketches in *SR* that Tolstoy's narrator and characters invoke the swaggering soldier in a way that lampoons the old models of war writing and warrior-heroes, clearing the way for a different literary approach.

The Beautiful Bravery of a Gentleman

The first sketch, "Sevastopol in December," is rife with Classical references, but not yet as pasquinade. At the end, Tolstoy's narrator explicitly invokes the heroes and genre of an ancient Greek war story. He describes a patriotic scene

> when Kornilov, that hero worthy of ancient Greece, would say as he inspected his troops: "We will die, men, rather than surrender Sebastopol," and when our Russian soldiers, unversed in phrase-mongering, would answer: "We will die! Hurrah!"—only now do the stories of those days cease to be a beautiful historic legend and become a reality, a fact. . . . Long will Russia bear the imposing traces

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17. See Orwin's chapter "Courage in Tolstoy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*.

18. For one of the few examples of such scholarship, see Masolova's article on the epic narrative structure in the *SR*.

19. My thanks to anonymous reviewer #1 for pointing out this additional connection between Sevastopol and ancient Greece.

of this epic [*epopeia*] of Sebastopol, the hero of which was the Russian people [*narod russkii*] (57).[20]

The link with Antiquity is further evidenced in a letter that Tolstoy wrote his brother from Sevastopol in November 1854: the "spirit of the [Russian] army is beyond description. There wasn't so much heroism in the days of ancient Greece [*vo vremena drevnei Gretsii ne bylo stol'ko geroistva*]" (Christian 44), as though the patriotic fervor of the Russian troops surpassed even the epic heroes of Antiquity.[21] Earlier in the same concluding paragraph, the narrator lauds the "spirit" of the "defenders of Sevastopol," who cannot possibly allow the city to fall: "You realize now that the feeling which drives them has nothing in common with the *vain* [emphasis mine; *tshcheslaviia*], petty, and mindless emotions you yourself have experienced, but is of an altogether different and more powerful nature" (56). The heroic Russian soldier, we are told, continues fighting in terrible, deadly conditions due to "a love of his native land" (56), rather than for the sake of vain rewards.[22] Although the narrator asserts that the epic past has become "a reality, a fact," and Morson has argued that this first sketch can be read as a didactic parody of readers' desire to enjoy the spectacle of death as voyeurs (see his essay "The Reader as Voyeur"), another way to read Tolstoy's first sketch is that it unambiguously and uncritically models itself after the familiar ancient Greek epics and heroes.

As Victor Shklovsky points out, from the first to the second sketch "lies Tolstoy's profound disillusionment in the czar's policy and his criticism of it. He himself has changed, shedding part of his old prejudice" (220). This change is also evident in the different way that he seems to employ literary models from Antiquity, especially the swaggering soldier. As opposed to the first sketch, in which none of the Russian officers are driven by "vanity," there is a long list of characters in the second sketch, "Sevastopol in May," who are candidates for the role of the figure. In the opening scene, for example, the narrator allows the reader access to the men's thoughts and feelings as they stroll along a boulevard, and foremost on all their minds is their appearance and how they are being seen by others. There is practically

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20. Unless otherwise indicated, this and all quotations from Tolstoy's *Sevastopol Sketches* are taken from McDuff's translation, where he prefers spelling the name "Sebastopol."

21. Tolstoy did not invent this scene; he had personally witnessed Admiral Vladimir Kornilov addressing the troops the day after he had arrived in Sevastopol, and he described the same scene almost verbatim in a letter to his brother (Christian 44).

22. The Cross of St. George (*Georgievskii krest*) is one such "vain" reward that some of Tolstoy's characters want. The award was primarily given to lower ranks of the military "for service and bravery" («за службу и храбрость»).

nothing genuine in their interactions with one another. The narrator decries the "vanity" or "vaingloriousness" (in Russian: *tshcheslavie*) that is on display in this opening scene, once the characters' inner selves are laid bare, and the absurdity of such concerns is heightened against the life-and-death reality of war:

> Vanity! vanity! and vanity everywhere, even on the brink of the grave, and among men ready to die for the highest convictions. Vanity! It must be that it is a characteristic trait, and a peculiar malady of our century. Why was nothing ever heard among the men of former days, of this passion, any more than of the small-pox or the cholera? Why did Homer and Shakespeare talk of love, of glory, of suffering, while the literature of our age is nothing but an endless narrative of "Snobs" and "Vanity"? (66)

The above passage has been cited as an example of Tolstoy's interest in the sermon as a form of rhetoric, and as invoking the famous passage from Ecclesiastes 1:2-8, which, in the King James Version, begins: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity; all is vanity." Eikhenbaum observes that the tone running throughout "Sevastopol in May" is that of a sermon, "with its rising intonation, emotional repetitions, and phrases of broad declamatory style designed for a large crowd of listeners" (103). In her insightful chapter on the influence of Harriet Beecher Stowe's sermonic mode on *SR*, Liza Knapp writes that, in the passage quoted above, Tolstoy is sermonizing on subject matter that has been popular with preachers from Ecclesiastes on (231); adding "some of the references to vanity, coupled with those to the sun rising and setting, while humans strive for naught, seem to evoke Ecclesiastes directly" (255 fn109). However, in a letter to the poet Afanasy Fet dated August 1879, more than two decades after writing "Sevastopol in May," Tolstoy writes about Ecclesiastes, "which nobody has read, and which I read the other day *for the first time* and continue to read with exclamations of joy" [emphasis mine]. He recommends that Fet read it in Old Church Slavonic, saying "the modern Russian translation … (I'm ashamed to call it a translation) is interesting because it shows plainly the stupidity, ignorance, and effrontery of our priests. The English translation is also bad. If you had the Greek, you would see what it is like" (Christian 335). Moreover, when Tolstoy quotes Ecclesiastes 1:2 in Chapter 6 of his autobiographical work *Confession* (*Ispoved*), published in 1882, he uses the word *sueta*, not *tshcheslavie*.[23] This is not

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23. The Russian Synodal Translation of the Bible (Old and New Testament) was first published in full in 1876, as the official translation from Old Church Slavonic into contemporary Russian language. It also uses the word sueta: "Суета сует, сказал Екклесиаст, суета сует,—всё суета!" (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

to argue with Eikhenbaum or Knapp about the presence of sermonic modes in "Sevastopol in May," but to suggest there is room for another extraliterary reading of Tolstoy's much-cited passage about the "vanity" [*tshcheslavie*] on display among Russian officers fighting in the Crimean War.

Tolstoy's repetition of "vanity" (or "vaingloriousness"), used five times in this early paragraph, introduces the sketch's emphasis on hypocrisy, which is the predominant characteristic of *miles gloriosus*. There is also a linguistic connection. The Russian word, *tshcheslaviia*, like the English word, vaingloriousness, is a calque from the ancient Greek word κενοδοξία (kenodoxía), meaning "empty glory."[24] The most common Russian translation of the Latin phrase *miles gloriosus* is *khvastlivyi voin*, or "boastful warrior," which uses the adjective *khvastlivyi* rather than *tshcheslavnyi*, the adjective derived from the noun. In Vladimir Ivanovich Dal's *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*, however, the long entry on "to boast" (*khvastat'*) ends with offering a single synonym: *tshcheslavnyi*.[25] In other words, there is a close association between the words *khvastlivyi* and *tshcheslaviia*, the former used in the Russian translation of *miles gloriosus* and the latter repeated by the narrator at the beginning of Tolstoy's sketch. Empty swagger or bragging is certainly linked to the "vaingloriousness" that the narrator is criticizing here.[26] Furthermore, the narrator will use the verb *khvastat'* to describe the actions of two characters in the second sketch: Adjutant Kalugin and Baron Pest.

Back on the boulevard, the men's obvious preoccupation with status in the eyes of others—as opposed to a focus on duty—suggests, initially, that any of them are strong candidates for the swaggering-soldier stereotype. Prince Galtsin, an adjutant, insists on promenading past the home of a sailor's daughter, whom he describes as a "magnificent girl in a red kerchief." He is the only character in the entire sketch to show this kind of interest in women, which is a trait of *miles gloriosus*. Moreover, when Captain Praskukhin tries to impress Prince Galtsin by explaining his acquaintance with a famously brave naval officer, Prince Galtsin ignores them both according to the following strange logic: When he had visited the dangerous 4th bastion the day before, he had seen "a bomb burst twenty paces away, and

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24. "Kleos" is another term for "glory" that is often used in analyzing the theme of glory in ancient Greek and Roman literature.

25. Collected by the academic Vladimir Ivanovich Dal and first published from 1863 to 1866.

26. Scholars have linked the narrator's monologues bemoaning the "vanity" of the officers' concerns to the language of sermons. The famous Russian Formalist Boris Eikhenbaum, for example, argued in his 1928–1931 essay that this new sermonic mode was an "artistic discovery" critical to the development of Tolstoy's style, which would be on display in his later, better-known novels.

therefore considered himself no less brave than this gentleman [and] assumed that a lot of reputations are acquired for nothing" (69). The narrator's sarcasm comes through quite clearly, and Prince Galtsin seems a ridiculous, comedic character. Later, as Prince Galtsin is drinking tea with cream in a comfortable apartment with the other officers, he comments that "I can't understand or even believe that people in dirty underwear, with lice and unwashed hands, could be brave. That way, you know, [in French] the beautiful bravery of a gentleman, [switching back to Russian] it cannot be" (74).[27] Within the context of the story, it is, again, quite clear that this opinion is wrong and even ridiculous. That night when a French attack begins, Prince Galtsin convinces himself, in true swaggering-soldier fashion, that he is not needed on the bastion, and he stays away from the action. Then, having wandered into a camp hospital some distance from the front line, he cannot stomach even that sight and runs away in great fear. He will not reappear in the sketch until the following day, after a truce has been called and the shelling stopped. Officers, soldiers, and young women once again promenade "festively" along the pavilion," while Prince Galtsin discusses the night's battle, wondering aloud whether the truce is still in force (102–4). Without waiting for an answer, he sashays away, his reputation and status intact. His true inner cowardice has not been revealed to anyone but the reader.

Unlike Prince Galtsin, Kalugin does ride off toward the front line when battle begins; however he is even more vain and boastful, pretending to know or believe things that he does not.[28] The narrator tells the reader that Kalugin "was not a specialist, though he considered he had a pretty sound grasp of military matters," so when he began to explain to Prince Galtsin the details of troop positions and the plan of attack, he delivers "a somewhat labyrinthine account—in the course of which he got all the fortificational terms mixed up" (76). Although he bombastically disagrees with Prince Galtsin about the bravery of lice-infested infantryman, insisting that "our infantry officers . . . are heroes, amazing people," in the very next moment he reveals himself to be a hypocrite, when an infantry officer arrives in the apartment with an important message from the general, and Kalugin treats him disdainfully (74). Throughout the sketch, moreover, Kalugin is overly concerned with how he appears to others. The narrator notices that he rides his

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27. Вот этого я не понимаю и, признаюсь, не могу верить, — сказал Гальцин, — чтобы люди в грязном белье, во в[шах] и с неумытыми руками могли бы быть храбры. Этак, знаешь, cette belle bravoure de gentilhomme, — не может быть.

28. This calls to mind another common type of alazṓn character, the swaggering scholar, who pretends to be erudite and an expert, when in fact he knows and understands very little.

Cossack horse in that "distinctive quasi-Cossack position" that apparently all the adjutants find "particularly agreeable" (78). He is described as "walking like a hero [*molodets*], valiantly clanking his sword" three times, in those exact same words.[29] The term *molodets* is a poetic Russian word for hero, associated with folk epics. Furthermore, when the bombs begin to fall, Kalugin is determined to continue walking with his back straight, because he has repeatedly "bragged" (*khvastalsia*) that his back never bends during such attacks; the narrator sarcastically explains that Kalugin was "in short, what is termed 'brave'" (85). He is furious with himself when he falls to the ground to take cover, and he immediately looks around to see who might have noticed. (This is the first occurrence of the verb *khvastat'* in the sketch.) Kalugin does not behave bravely in battle for any virtuous "love of his native land," but only to *appear* brave to anyone who might be watching.

The verb *khvastat'* is also used in connection with the young cadet ("*iunker*"), Baron Pest, whom the narrator introduces as "haughty and self-conceited," considering himself "a hero" already as a result of a single night spent near the battle, in a bombproof shelter. Before the battle, he contemplates the "impending action with [a] sinking heart" (75). Afterward, he spins tales of his own valor and bravery, relating "how he ended up in command of his entire company, how his company commander had been killed, how he, Pest, had bayoneted a Frenchman and how, had it not been for him, the day would have been lost" (92). The foundations for this tale were correct, the narrator informs us; but, in giving the details, the cadet had invented things and boasted (*khvastal*)—the narrator repeats the word "boasted" twice—because he had been in a "fog of oblivion." In fact, he did not exhibit any great bravery, contrary to the stories he would tell others. The narrator's lengthy description of what really happened reveals that Pest had no effect on the battle's outcome.

Thus, Prince Galtsin, Adjutant Kalugin, and Baron Pest are all revealed to be military *alazṓns*—imposters and hypocrites—despite their boasting to the contrary.[30] Another significant trait that they have in common with swaggering soldiers is their use of French—particularly in situations where it is used to elevate themselves above others. In Tolstoy's context, French is marked as the "pompous" speech, compared to the "common" language of Russian that is used by other

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29. This is my translation, as McDuff omits the word "*molodets*" (шел таким молодцом, бодро побрякивая саблей). At the end of the sketch, he thinks to himself that he deserves the honor of "a golden sword" (золотая сабля) and even discusses this on the promenade with another officer.

30. Another important point these three characters have in common is that their titles of Prince and Baron are higher ranks than that of the sketches' author, Count Tolstoy.

characters. As already described above, Kalugin converses at length with Prince Galtsin in French, when he is ignoring the lower-ranked infantry officer, who does not understand French. At the end of the sketch, Baron Pest speaks French when he is exaggerating his role in arranging the truce. Prince Galtsin speaks French throughout the sketch, but perhaps his choice of language is most significant in his final words, when he is asking about the truce. Initially, he speaks French, having "resumed his customary haughty manner" (104). Captain Mikhailov answers him in French, "anxious to show that he too could speak French," but Galtsin then repeats his question in Russian, "thereby implying—or so it appeared to the lieutenant-captain, at any rate—that since it must be a dreadful effort for him to speak French, why didn't they simply . . ." (104). As in the Shakespearean comedy, *All's Well That Ends Well*, where the French Captain Parolles repeatedly used Italian phrases with his fellow French-speakers when they were in Italy fighting Italian-speakers, in Tolstoy's sketch, this point, too, is analogous: French is the language of the Russians' enemies, but his swaggering Russian soldiers pepper their language with French. This strange situation becomes most apparent in the sketch's final scene. When soldiers on both sides have a moment to fraternize during the temporary truce, the Russian soldiers are very impressed with themselves and unaware of their mistakes as they try to speak French.

Arguably, the only *non*-swaggering soldier in Tolstoy's middle sketch is a minor unnamed character, an experienced naval officer, who refuses to give in to the temptations of vanity. When Kalugin asks to see one of his guns on the battery, the naval officer all but refuses. The narrator explains that this captain had already been in command for six months of one of the Russian line's most dangerous batteries, where he had lived without a break among the sailors since the beginning of the siege, earning a reputation for bravery. Kalugin, however, understands none of this; he is merely amazed at what he interprets as cowardice, thinking sarcastically to himself, "so much for reputation" (87). These are words that echo Prince Galtsin's sardonic thoughts at the beginning of the sketch, about another officer's reputation for bravery—another way in which the two men are linked by their swagger. Then, however, the narrator reveals that the naval captain *used to be* vain: "[A]t first he had indulged in valor, he had pretended to be brave, run foolish risks, hoped for honours and reputation, and even acquired them" (88). But he "had already been through all that," and now "he viewed the whole business rather differently," focused instead on fulfilling his duty "to the letter" but without the risk-taking that passes for bravery (88). Through the naval officer, the narrator

shows us that vaingloriousness in soldiers can be a normal phase in the beginning of military service. Unlike Galtsin, Kalugin, or Pest, the naval officer does not boast or brag, nor does he shirk his duty for want of bravery (although Kalugin does not understand this point). He does not ride his horse in a particular way, or clank his sword, or speak in French. Moreover, we never even learn his name; in a sketch filled with the names of major *and* minor characters—the absence of a name is significant. This officer's name will not live on in even literary glory.

In the narrator's reference to Homer and Shakespeare in the long "sermonic" passage railing against vanity (quoted above), there is a positive reference to earlier models of (war) writing that, at first glance, seem similar to the reference to a "hero worthy of ancient Greece" that appears at the end of the first sketch. Moreover, the swaggering-soldier character—so prevalent in the literature of ancient Greece and Elizabethan England—can be seen in imperial Russia in "Sevastopol in May" and follows the patterns familiar from the Classical model of the swaggering soldier—until the end, when the pattern suddenly breaks.

Eikhenbaum writes that, in "Sevastopol in May," Tolstoy "unmasks his own characters at every step" when his narrator reveals their hypocritical vanity to the reader (110). However, unlike previous examples of *miles gloriosus*, none of Tolstoy's characters' swaggering characters are forced to confront or admit the truth to themselves or to each other—in this sense, their masks stay on. Perhaps this subversion of the expected ending for a Classical *miles gloriosus* is connected to the narrator's diatribe against aristocrats in the pages leading up to the proclamation about "vanity everywhere." The sketch's social critique of Russian "aristocrats" is underscored by the swaggering soldier-aristocrat who is never unmasked within a system that always protects its higher-ranked members, even the cowards.[31] Tolstoy's military *alazṓn*, according to this reading of the sketch, is not about the military as much as it is about society as a whole.

In another unexpected twist at the end of the second sketch, the narrator asks rhetorical questions that seem to contradict the beginning's sermonic chastisement against vanity: "Where in this narrative is there any illustration of evil that is to be avoided? Where is there any illustration of good that is to be emulated? Who is the villain of the piece, and who its hero? All the characters are equally blameless and equally wicked" (109).

If Galtsin, Kalugin, and Pest are not evil or villains, another way to understand their function in this sketch is as representing men at a normal but immature state in

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31. For another reading of the sketch's didactics, see Morson's "Reader."

their development. Given time, perhaps they, like the unnamed naval officer, could also grow out of their preoccupations with swagger, appearance, and reputations of bravery. But what exactly they might become is less clear, as is the question of whether they still fulfill the Classical function of a swaggering soldier as the foil to the hero. The narrator famously concludes the sketch with the declaration that "the hero of my story . . . whom I have attempted to portray in all his beauty and who has always been, is now, and will always be supremely magnificent, is truth" (109). In a sense, the truth has been the key to the swaggering soldier stereotype for millennia; the contrast between the true cowardice within and the untrue braggadocio without lies at the heart of the Classical stock character.[32] Each of the three swaggering soldiers may be seen as a foil to the "hero" of truth, in different ways, most obviously in young Baron Pest's boastful untruths about his performance in battle. But the contrast between a concrete character and an abstract concept is murky and unsatisfying.

"Something Wrapped in a Greatcoat"

Further support for the conclusion that the swaggering soldiers in "Sevastopol in May" are failed foils, ineffective in highlighting or clarifying the "truth," is the very clear contrast between hero and foil that makes up almost the entire third sketch, "Sevastopol in August 1855," which even more emphatically turns out to be completely extraneous. The continued evolution in Tolstoy's approach to the swaggering soldier is evident in this final sketch, just before the Russians' final defeat and surrender in September, ending the Crimean War. As Shklovsky wrote, "[E]veryone expected a monumental story about the surrender of Sevastopol to come from Tolstoy" (228). Instead, the sketch primarily follows two brothers named Kozeltsov, both officers and aristocrats, on their way into battle, and to death.

The younger, Vladimir Sergeevich, seems at first to be a perfect reproduction of the Classical swaggering soldier. Vladimir, nicknamed Volodya, is physically beautiful, with thick, curly hair, as well as attractively dressed, in a red shirt with a high collar and a greatcoat that is mentioned several times. His appearance attracts the attention of a young nun, who bursts out weeping at the thought that such a beautiful young man will be killed, as well as that of young Cadet Vlang, whose name is feminized, and who is mocked by others for his girlish devotion

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32. In his *Republic*, for example, Plato describes the "false and boastful words" that enter an *alazṓn*'s mind and drive out the true words (267; Bk VIII, 560c).

to young Vladimir. Vladimir Sergeevich is also, apparently, "rather ashamed" that his older brother lacks "the ability to speak French, to conduct oneself correctly in the presence of important persons, or to dance well" (127). These characteristics, which Vladimir either himself possesses or at least admires, represent the epitome of the swaggering soldier, who can speak and behave bombastically, hiding his true nature inside. Additionally, Vladimir is boastful despite being fearful, and nearly every thought and action that we witness is of his determination to hide his inner cowardice. When the two brothers happen to cross paths in Crimea, and the older brother tells his younger brother that they can continue on together to Sevastopol, Vladimir thinks to himself, "Straight to Sevastopol, that hell on earth—how dreadful!" (127). He seems to be searching for an excuse when he says he cannot leave due to unpaid gambling debts. Once Vladimir is in Sevastopol, he is gripped by fear almost the entire time. One notable exception is on the day before the battle, when the feeling of being watched by the men under his command turned Vladimir into a "hero" (*molodtsa*). Notably, however, the *narrator* does not say that Vladimir was brave, but that he "took pride in his own bravery" (*tshcheslavilsia svoie khrabrost'iu*).[33] In the only occurrence of the word "vanity" in the final sketch, Vladimir is putting on a show for those watching him, so that they will admire him.

The older brother, Mikhail, is not beautiful, well-dressed, or well-mannered—but he is brave. Whereas his younger brother looks for excuses not to go to Sevastopol, the older brother has returned to duty after a serious head wound, even though it has not yet healed completely (152). A private warns him to keep close to the wall and keep his head down, to protect himself from cannonballs flying overhead; "paying no heed to the man, Kozeltsov walked off briskly down the center of the road" (150). Upon meeting the newly appointed regimental commander, a longtime companion of his, Kozeltsov feels intimidated by his demeanor, although he "was certainly no coward" (151). Moreover, when Mikhail returns to his company, he is greeted warmly by his soldiers, cheering them with brave talk about thrashing the French. Listening to his superior officer, a young drummer says "he's got a lot of guts, his honour has, he's really got a lot of guts," in a voice that the narrator describes as soft but "still loud enough

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33. This translation is mine. «Радость, что он исполняет хорошо свою обязанность, что он не только не трус, но даже храбр, чувство командования и присутствия двадцати человек, которые, он знал, с любопытством смотрели на него, сделали из него совершенного молодца, Он даже тщеславился своей храбростью, франтил перед солдатами, вылезал на банкет и нарочно расстегнул шинель, чтобы его заметне было.»

to be audible, as if in support of what the company commander [Mikhail] had been saying, and as if in order to persuade the soldier that there has been nothing boastful [*khvastlivovo*] or fanciful about it" (154).[34] This is the only occurrence of the word "boastful" in the final sketch, and its negation—as well as the other characteristics described above—suggests that the older brother is very clearly *not* the swaggering soldier, but the hero.

However, at the end of the final sketch, both brothers die. Mikhail dies a hero's death, drawing his saber and urging his soldiers on with a "hurrah" that inspires fifty of them to rush after him, toward the attacking French soldiers (178). As he receives his final rites, he feels no fear of death. The priest allows him to think that the Russians have won, and Mikhail dies, "experiencing a sense of ecstasy as he realized he had performed a heroic deed," and wishes the same "happiness" for his brother. But Vladimir dies a cowardly death: struck immobile by fear, unable to carry on the defense or support his own soldiers. His death is relayed in a single sentence, from the perspective of a soldier looking back to find him: "Something wrapped in a greatcoat was lying face down in the place where Volodya had been standing, and the entire area was now occupied by French soldiers, who were firing at the Russians" (181). Vladimir's corpse is dehumanized and defamiliarized as "something wrapped in a greatcoat," an artistic device that, as Shklovsky points out, draws on the cognitive dissonance that occurs when the familiar is made strange. Death in war is expected, but neither of the brothers' deaths feels right.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle compares a rash man to a brave man: "[T]he rash man is generally thought to be an imposter [*alazṓn*], who pretends to courage which he does not possess; at least he wishes to appear to feel towards fearful things as the courageous man actually does feel, and therefore he imitates him in the things in which he can" (161, lines 8–9). The rash, he continues, are "eager before the danger comes" but then "hang back at the critical moment; whereas the courageous are keen at the time of action but calm beforehand" (161, line 12). The contrast that Aristotle describes could have been written to describe the two brothers in Tolstoy's final sketch: Mikhailov is relaxed before battle, but brave when he becomes aware of the danger; Vladimir feels some excitement before the French assault, but he reveals his true nature as an *alazṓn* when he hesitates at the

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34. — Что же, они точно смелые, их благородие ужасно какие смелые! — сказал барабанщик не громко, но так, что слышно было, обращаясь к другому солдату, как будто оправдываясь перед ним в словах ротного командира и убеждая его, что в них ничего нет хвастливого и неправдоподобного.

critical moment. In light of the clear contrast between the two, the heroism of Mikhail also functions to further criticize the vainglorious swagger of Vladimir.

The concluding section of the last sketch, then, is a puzzle. The hero Mikhail seems to have been already, immediately, forgotten; he is not mentioned once. Volodya is remembered and wept over by Vlang, whom the soldiers shush, thinking he is "not right in the head" (182). Instead, the narrator speaks about the Russian infantry soldiers and sailors, primarily collectively, as "nearly every soldier" reacts with relief, remorse, shame, anger, and bitterness to the order to retreat. Shklovsky explains the strange ending of the final sketch by pointing to the ultimate uselessness of the aristocrats, the officers Mikhail and Vladimir Kozeltsov, and Tolstoy himself:

> *Sevastopol in August* was written with profound sadness, composure and inner frankness. In this story Tolstoy solved for his own self those questions which he would not be able to solve as correctly once he had cooled off.
> The aristocrats did not decide the outcome of the Sevastopol defense, and not because they were bad or cowardly. The resistance was put up by men of another social substance, by middle class army and naval officers . . . *Sevastopol in August* was written by a man who could not forgive the defeat for which he was not to blame. (228–29)

Eikhenbaum writes about the "parallelism" of Mikhail and Vladimir, strengthened by being brothers, that is only motivated by Tolstoy's structural need to connect scenes; in his opinion, the parallel does not converge or reveal itself to be "only seeming[ly]" a parallel (116–17). However, another reading of the end presents itself, if the two brothers are instead seen as representing the Classical binary of swaggering soldier versus brave soldier, of foil versus hero. Then, in the end, when both die, are forgotten, and Sevastopol falls, the meaning of the parallel is that it falls apart into meaninglessness. In the second sketch, the foil of the swaggering soldier is too trivial for the enormous hero of "truth," the entire Russian aristocracy's vanity and hypocrisy. In the third sketch, however, both the foil of the swaggering soldier and even the hero are irrelevant, insignificant. With Vladimir reduced to a heap of clothing and Mikhail's name erased off the page, the unexpected conclusion of "Sevastopol in August" demonstrates that the foil of the swaggering soldier, like all the old Classical models of war writing, is empty and irrelevant. Traditionally, the swaggering soldier functions to bolster the hero and the heroic value system in war stories. But, in Tolstoy's *SR*, the trope fulfills

a different function: to undercut the old models and systems of war stories and heroes, revealing them as outdated, hollow, and void, which underscores Tolstoy's larger concern about war, in general, as senseless.[35]

In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy returns to many of the ideas he explores in these early sketches from the Crimean War. Arguably, Baron Pest is a direct prototype for Nikolai Rostov, another inexperienced young soldier who becomes confused in the fog of war but boasts of his exploits afterward. However, words formed from "vanity" (*tshcheslaviye, tshcheslavit'sia*) appear sixteen times in the *SR* and only twice in all of *War of Peace*, both times in the same paragraph—but in *War and Peace* in the context of *social* vanity, listed alongside gossip and dances.[36] The verb "to boast" (*khvastat*) occurs only once in *War and Peace*, and this time, too, not in the context of combat.[37] The *SR* were published one after the other, almost immediately once they were written without much opportunity for revision, in the manner of reportage, rather than fiction, and at an early point in Tolstoy's writing career. There are inconsistencies in his representation and judgment of the swaggering soldiers that appear throughout his three tales. However, from the first to the second to the third sketch, it is possible to see in broad strokes a young author's evolving thoughts on military heroism, related to certain characters and forms familiar from Antiquity: from the invocation of epic heroes, to a varied but omnipresent array of vain and glory-seeking soldiers, none of whom is a hero or villain or even a successful foil, to the clear presentation of two brothers as a defined binary that, ultimately, does not hold. By invoking, subverting, and ultimately discarding the swaggering soldier as a viable literary figure, Tolstoy dismantles not only the bravado of military heroism but also the very foundations of war writing that had long relied on empty heroics, making way for a new, more prosaic truth in Russian war literature.

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35. Think of the beginning of "Sevastopol in May," in which the narrator suggests that wars be decided by a duel between two individual representatives of each side, so that only one man would die, instead of thousands.

36. «Гостиные, сплетни, балы, тщеславие, ничтожество» и «Эгоизм, тщеславие, тупоумие, ничтожество во всем.»

37. At a drunken party, curly-haired Dolokhov (one of Tolstoy's most despicable characters) has bet an English naval officer named Stevens fifty imperials that he can drink an entire bottle of rum, sitting up high in a window, without holding on to anything. Before the deadly bet can begin, Anatole Kuragin asks Dolokhov if the Englishman might be "bragging" ("англичанин хвастает . . . а? . . . хорошо?") (Part 1, Ch 6). As Aleksandr Orlov points out, the English were seen in Russia as largely responsible for fanning the flames of the Crimean War (21). Kuragin's use of the word "khvastaet" to describe the English officer Stevens might recall Tolstoy's literary "*khvastlivye voiny*," or swaggering soldiers in the Crimean War, when the English were the enemy. Of course, *War and Peace* is about the earlier conflict of 1812, when the French were Russia's enemies and the English her allies.

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PART II

War Literature

Editor
Olivia Holloway

No Savior in Sight

THE SPIRITUAL SHOCKWAVES OF STRATEGIC BOMBING IN GERT LEDIG'S NOVEL *VERGELTUNG*

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You would think the fury of aerial bombardment
Would rouse God to relent; the infinite spaces
Are still silent. He looks on shock-pried faces.
History, even, does not know what is meant.

—Richard Eberhart, "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment"

Gert Ledig's novel *Vergeltung* (1956; translated as *Payback*, 2003) chronicles the gruesome results of an American air raid on an unnamed German city during the Second World War (1939–1945). To convey the uncomfortable truth of strategic bombing—that the wrath wrought by the air war is devoid of the divine—Ledig ironically employs the quintessentially Christian concepts of an apocalypse and martyrs. As an omniscient narrator uses these two ideas to unmask the hideous face of war through the eyes of thirteen characters, time, technology, and progress are recurring themes. Panned by most critics in the 1950s and largely forgotten, the novel experienced a renaissance at the end of the twentieth century thanks to W. G. Sebald's controversial book, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (1999, translated as *On the Natural History of Destruction*). Sebald scholars often analyze his explicit references to "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" ("On the Concept of History," 1942), one of the most famous essays by German cultural critic Walter Benjamin. Close readings of selected passages from *Vergeltung* reveal that Ledig, too, thematically overlaps

with Benjamin, albeit in a more suggestive, opaque way. The key to understanding this connection is the "angel of history," a metaphor crafted by Benjamin that was reinterpreted by Sebald to capture the spiritual shockwaves of strategic bombing.

Witnessing an Apocalypse: Time, Technology, and Progress as Themes of Aerial Warfare

In response to the aerial bombardment of the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), the famed Spanish artist Pablo Picasso created an anti-war painting of the same name. Although widely acknowledged by art critics as one of the most important artworks of the twentieth century, *Guernica* (1937) was not universally acclaimed at its unveiling in Paris or during subsequent tours in Europe and the Americas. Due in part to the painting's subject matter, initial public reactions were mixed. For many viewers, the grotesque images were an unwelcome reminder of a disturbing feature of modern warfare: the indiscriminate bombing of urban areas inhabited by noncombatants, mostly women, children, and the elderly. Only after time had begun to heal the wounds of war did *Guernica* receive the widespread recognition that had at first eluded it (Hensbergen 76, 119–120).

Considering initial public reactions and critical reviews, Picasso's painting can be superficially compared to Gert Ledig's *Vergeltung* (1956). First translated into English as *Payback* (2003) by Shaun Whiteside, Ledig's *Vergeltung* was not appreciated until almost half a century after its publication. Ledig presents the reader with a series of stories that, taken together, resemble a montage or a mosaic. Through the jumbled, fragmented storylines of thirteen characters, an omniscient narrator chronicles the gruesome results of a sixty-nine-minute air raid by U.S. bombers on an unnamed German city during World War II.

Between the ever-present death and destruction as well as numerous religious allusions woven into the narrative fabric, *Vergeltung* seems to be cut from a specific literary cloth, none other than the apocalyptic genre of Judeo-Christian traditions. Florian Radvan, an authority on Ledig's oeuvre, confirms this connection but also qualifies it: "Ledig's novel aesthetically ties in with the literary and, to a certain extent, with the iconographic tradition of the apocalypse, without, however, taking up its basic structural pattern—i.e., the prophecy of downfall *and* redemption" (177).[1] He further maintains that Ledig's writing constitutes "the depiction of an

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1. For purposes of meaning and nuance, all translations from German to English are my own unless otherwise noted.

apocalyptic scene without eschatology" (178). As the branch of theology fixated on finality, eschatology focuses on death, the Last Judgment, and the end of the world. Though these themes loom large in the text, Ledig ultimately eschews this doctrine in favor of a different method. In concurrence with an international community of scholars, Nil Santiáñez calls *Vergeltung* "a phenomenology of war and violence in which both war and violence are the real subjects of the narrative" (119). The novel is, to quote Susanne Vees-Gulani, a philosophical study in which "Ledig does not allow religion or myth to distort the true facts of the causes of the war" (90). Ledig, in short, disenchants war by boiling it down to its violent core.

For Ledig, wrath wrought by war is the work, not of supernatural forces, but of physical actors. In his quest to expose this all-too-human truth, Ledig employs two notions that are, ironically, inseparable from religion: an apocalypse and martyrs. Just as a phenomenology attempts to distill ideas down to their basic forms, *Vergeltung* showcases interpretations of these concepts that are rooted in the original, elemental meanings of the words. Both terms trace their etymology to ancient Greek. An apocalypse (ἀποκάλυψις) entails an uncovering; a martyr (μάρτυς) is a literal witness. To make the horrors of war plain to see, Ledig forges a bond between *Zeugen* and *überzeugen*, between witnesses and convincing. When it comes to writing about warfare, descriptions of battles and lists of statistics convey only a sense of a war's scope and scale. Firsthand accounts, however, possess a persuasive power all their own because an individual can more easily relate to them.

In *Vergeltung*, the witnesses to war, who are also participants, victims, and perpetrators, have backstories in the form of one- to two-page biographical sketches that are interspersed throughout the text. In line with the mosaic-like nature of the novel, these episodic biographies, to quote Heinz-Peter Preußer, "mark the vanishing point of the retrospective narrative and provide the distance that allows for reflection" (151). For all its importance, this individualization of characters is infrequent. In the bulk of the book, literary figures are, as Santiáñez describes them, "not subjects, but rather objects of raw destructive historical forces" (119).

The thirteen main characters in *Vergeltung* play dual roles. On the one hand, by representing various walks of life, ages, and nationalities, they are a cross section of the everyday people whom war can affect. On the other, they are testaments to war's dehumanizing effects. Apart from Sergeant Jonathan Strenehen, a downed American airman who becomes the Christ figure of the novel, people are infrequently called by their names outside of their biographies. Referred to

and reduced to their sex, profession, or rank, the characters' individual identities take a back seat to their social or military functions. Moreover, as Colette Lawson puts it, "[T]he people featured, like all objects of the narrative, become nothing more than datives of the destruction, . . . bodies to whom violence is done" (35). Instrumentalized by war, soldiers and civilians alike become subject to its inhuman influences, such as its capacity to twist people's perceptions of themselves and their environment. Among the forces alluded to by Santiáñez and Lawson are three interconnected processes that merit closer examination: time, technology, and progress. In this trio of bywords for modernity, Ledig finds illuminating religious leitmotifs that enable him to initiate a secular apocalypse (i.e., to unveil the hideous face of war); to feature largely anonymous martyrs; and to explore seemingly angelic figures in all their potentiality, fragility, and futility.

Slow-Motion Emotion: Literarily Representing How War Warps Time

Ledig captures the disorientation caused by aerial bombardment both spatially and temporally. Notably, the novel begins and ends with timestamps: "Central European Time 13:01" and "Central European Time 14:10" (*Vergeltung* 11, 177). These temporal markers create a disconnect between the time covered by the narrative and the time that it takes to narrate the story. This disparity underscores the slow-motion perception that the characters and the reader experience. Psychologically speaking, this effect corresponds to tachypsychia, a neurological condition triggered by trauma, in which observers experience events at a sped up or slowed pace. According to media psychologist Gareth Schott, this phenomenon "is found in accounts given by perpetrators, victims, and witnesses of violence, when individuals are around, or placed in 'life or death' situations" (181).

To uncover the ways in which war warps witnesses' awareness of time, Ledig relies on a writing style that is, in a word, staccato (Sebald 109; Radvan 166; Santiáñez 118). With the exceptions of the introduction and the conclusion of the novel, as Gabriele Hundrieser reminds readers, "the account oscillates back and forth between the different narrative fragments in quick, hard cuts" (369). In Florian Hoppe's estimation, the upshot of these sharp breaks is that "the temporal continuity of the narrative" as a whole becomes less important (22–23). As a result, the disjointed narrative threads of the thirteen characters scramble any semblance of a cohesive, predictable reality and thereby thrust readers into, as Santiáñez puts

it, "a situation similar to the one experienced by the disoriented and panic ridden characters of *Vergeltung*" (118).

Among these characters, there are 300 occupants of an air-raid shelter, all of whom, like twelve of the central figures, remain more or less nameless in the main narrative. In a telling scene that illustrates how trauma can distort time, an anonymous man in the bunker asks if they should dig themselves out. A "voice out of the gloom" resounds with the answer: "Of course. . . . We've been waiting for four hours." Immediately—"as if shot out of a pistol"—a character identified as "the widow" asks the voice, "How do you know that?" After the voice claims to have a watch, the widow makes her displeasure known by saying, "We ask a hundred times what time it is, and she's got an alarm clock." When ordered to show them the timepiece, the unknown woman refuses: "You can't see it!" Obviously anxious, the widow says, "Hear. . . . Let us hear it." The voice responds with a mocking "Tick, tock, . . . Tick, tock!" (*Vergeltung* 76). The occupants of the air-raid shelter inhabit a world in which time flows differently. They have not been waiting for an hour, let alone four. Nevertheless, the widow desperately clings to a conception of time which war has suspended. She wants to see or hear the nonexistent alarm clock because it is a symbol of a secure, predictable environment. Mechanized time, one of the hallmarks of industrial society, is a common frame of reference that modern people use to make sense of our surroundings and order daily life. War, however, has rendered the comforting, orderly ticking of time moot as well as mute. This effect is accentuated later in *Vergeltung*, when an old man trapped under the rubble with a young girl succumbs to his injuries after raping her. The narrator describes the death of this depraved individual as "like a clock that suddenly stops" (158). By the end of the novel, the young girl perishes, too.

Summarizing such a shocking scene with a mechanical turn of phrase is complicated by the fact that there is no moral commentary on the appalling situation. For a literary work that appeared only eleven years after the end of the Second World War, creative choices of this kind no doubt contributed to the overwhelmingly negative reception of the novel when it was first published in 1956. Ledig, however, did not write to moralize or to absolve. Rather, he sought to portray Germans' wartime suffering and violence in experiential terms, in matter-of-fact language that did not imbue bodily harm and bloodshed with any higher meaning. In doing so, he served as a witness who could, as Brad Prager argues, "testify for those who themselves did not live through the trauma," like the girl (310).

No *Deus* in the *Machina*:
The Dehumanizing Effects of Wartime Technology

In addition to emphasizing the effect of war on the cognitive experience of time, Ledig's apocalypse is animated by a second leitmotif: the mechanization of mankind by the technology of modern war. Throughout the novel, he demonstrates how technological automation robs human beings of their autonomy and individuality. As victims and perpetrators of this phenomenon, individuals in Ledig's phenomenology are subsumed by the group and become interchangeable cogs in a vast war machine. In a macabre metamorphosis, an anti-aircraft unit explicitly transforms "into a machine" when the loader sounds the alarm (*Vergeltung* 39). German soldiers also move "like a machine" (45, 115, 155). As flesh and blood disappear behind metal and oil, a German technician at his post cannot fathom what he witnesses in the distance: "'Bomber stream, six hundred meters wide, thirty kilometers long.' . . . The radio operator peered through the crack of the door [and] into the sky. The bombers flew in V-formation, like wild ducks. . . . He looked at the dots. He could not imagine that men were sitting in them" (51).

Without empathy or compunction, people act as relentless machines, repeating the same destructive actions over and over. Sergeant Strenehen gets to the heart of this problem of automaticity as he is descending to earth in his parachute after being shot down. Under heavy fire, he thinks to himself, "if they are people, they will stop now" (*Vergeltung* 55). The anti-aircraft batteries do not stop shooting, however, because the men who man them have lost their humanity. Through these witnesses to war, these martyrs to modernity run amok, Ledig opens the reader's eyes to what Hoppe calls the "conflicts of the individual in technological fighting" (24).

Technology, the second leitmotif of *Vergeltung,* traces its origins to *Die Stalinorgel* (1955, translated into English by Michael Hofmann as *The Stalin Organ*), Ledig's debut novel. In this episodic text populated by largely faceless characters, German and Russian forces fight over a swampy hill outside of Leningrad. Regardless of their allegiance, troops are similarly labeled as "mechanical," "only a machine," or "an unfeeling machine" (*Die Stalinorgel* 61, 65, 109, 134). In both novels, technology has deprived combatants of their autonomy and transformed them into tools of war. Even though the hierarchy and the chain of command that define a soldier's life contribute to growing dehumanization, this process is not confined to the military. Noncombatants, too, have fallen under the dark spell

of the machine. The previously mentioned 300 occupants of the air-raid shelter in *Vergeltung* provide a perfect example of this phenomenon. Throughout the text, there are individual descriptions of these men, women, and children. More significantly, however, the narrator designates the trapped civilians as a unit, a kind of superorganism that functions like a machine. In a subtle nod to the 300 Spartans at the Battle of Thermopylae (480 BCE), seven sentences in the narrative begin with "300 people." Boxed into an air-raid shelter, this collectivized group performs mechanical actions simultaneously—e.g., they "turned their heads"; "breathed in time"; "ducked"; and "straightened their clothes" (114, 146, 156, 157). These synchronous reactions remind the reader that the members of this society are no longer masters of their own actions. Subject to destructive forces beyond their control, they are reduced to responding to environmental stimuli.

In Ledig's work, everyday people have become victims of circumstances that are worlds apart from the vaunted heroism of Antiquity. Their modern experiences, visceral as they are vicious, stand in stark contrast to the rosy rhetoric of the Nazi regime, which uses words like "fatherland, heroism, tradition, [and] honor" to conjure up an ancient past steeped in military glory (*Vergeltung* 96). The fatal attraction of such loaded language is a theme that appears in the works of other postwar German writers, most notably Heinrich Böll, whose short story "Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa . . ." (1950, translated as "Stranger, Bear Word to the Spartans We . . .") underscores how the Nazis used and abused classical history, like the 300 Spartan hoplites eulogized in the title, to ideologically indoctrinate students into fighting and dying in a war of conquest.

The difference between Böll and Ledig is an eschatological one. As multiple religious allusions to the New Testament in "Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa…" attest, Böll was an eternal optimist (201). For Böll, violence is the price to pay for hubris and a necessary evil for renewal. To his mind, the carnage of war paved the way for spiritual rebirth. Ledig had a completely different interpretation of wartime destruction. Seeing no *deus* in the *machina*, he paints a picture of war without mercy or grace. As the narrator bluntly states: "Anyone who still whimpered was silenced. Whoever screamed still screamed in vain. Technology shattered technology" (*Vergeltung* 42). Frantic prayers to escape the hell falling from heaven go unanswered in *Vergeltung* because technology has eclipsed theology.

Such laconic language confronts the reader with the inescapable effect of technology on war. In the case of World War II, strategic bombing took the relationship between men and machines to dizzying new heights. As Sönke

Neitzel and Harald Welzer conclude in their discussion of "the deep connection between modern industrial labor and the labor of war," the Second World War "was a war of technicians and engineers, pilots, radio operators, and mechanics" (192). *Vergeltung* scrutinizes technology, the most revolutionary development of the war. Ledig avoids metaphorical turns of phrase because they would lessen the perceived severity of the violence. In doing so, Ledig channels a creative spirit that is quintessentially Benjaminian. As Martin Jay maintains, Walter Benjamin "was resolutely against . . . the aestheticization of destructive technology that he saw in the postwar writings of Jünger and other 'reactionary modernists'" (19). In similar way to Benjamin, Ledig sees the instruments of war as simple tools in the hands of culpable human actors.

Vergeltung emphasizes how technology has accelerated and exacerbated violence to demonstrate that modernity has not only mechanized mankind but also driven humanity's belief in the divine into doubt and darkness. For many of the main characters, the physical destruction that they witness triggers a psychological struggle turned personal apocalypse. They experience a crushing crisis of faith when faced with what Radvan pinpoints as "the question of a God in existentially dangerous situations" (175). With his characters' belief in God shaken or shattered, Ledig strips away the veneer of the New Testament, which delivers a message of hope and salvation, to expose the violence and doom of the Old Testament. Ledig is not as interested in erasing religious belief, however, as he is in, as Lawson maintains, "shattering of blind faith in instrumental progress" (39). He wants to show, in other words, that humans' destructive nature still lurks behind the carefully crafted façade of civilization.

Divorcing the Dead from the Divine:
Benjamin's Storm of Progress, Ledig's Hurricane of Vengeance

In *Vergeltung*, catastrophic devastation creates a breeding ground for anarchy as the characters' predictable, civilized existence devolves into a chaotic fight for survival. The reader observes how people become, to borrow another poignant phrase from Lawson, "nomadic gatherers, thrust back to an unrecognizable state outside of civilization" (37). Lawson's bleak assessment mirrors that of W. G. Sebald. In characterizing the relationship between the air war and German literature, Sebald imagines a "necropolis of a strange, incomprehensible people, torn from their civil existence and history, thrown back to the development stage of

homeless gatherers" (47). Although such a scene evokes a religious end of the world, Sebald and Ledig are more concerned with secular affairs, above all the concept of progress. This third leitmotif of *Vergeltung* is indispensable to Ledig as well as Sebald. Both writers, in fact, use Benjamin's ideas as a lens to focus their critiques of progress. Ledig problematizes progress in a way that anticipates what Sebald calls "a natural history of destruction," the first principle of his controversial work *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (43). In Sebald's view, because the destruction caused by aerial bombardment did not align with the larger narrative of historical progress, postwar German writers often resorted to figurative language to obscure the devastation. Ledig is no friend of the contrived clichés that his contemporaries used, in Sebald's estimation, "to cover up and neutralize experiences that go beyond one's comprehension" (34). As far as this approach goes, Lawson convincingly argues that "Ledig's narrative strategy foretells Sebald's own in the narrative passages of *Luftkrieg und Literatur*" (36).

As conveyed in the conclusions of *Luftkrieg und Literatur* as well as *Vergeltung*, both Sebald and Ledig echo Walter Benjamin's thoughts on progress. Sebald, in fact, closes his essay with a long quotation from Benjamin:

> He [the angel] would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has gotten caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. That which we call progress is this storm. (80)

In contrast to this explicit acknowledgement in *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, *Vergeltung* implicitly overlaps with Benjamin's philosophy. Sebald *invokes*, while Ledig *evokes*. From the outset of his novel, Ledig makes it abundantly clear that he, in a way that aligns with Jay's assessment of Benjamin, "could not stomach the religious rhetoric of Resurrection employed by certain artists after the [world] war[s] to give meaning to those who died" (19). The opening paragraph of *Vergeltung* is a microcosm of this attitude in action:

> Let the little children come to me—When the first bomb fell, the air pressure hurled the dead children against the wall. They had suffocated in a basement the day before yesterday. They had been laid in the graveyard because their fathers were fighting at the front and their mothers had to be found first. Only one was found. But she was crushed under the rubble. This was what vengeance looked like. (11)

The initial reference to Matthew 19:14, in which Jesus calls little children to him and the kingdom of heaven, turns out to be part of a bait-and-switch. This biblical allusion to the grace of innocents immediately gives way to a wasteland populated by the asphyxiated corpses of noncombatants. Instead of wrapping the women and children in the religious rhetoric of resurrection, the narrator deliberately divorces the dead from the divine.

With the dead disenchanted, Ledig has free reign to confront the reader with more nightmarish scenes of death divested of its spiritual significance. Midway through the novel, a Russian prisoner of war named Nikolai Petrowitsch happens upon a toppled statue while wandering around the city during the air raid. The narrator casts the mangled mass of metal in a martial light. "A monument pedestal stood in front of him [Nikolai]. Tattered camouflage netting lay around it along with a fallen figure. It was made of metal. A man with a cape. His arm was holding something. That was broken off" (*Vergeltung* 100). With the scene set for a small, symbolic act of vengeance, "Nikolai stepped closer, unzipped his pants. His stream of urine splashed into the figure's face…. When he was finished, he sat on the metal man's feet. He wore solid boots" (100). No sooner has traditional memorialization of the dead been knocked off its pedestal and defaced, Ledig returns to his impetus for writing, death:

> It sounded as if a landslide were starting. The ground shook. Chunks of wall rolled down to his feet, then the storm drove the fumes further. . . . Slowly, he strolled across the street, over rubble and smoldering piles. Nikolai Petrovich had died alive. He no longer dreamed of bread. Dead people don't go hungry. (*Vergeltung* 101)

This haunting passage harkens back to stark statements at the beginning of the novel's narrative, such as "the dead don't need watches" and "the dead don't drink" (18, 25). Taken together, these conspicuous *memento mori* sprinkled throughout are variations on the theme introduced in the dedication, which reads "to a dead woman whom I never saw while I was living" (9). From the opening lines of *Vergeltung*, Ledig evinces what Jay terms an "insistence on not letting the dead rest in peace," a creative choice that connects his work with the hallmark of Benjamin's "celebrated critique of historicist attitudes towards the past" (17). Like Benjamin before him, Ledig seeks to undermine abiding faith in progress by challenging historicists' assumption about an uninterrupted connection between past and present. To do so, he fashions a natural history of destruction that, through the

Christ figure of Sergeant Jonathan Strenehen descending from the heavens, brings humanistic dreams of uplifting progress crashing down to earth.

The disenchantment of physical bodies in the first paragraph of *Vergeltung* paves the way for natural forces unleashed by the air raid to create a literal and spiritual vacuum. In the second paragraph of the novel, the line, "It sounded as if a hurricane were beginning," foreshadows the coming destruction that will suck the oxygen out of the city and suffocate civilians in their shelters (*Vergeltung* 11). Shortly thereafter, the reader learns that Strenehen, the bombardier, purposely releases the plane's payload prematurely. He targets the graveyard in the hope that "there [the payload] would hit only the dead," a decision that angers the captain commanding the bomber (12). Much as Strenehen, like Benjamin's angel of history, might have preferred to wake the dead instead of killing the living, the American is catapulted into chaos after his bomber is blasted out of the sky. In the description of him bailing out of his plane, the narrator avoids lofty language and reminds the reader that what goes up must come down. "There were no images of the past, no thoughts of the future. There was only a body that was flying through the air" (47).

In the space of two sentences, Ledig deprives Strenehen of his personal identity, that is to say, his past experiences and future ambitions, and reduces him to a physical body parachuting through the earthly element of air. This disenchantment undermines the religious significance implicit in the downed airman's character. With Hebraic and Germanic roots, his first and last names—Jonathan Strenehen—literally mean "God has given strength." Tempting as it may be to see the compassionate American as an angel with clipped wings, he is but flesh and blood subject to the law of gravity. When Strenehen touches down, incendiaries have caused not only a storm but the hurricane mentioned at the outset. In the narrator's words, "twenty minutes later, the storm became a hurricane" (56). By the end of *Vergeltung*, this hurricane has laid waste to the city. As the narrator summarizes the devastation in the two-page conclusion of the novel, the narrative ends on a Benjaminian note: "Progress destroyed the past and the future. . . . Vengeance did its work. It was unstoppable. Only the Last Judgement [das Jüngste Gericht]. It was not that" (177–78).

In wrapping up the narrative, Ledig performs some literary sleight of hand. The word "verrichtete" (did, carried out) amplifies the word "vernichtete" (destroyed). Through the structure of the two sentences and their rhyming verbs, he portrays vengeance as an extension of progress. If progress is a storm, then its

evolved form, vengeance, is a hurricane. This vengeance, however, is summarily stripped of its Christian connotations. In the final two sentences, Ledig precludes a religious interpretation of the text by ruling out the Last Judgement, a concept that features prominently in the Gospel of Matthew.

In making this pronouncement, the narrator seems to play the role of a judge. At the same time, the word *Gericht* (court) is a subtle reminder that the narrator, like Ledig himself, is also a witness. *Zeuge* (witness) comes from *ziehen* (to pull, to summon), an action that has a precise meaning in a legal setting. A witness is a *vor Gericht gezogene Person*, an individual who is summoned to deliver public testimony and whose experience and expertise informs the judgement of a court ("Duden"). For his part, Ledig felt the ferocity of modern warfare, first as a soldier on the Eastern Front and later as an armaments worker during bombing raids on Munich. These dissonant perspectives, combined with his dissident political views, made him, as Jan-Pieter Barbian soberingly says, a postwar "outsider, who, in three novels, tried to come to terms with his personal experiences during the Second World War" (358). This idea of witness testimony, the very idea that is fundamental to Ledig's literary approach, also helps situate *Vergeltung* in the context of its time and its then-controversial subject matter.

Seeing with Blinding Sight: Ledig as the Diogenes of Postwar Germany

Gripping as Ledig's narrative is, *Vergeltung* was largely forgotten for more than four decades. Even Sebald, a supposed expert on literary depictions of aerial warfare, had never heard of Ledig, who was not so much as mentioned in the 1997 lectures that became *Luftkrieg und Literatur*. After critics made him aware of this glaring oversight, Sebald acknowledged Ledig's importance and admitted that he was a "wrongly forgotten" writer (109). Despite this initial omission, in *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Sebald identifies the stock character that Ledig ended up playing in postwar Germany. As Lawson puts it, "Ledig suffered the fate of the doomed messenger Sebald describes, who is compelled to speak of what he has seen in Hamburg, but whose audience then kills him" (40).

A fitting example of this "messenger in a tragedy," to use Sebald's phrase, is *der tolle Mensch* (the madman), a figure who first appears in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882, *The Gay Science*) by Friedrich Nietzsche (63). Ironically inverting the role of an angel as a divine herald, *der tolle Mensch* is the mouthpiece for Nietzsche's

immortal line, "God is dead" (127). After the protagonist delivers this news to a group of people assembled in a marketplace, *der tolle Mensch* notices that his listeners "fell silent and looked disconcertedly at him" (127). He then realizes that they are not mentally prepared to accept the awful truth that God is dead. "I come too early; it's not my time yet. This awful event is still on its way and spreading," concludes the doomed messenger (127).

The message of *Vergeltung*—that people alone are responsible for the horrors of war—came too soon. Because the bombing of cities was still a painfully present memory for the average German in the 1950s, Ledig became a modern Diogenes, the Greek philosopher on whom *der tolle Mensch* is based. Like his ancient counterpart, Ledig shone a lantern in the face of society but found few who were as brutally honest as he.

This moniker is accurate in more ways than one. The term maverick traces its origins to cattle ranching in nineteenth-century America. As the original meaning of the word suggests, Ledig refused to be branded. Even though war left him disfigured and dismembered, he did not let fire leave a symbolic mark. True to himself and his artistic vision, sentimentality and salvation have no place in his work. This steadfast refusal to give his shocking stories happy endings makes Ledig's writing as sobering as it is jarring. It is this numbing writing style that prompted a critic for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* to dismiss *Vergeltung* as "intentionally macabre horror painting" in a review from November 22, 1956 (Hage 46).

This scathing critique could just as easily have been an initial reaction to *Guernica*. Like Picasso's masterpiece, *Vergeltung* is decidedly pessimistic. Nothing positive emerges from the negative experiences. No phoenix rises from the ashes. The clouds that the storm of progress leaves in its wake do not have silver linings. By broaching a taboo subject—the heinous acts that were done by and to Germans from all walks of life during the war—Ledig challenged his fellow citizens with an issue that hit too close to home. In urban landscapes defined by the rubble caused by strategic bombing, Germans were understandably averse to literature that reminded them of what they wanted to forget. Preferring to look to the future and rebuild, they had no desire to recall the ghastly sights that they had witnessed only ten to fifteen years before.

After surviving the kinds of events described in *Vergeltung*, Ledig turned to writing, perhaps as a coping mechanism that allowed him to speak for the dead and to put the unspeakable into words. In doing so, this maverick author produced prose that is as experimental as it is experiential. This unique novel offers the reader

no consolation, no hint that a higher power will save people from themselves. The wrath that we have wrought is ours and ours alone. In the end, the man-made ruin does not distinguish between innocent and guilty or between good and evil. The bombs fall on the just and the unjust just the same.

In 1940, just a few short years before incendiaries from the sky created enormous pockets of hell on earth, Benjamin fashioned a versatile metaphor that could be reinterpreted to capture the spiritual shockwaves of strategic bombing. Whereas Benjamin's angel of history heralds the destruction that progress can unleash, the works of popular postwar German writers, like Heinrich Böll's posthumously published *Der Engel schwieg* (1950/1992, *The Silent Angel*), referenced angels to give their readers a renewed sense of purpose and hope for spiritual rebirth. In Ledig's literary universe, however, the angels are not only silent. At best, they are deaf. At worst, they are absent.

Although the American poet Richard Eberhart hauntingly distilled strategic bombing into verse in "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment" (1944), a stanza from one his of postwar poems, "Blessed Are the Angels in Heaven," resonates even better with the spirit of *Vergeltung*:

> And the angels in heaven who are blessed
> Will not hear him calling, calling
> For they have nothing to do with us
> And bind us to our barking heritage. (358)

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The Songs of the Soviet-Afghan Campaign in Post-Soviet Popular Culture

FROM FOLKLORE TO PROPAGANDA

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A great deal about recent Russian history can be gleaned from the evolution of the unofficial Russian songs written by soldiers who served in the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989). Created primarily in opposition to the official military musical canon of the Soviet years, these songs commented on such taboo subjects as romance with local women, veterans' trauma, and criticisms of a war they saw as futile and of an oppressive political system they were charged with protecting. Every song expresses the loss, fear, courage, and friendship that the soldiers experienced in Afghanistan. Unofficially recorded and smuggled into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) through various underground channels, they allowed listeners to hear their truth about the war, which was covered by a veil of secrets and rumors, yet at the same time, to acknowledge the heroism and self-sacrifice of Soviet soldiers fighting in a foreign country. Throughout the first post-Soviet decades, the corpus of so-called Afghan songs (*afganskie pesni* in Russian) has undergone various transformations before finding their way into the official neo-military discourse of Russian leader Vladimir Putin's regime, gradually subverting its original meaning and becoming an integral part of the state propaganda.

Social and Political Background During the Late Soviet Era

In late December 1979, the Soviet Union intervened in support of the Afghan communist government in its conflict with anti-communist Muslim guerrillas and

remained in Afghanistan until mid-February 1989. Afghanistan lies on the borders of South, Central, and Southwest Asia, and at the same time at the southern borders of what was then the Soviet Union. Because of this geopolitical position, the Soviet government had a keen interest in controlling Afghanistan's domestic political situation. In December 1978, the Afghan government signed a treaty of cooperation and friendship with the Soviet Union. This same treaty was used by the Soviet Union a year later as a justification for direct military intervention (Kowalczyk 5–7). Artemy Kalinovsky states, "The goal of the invasion was to secure infrastructure, free up the Afghan army to conduct raids and operations, and enable the new government to function. Soviet leaders did not envision their army being directly involved in battle after the initial invasion—they were there just to prop up the military of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan" (25). The Afghan campaign started in the last years of stagnation of the era of Leonid Brezhnev, who served as general secretary from 1964 until his death in 1982, and lasted until the final phase of *perestroika*, the period of Mikhail Gorbachev's political and economic reforms that led to the democratization of the Soviet state, such as the freedom of the press and relative economic freedoms, including allowing small private business enterprises, called co-ops. (Gorbachev served as the last leader of the Soviet Union, from 1985 until its dissolution in 1991.) Despite ten years of armed conflict (1979–1989), the Soviet army was not successful in defeating the armed opposition. What is more, the pro-Soviet Afghan government was overthrown in 1992.

The West at the time of the invasion condemned the Soviet involvement, calling the USSR's military campaign in Afghanistan an illegal incursion. For several years, the Soviet Union ignored the voices of world opinion, which opposed its presence in Afghanistan. Only after Gorbachev came to power in 1985 did Soviet leaders decide to withdraw troops because of the rising costs of war and the deepening economic difficulties (Kadykało 50).

A critical attitude towards this war still prevails in the West. Starting with the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014, many Western voices have been comparing the Afghan campaign to the ongoing war in Ukraine, especially since both wars have never been officially recognized as wars in Russia. Such a perspective can be seen in Alan Taylor's 2014 article:

> Nearly twenty-five years ago, the Soviet Union pulled its last troops out of Afghanistan, ending more than nine years of direct involvement and occupation. In short order, nearly 100,000 Soviet soldiers took control of major cities and highways. The rebellion was swift and broad, and the Soviets dealt harshly with

the Mujahideen rebels and those who supported them, leveling entire villages to deny safe havens to their enemy. In the brutal nine-year conflict, an estimated one million civilians were killed, as well as 90,000 Mujahideen fighters, 18,000 Afghan troops, and 14,500 Soviet soldiers. Civil war raged after the withdrawal, setting the stage for the Taliban's takeover of the country in 1996. As NATO troops move toward their final withdrawal this year, Afghans worry about what will come next, and Russian involvement in neighboring Ukraine's rebellion has the world's attention, it is worth looking back at the Soviet-Afghan conflict that ended a quarter-century ago. (1)

   During perestroika, similar views also started to appear in the USSR. It can be argued that an emotional speech by dissident Andrei Sakharov at the First Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow in 1989 ignited the strongly negative views of the Afghan war. Immediately following the speech, the media started to interpret the outcome of the war, especially the Soviet decision to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan, as a military defeat. The Soviet press at this time sharply criticized the incursion into Afghanistan. Newspapers and TV programs labeled the war a failure that had taken many lives meaninglessly. Since the Soviet media was highly controlled by the state in the early 1980s and for most of the USSR's existence, such criticisms were certainly new and unexpected. They established a critique of the war that continued to dominate in the mass media until the beginning of the twenty-first century.

   As Holly Myers notes in her article "Svetlana Aleksievich's Changing Narrative of the Soviet-Afghan War in *Zinky Boys*," unlike the Russian Civil War (1918–1920) or Russia's participation in World War II (1941–1945), the Soviet-Afghan War did not gain a stable narrative in Russian culture (330–31). As a result, its literary representations, and interpretations of these representations, have been especially sensitive to evolving political realities and agendas. During the 1990s, the Afghan War's image in people's memory was replaced by the then-ongoing war in Chechnya, which, under the circumstances of that time, was much more openly commented upon and discussed in the media than the Soviet-Afghan War had been. (The war in Chechnya had two phases: the First Chechen War, which lasted from 1994 to 1996, and the Second Chechen War, which lasted from 1999 to 2009.)

   An important factor in the evolution of the popular attitude toward the Soviet-Afghan war was not linked directly to the war itself, but to a strongly negative stereotypical image of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan that became

widespread in Russia in the early 1990s. As mentioned earlier, certain press freedoms introduced by Gorbachev, followed by a lack of censorship of the media during the early post-Soviet period, made it possible to publish without restricting negative views, not only about the war, but also about its veterans. The critique of soldiers' behavior in Afghanistan formed in public opinion an image of *afgantsy* (the widely used Russian term for Soviet-Afghan war veterans) as pogromists who were accustomed to ravaging, raping, and robbing. In the early 1990s, Soviet-Afghan veterans started facing allegations of aggressive cruelty toward Afghan civilians that the media claimed often prompted similarly brutal behavior toward their own people after the soldiers returned home. Mass media of the early 1990s depicted soldiers returning from Afghanistan as mentally ill and brainwashed. As a newspaper article proclaimed in 1991, "These guys are all crazy—in Afghanistan, they fought with the local people, and any war with the people, even their own people, is the war they understand the best" (Ivanov 302). Unfortunately, Western criticism has been similarly negative. In his book *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan,* Gregory Feifer claims that "thousands of young people who learned to steal and murder in Afghanistan very easily turned to a life of crime upon returning" (259).

The First Post-Soviet Decade: Soviet-Afghan Veterans and Organized Crime

In truth, the situation was more nuanced than the media presented it. While many Soviet-Afghan veterans turned to lives of crime upon returning, the primary reason for their choice was not the malicious nature of the returning soldiers but the simple fact that the only social structures that truly welcomed them in the early post-Soviet times were criminal organizations. There were several reasons behind the attraction of organized crime organizations towards *afgantsy*. First, many veterans had a rather specialized military background because they had served in the special forces, and criminal gangs desired their experience and skills. However, there were also particularly important economic reasons behind the cooperation between the veterans and organized crime. The government granted Soviet-Afghan veterans a variety of unique economic benefits, such as licenses to sell cigarettes and alcohol. Such benefits were welcomed by criminal organizations. *Afgantsy* and any businesses they owned were also tax-exempt, and this specific benefit made them desirable business partners.

Rodric Braithwaite, author of *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979–89* and a former British ambassador to Russia from 1988 to 1992, notes that a strongly critical attitude toward the war in the early post-Soviet Russian society affected the soldiers who had fought in it. Veterans of the war felt unwanted and useless, not only by the state authorities who had abandoned them and neglected their legacy after the disintegration of the USSR, but also by the society as a whole. A difficult experience for soldiers returning home, Braithwaite notes, was a discrepancy between the suffering they had endured while fulfilling their duty, and the indifference or even hostility they encountered from society upon return (245). Braithwaite writes, "The contrast between the reality of the fighting and the almost total inability of the civilians to understand what was really going on was sometimes too much to bear" (249). The veterans regarded the negative attitude of the public as distorted, unfair, and purposely misleading. They felt that they had been betrayed by the country they had served and were especially disappointed because that country ceased to exist soon after the war ended. These feelings prompted the formation of the so-called Soviet-Afghan legacy, or the belief that all veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war, wherever they live, were still part of one brotherhood who would always help each other in times of need. As a result, during the early 1990s, Afghan veteran clubs and organizations formed all over Russia, as well as in other parts of the post-Soviet space.

Over the first decade of post-Soviet Russian history, however, quite a few of these organizations merged with or developed into criminal groups. T. H. Rigby notes that there has been much in the experience of *afgantsy* to bind them together. After the war, it was difficult for the soldiers to find their place in society, which resulted in the fact that they began to have a devastating impact on it. The attitude of the public towards them was at best ambivalent, and they often felt embittered by the contrast between what had been demanded of them and the cynical materialism and corruption of life back home. Small wonder that they tended to band together for mutual solace and protection and that they sometimes formed vigilante groups that took the law into their own hands (Rigby 77). The same sentiments can be seen in *Eburg*, a nonfiction book by Alexei Ivanov, a famous contemporary Russian writer, which concentrates on the history of the author's native city, Ekaterinburg:

> When the last Soviet tanks rolled across the bridge from Hairatan to Termez, there were about 4,000 Afghans in Sverdlovsk. Like all young people, they had

nothing—no work, no education, but the experience of Afghanistan sharpened their thirst for justice and became a topic on which they could unite to carve out a place in the sun for themselves. Initially, the Soviet-Afghan veteran communities were just veteran organizations that demanded the usual social benefits from the authorities. Yet the ex-soldiers, tightly connected, and quite desperate, soon proved to be waiting for a new action—they had nothing to lose. (307)[1,2]

The first official chapter of the Soviet-Afghan veteran fraternity, the Union of Afghan Veterans, was founded in 1991 in Ekaterinburg, the city that lost the largest number of men, 240, in the war. In 1992–1993, however, the union evolved into one of the three most powerful criminal groups in all of Russia. In 1992, the Soviet-Afghan veteran gang took control of the largest unofficial city market, a Sunday fair where people chaotically sold everything from CDs to clothes. By 1997, the market had developed into one of the three largest malls in Russia, totally controlled and owned by an *afgantsy* organization fully tax-exempt. A year later, the first leader and the founder of the union, Viktor Lebedev, was killed in the ongoing criminal wars between various city gangs. His killer has never been officially caught, yet rumors claimed that he was murdered by a fellow *afgantsy* and close friend who worked as a hired killer for another criminal group. The murder of Lebedev has become proof for many veterans that the largely idealistic image of the Soviet-Afghan veteran did not survive the Russian "wild nineties," a term often used to define the first decade of post-Soviet capitalism, characterized by economic instability and organized crime.

Transforming the Soviet-Afghan Veteran Idea in the State Ideology of Putin's Russia

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Vladimir Putin's government has gradually eliminated the negative image of the Afghan campaign from state-controlled media. After a decade of relative freedom in the 1990s, under Putin's leadership during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, government control over the media has gradually increased. As Braithwaite claims, "Vladimir Putin restored a sense of pride in the history of Russia in the twentieth century,

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1. Когда последние советские танки прокатились по мосту из Хайратона в Термез, в Свердловске насчитывалось около 4000 «афганцев». Как и у всех молодых, у них ничего не было—ни работы, ни образования, но опыт Афгана обострил их жажду справедливости и стал той темой, по которой можно объединиться, чтобы выбить себе место под солнцем. Изначально сообщества «афганцев» были «солдатскими» и требовали от властей обычных социальных льгот. Солдаты оказались лёгкими на подъём, сплочёнными и отчаянными—терять-то им было нечего (307).

2. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

and especially the history of the Soviet Union. Patriotism and the glory of Russia's military history began to be emphasized. Consequently, the war in Afghanistan started to be looked at as a heroic episode, during which the soldiers fulfilled their military duty and defended the interests of the Soviet homeland" (324). Feifer also notes that many Russians' attitudes toward the war in Afghanistan have changed. Knowing that the country is rich in raw materials, the people wanted a new confrontation with the West in the twenty-first century and a chance to regain Russia's lost position in the world (324). Over the last two decades, the Chechen wars of Boris Yeltsin's government (1991–1999) have gradually started to be viewed as lost and failed. By contrast, the Afghan events are now interpreted not as a pointless campaign of groundless aggression but as a fully justified war aimed at protecting the Central Asian borders from the military dominance of the United States. In this new interpretation, Soviet soldiers fought to protect Afghan society from a fanatical religious tyranny, which had been imposed on the country with the full support of the American government. The war is also now seen as a campaign that has brought prosperity to the people of Afghanistan. The public has also gradually rejected the initial interpretation of the war's outcome. Since Soviet troops had not lost but simply decided to withdraw their forces, the Afghan campaign is now considered a victory, rather than defeat.

Afganskie pesni: The Songs of Afghan War from the 1980s to the 1990s

Anna Kadykało notes that stable structures of collective identity need historical components—elements of real history—to build a fictional genesis of the current situation. Social transformations in post-Soviet Russian society have been accompanied by noticeable tensions in the structure of collective identity. This phenomenon is evidenced, Kadykało believes, by the strengthening of mass interest in the past and the attempts to answer the following questions: "Who are we?" and "What can we be proud of, and what causes our shame?" among other questions (56). As Kadykało asserts, among the most important vessels of memory in post-Soviet society have been the songs of Soviet soldiers fighting in Afghanistan (67). The evolution of Soviet-Afghan veteran songs from the 1980s to the present can serve as a strong example of the general cultural processes that Russian society has undergone for more than thirty years, from the final years of the Soviet Union through the turbulent and chaotic nineties to the contemporary Russian regime.

As previously noted, the Soviet-Afghan veterans' songs comprise a relatively large body of unofficial and mostly amateur songs written by soldiers serving in the Afghan campaign. Kadykało believes that the songs of Soviet soldiers fighting in Afghanistan are among the most important vehicles of memory about the war through which soldiers' folklore has been created, containing such motifs as fatigue from fighting, memories of severe battles, the desire to survive and return home as soon as possible, uncertainty about the future, but also courage and heroism. They reflect the moods, feelings, and realities of the war (67–68).[3]

Soviet-Afghan veterans' songs can be characterized as being at the intersection of city folk ballads, known in Russian as street or yard songs (*dvorovye pesni*), the so-called bardic songs, and early Soviet underground rock in the style of such groups as Kino. The bardic songs probably need their own explanation. The term "bard," taken from the medieval tradition, also describes singer-songwriters in the late Soviet years. Bards were never part of the so-called "mainstream" while the USSR existed, in that they rarely made a career out of their music and had very few official recordings, but they were extremely popular, nevertheless. Musically, Soviet-Afghan veterans' songs were written primarily in the style of the city folk ballads mentioned above. However, various bards differed in style. Many of their songs were likely influenced by the work of Vladimir Vysotsky, known for his strongly pronounced praise of war heroism, tributes to the courage of Russian athletes and mountain climbers, and emphasis on rather stereotypical masculinity, which at the same time was to a great extent combined with a disguised critique of the Communist regime. Bardic songs have been known for their intimate voice, which differed profoundly from the official canon of Soviet music. Rather than glorify the state and its people as a collective unity, bardic songs, born in the relatively liberal period of the Thaw (the brief period of limited political freedoms that followed the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953), spoke to the "little person," sharing and highlighting the individual's mundane, everyday pains and problems but simultaneously placing them in the context of the whole society. Such an intimate voice can be distinctly seen in the earliest songs written during the Afghan campaign, such as the anonymous song "Hello, Sister" (*Privet*).

Hello sister, my dear, how are you?	Привет, сестрёнка, моя родная, ну как дела,
The winter has probably swept the way home already.	Зима дороги домой наверно уж замела?
The stars are falling over Kandahar in the rays of dawn.	А звезды падают над Кандагаром в лучах зари,
Just do not tell Mom that I am in Afghanistan.	Ты только маме, что я в Афгане, не говори!
It is Saturday now, I will wash my linens, hell with the war.	Сейчас суббота, белье почищу я, и черт с войной
It smells sweaty here because boys sleep here after a hard battle.	Здесь пахнет потом, здесь спят парнишки, был трудный бой
I made a bet with my friend Oleg that he would return home.	С дружком Олегом, что он вернется держу пари,
Just do not tell Mom that I'm in Afghanistan.	Ты только маме, что я в Афгане не говори.
	(Andriyuk)

British researcher Joseph Elgar writes that music created by the soldiers who were serving in Afghanistan varied in its messaging while reflecting the soldiers' outlook, from mere ambivalence to outright opposition to the conflict (22). That is not to say there was no reinforcement of party values within the military at the time. Indeed, the songs deemed overly subversive were banned by political censorship customs officers on the frontier, who cracked down heavily on attempts to bring cassette tape recordings into the Soviet Union. Early Soviet-Afghan veterans' songs usually did not have an established author. For example, although some of the most famous Soviet-Afghan veteran songs have been attributed to Yury Slatov, these songs have been performed in many variations. They traveled from one regiment to another and were smuggled illegally into the USSR and recorded on cassette tapes that could be easily bought in Afghan cities.

Starting in the late 1980s, perestroika allowed Soviet-Afghan veteran songs to enter the cultural mainstream. In 1987–1989, amateur soldier singers—as well as professional groups like Blue Berets (Golubye Berety) and Cascade (Kaskad) that originated as amateur bands in Afghanistan—regularly performed on the TV

show *When Soldiers Sing* (*Kogda poyut soldaty*). Designed as a series of performances and musical competitions devoted to the history of Soviet military songs, the show broadcast from the second half of the 1980s to the 1990s on Channel 1, the state-sponsored channel of Russian Central Television. It was first performed in the city of Odessa in 1986 and was dedicated to the seventieth anniversary of the Soviet Army and Navy. The third round of the competition was held in Moscow in March 1987. The Blue Berets, by that time an official ensemble of the Airborne Forces, became its winners with the song "Blue of the Sky" (*Sineva*), which later became the unofficial anthem of Russian Airborne Troops and remains so until today.[4] The songs performed by the Blue Berets on *When Soldiers Sing* placed in the top ten most popular songs of 1987 in the USSR. The festival became the first event during which Soviet-Afghan veterans' songs were heard on official television.

However, during the early 1990s, Soviet-Afghan veteran songs underwent an important transformation. Their musical style increasingly shifted from bardic or rock music to the so-called *chanson,* a ballad style primarily associated with criminal folklore and culture. Through the first post-Soviet decade, this genre became widespread and popularized around Russia, performed mostly at restaurants, event halls, or night clubs frequented by criminal gangs and broadcast on a special radio station, Radio Chanson. While most scholars believe that some songs written by soldiers in Afghanistan are "overt critique[s] of the conduct and knowledge of the war from the point of view of the soldiers who served" (Elgar 23), these songs usually emphasize the heroism of the soldiers and their devotion to the country they defended abroad.

Starting from the early 1990s, the expression of these positive sentiments gradually began to prevail in the new interpretations of old songs or in the newly written songs that dealt with veterans' legacy in post-Soviet Russia while increasingly suppressing the critical notes. Simultaneously, these emotions started to be accompanied by feelings of underappreciation, betrayal, and anger toward the informational blockade and negative stereotypes created by late Soviet and especially post-Soviet media that concealed from the public veterans' heroism and loyalty to the state. For example, in the song "Medals Are Not for Sale," a veteran is confronted at the train station by an elderly lady, who scolds him, arguing that he has bought the military awards on his chest at a street market. The man does not confront the lady for fear of offending her, but he feels a powerful need to tell her about his experience in Afghanistan and justify the validity of his earned medals:

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4. The song is often performed in Russia on the Memorial Day of the Airborne Forces.

How should I answer the old woman without insulting her age?
But the excuses don't come, like they're too much to bear,
I just covered up the medal to hide it from shame,
When I remembered the Afghan sky, our transparent sky.
I could recount to this woman, how the mountains wept.
How the snows darkened with red-currant blood,
And how the swift rivers drowned the last screams,
And how the sky threw flaming MiGs to the earth.
And I could tell her more, I could tell further, how grief tears into apartments,
How a mother in anguish can't be pulled from a grave,
And then you, grandma, will understand and absolve me,
A medal like ours, you won't find or buy at any market.[5]

Similar feelings are expressed in arguably the most famous song among those discussed in this paper. Entitled "We Are Leaving" (*My ukhodim*), it was written on the eve of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and performed by Cascade, a Soviet and later Russian pop group. The song questions how the experiences of Soviet-Afghan veterans could be understood by regular people who had never shared the same failures and glories. The author frets that the history of this war would most probably be placed in the hands of a civilian scholar who, having never left the safety of his office, would present the war in a one-sided narration, not true to its real essence and legacy:

From once subdued celestial peaks,
We descend charred steps to the ground,
Through the shots of libels, slander, and lies,
We are leaving, leaving, leaving, leaving . . .
Farewell, mountains, you witnessed
Who we were in this distant land,
Let them, the office-bound scholars,
Not judge us biasedly and one-sidedly.

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5. Что ответить старушке седой? Не обидеть бы старость.
 А слова оправданья не лезут, как будто бы в тягость.
Только орден рукою прикрыл чтоб обидой не пачкать,
И вдруг вспомнил афганское небо – наше небо прозрачное.
Я бы мог рассказать той старушке как плакали горы,
Как снега вдруг краснели от яркой рябиновой крови.
И как быстрые реки топили последние крики.
И как небо швыряло на землю горящие Миги.
А еще расскажу, как врывается горе в квартиры,
Как безумную мать не могли оторвать от могилы.
И тогда ты старушка поймешь и меня не осудишь,
Ордена как у нас на базаре ни встретишь, ни купишь. (Golubye Berety, "Ordena ne prodayutsya")

Farewell, mountains, you witnessed
What we had and what we have offered,
We do not know how our hopes and sorrows,
Would live amongst the people.[6]

Over time, the intimate musical voice of the early Soviet-Afghan veteran songs increasingly changed to the loud pop accompaniment prevalent at the clubs and discos of the 1990s. The personal feeling of loss shifts in the new adaptations to a collective social post-traumatic experience, which has now been enjoyed, rather than suffered by its audience as a rite of passage into an exclusive brotherhood. Such a new undertone is probably best represented in later performances of the famous song "Black Tulip" (*Cherny Tul'pan*). "Black Tulip" is an exception to most songs discussed here because it was not written by a soldier who actively served in Afghanistan but by the popular Russian singer Alexander Rozenbaum. Rozenbaum visited various military bases in Afghanistan in the late 1980s, and, following his trip to the country, wrote the song sometime between 1987 and 1989 as a poetic tribute to the fallen soldiers. Black tulips are known in the traditional Afghan folklore as a flower of death, and the term started to be used during the war as a nickname for the military planes that transported the bodies of the fallen soldiers back to the USSR.[7] Rozenbaum, who started his career as a bardic singer, became in the 1990s one of the most popular singer-songwriters, favored by the so-called gangster and mafia nouveau-riche audience called "New Russians" by the general public. By the end of the 1990s, "Black Tulip" became the tribute not only to the fallen soldiers but also to those veterans who had been killed in Russian gang wars or died in prison, sometimes far from their hometowns:[8]

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6. С покорённых однажды небесных вершин
По ступеням обугленным на землю сходим.
Сквозь прицельные залпы наветов и лжи
Мы уходим, уходим, уходим, уходим...
Прощайте, горы, вам видней
Кем были мы в краю далёком,
Пускай не судит однобоко
Нас кабинетный грамотей.
Прощайте, горы, вам видней
Что мы имели, что отдали
Надежды наши и печали
Как уживутся средь людей. (Kaskad [Cascade]. "My ukhodim—Afganistan")

7. The most famous memorial that commemorates the soldiers who have fallen in Afghanistan, located in Ekaterinburg, most probably borrowed its name, *Black Tulip*, not from the original nickname for the ill-fated planes but from Rozenbaum's song.

8. See, for example, the video clip created by Rozenbaum in 1995. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCCpVeqhcNE. (Last accessed on 01.19.2024).

In Shindand, Kandahar and Bagram
We will again put a heavy stone on our souls.
We will again carry the heroes back to the motherland,
These 20-year-old heroes for whom we dig graves.[9]

The Amorphous War and the Cultural Mythology of Putin's Russia

In the middle of the second decade of Putin's rule, Russian cultural ideology has been slowly yet clearly moving toward a new confrontation with the West. Starting from the mid-2000s—and especially after 2014, the beginning of the conflict in Donbas and the Russian annexation of Crimea—Putin's ideology has evolved increasingly to one centered on the dissolution of the USSR as a tragedy. More than once, Putin himself called the fall of the Soviet state the most terrible geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century. Over these years Russian culture, and in particular, Russian music, had gradually formed an image of one amorphous war, a largely mythological narrative that borrows and unites the elements from all Russian and Soviet wars ever fought. In none of the texts that built upon this image is this war ever named, yet it is always justified by the presence of an anonymous foreign aggressor.[10]

In 2010, Russia started the Immortal Regiment, an annual commemoration originally intended to memorialize the fallen heroes and veterans of the Great Patriotic War, which dates from 1941, the year Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, till 1945 when the war in Europe ended.[11] However, as WWII veterans pass away, the veterans of the Afghanistan campaign replace them at memorial ceremonies that occur around the country on Victory Day, May 9.[12] Schools started to initiate special programs to honor the fallen veterans of the war in Afghanistan who, as program scripts now often announce, "have lost their lives to protect the motherland from a possible American threat" (Moshak). Surprisingly, the incorporation of Soviet-Afghan veterans into an official canon of Soviet military

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9. В Шинданде, в Кандагаре и в Баграме
Опять на душу класть тяжелый камень.
Опять нести на родину героев,
Которым в 20 лет могилы роют. (Rozenbaum, "Black Tulip")

10. Such an unnamed amorphous war is best represented by the song "Let's Drink for Us" ("Davai za nas") by the virulently patriotic pop group Lubeh.

11. For the history and development of the project, see articles by Jade McGlynn and Mikhail Nemtsev.

12. Note that for the USSR, World War II started on June 22, 1941, when Nazi troops invaded the country, and officially ended on May 9, not 8, because of the time difference between the USSR and Germany. Therefore, Victory Day in Russia falls on May 9 and not May 8, the customary VE (Victory in Europe) Day.

martyrs, which they had been denied for years, was met with little objection by the Russian public.

Some of the most famous songs of the Soviet-Afghan war did not have purely original lyrics but borrowed largely from the poetic tradition of the Great Patriotic War or later Soviet military songs. As emphasized by Alla Sergeeva, in Russian culture love of one's country is inseparable from love for the native land, the landscape, and even the state (17). Such feelings are clearly seen in the unofficial anthem of the war, "Cuckoo" ("Kukushka"), in which soldiers' nostalgia for the sounds of the cuckoo singing in the woods transforms into nostalgia towards the Russian native land that, in turn, emphasizes soldiers' efforts to defend their state and country while serving abroad. The singer-songwriter, Yury Kirsanov, fought in the country's most famous special forces unit, Cascade, from which the previously mentioned band took its name. However, the lyrics of "Cuckoo" were adapted from a poem composed by Soviet poet Viktor Kochetkov about the Great Patriotic War. When Kirsanov went to Afghanistan, he brought a collection of poems by Kochetkov. As Kirsanov later explained, he took one of these poems and adapted it to the Afghan war. As he put it, "I removed something, added a couple of verses, and composed a melody" (Ogryzko 258).[13] In his interviews, Kirsanov always mentions that when he met with Kochetkov in Moscow in 1991, the poet took the collection and signed it, "To Yuri Kirsanov, the great *afganets* [the singular of *afgantsy*] who made me feel like I have also been in this war" (Ogryzko 258).[14]

By the mid-2000s, Russian media restored the tradition of amateur military song festivals and competitions. These newly created grand-scale concerts feature remastering of the songs from the Afghan campaign and the Great Patriotic War, performed side by side with newly written army songs. In a video recorded at one of the recent celebrations of the Day of the Airborne Forces, we can see how the song "Blue of the Sky," originally performed by Blue Berets, is sung by young army veterans who wear the uniforms of post-Soviet Airborne troops and an elderly man in a historic Soviet military uniform from the Great Patriotic War (Golubye Berety, "Sineva"). The figure of the elder veteran is also wearing the Georgiev ribbon (*Georgievskaia lentochka*), an orange ribbon that has become popular during the Putin administration as a symbol of Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War.

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13. See also "Kukushka" at Wikipedia.

14. See also "Kukushka" at Wikipedia. It bears noting that one of the most famous writers of Soviet-Afghan veteran songs, Yury Kirsanov, was born and lives in Lugansk, a city in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. Kirsanov is now a prominent political and social figure in the Donetsk National Republic.

However, the musical style of the original Soviet-Afghan veteran songs has changed significantly in recent years. The intimacy and the strong personal voice of the original arrangements, still partially preserved in the *chanson* style of the 1990s, has now totally vanished. Instead, the songs that were initially written as a critique of the Soviet regime, often condemning the war, and wishing for a safe return home, now feature a strong patriotic interpretation, accompanied by rather exaggerated visual images and effects designed to reinforce the militaristic emotions in the audience. One such example is the song "Comrade, Let's Remember Afghanistan" ("Vspomnim, tovarishch, my Afganistan"). Originally composed by Yury Kirsanov and his group Cascade as an adaptation of the war song "Baksanskaa," which had been written in January 1943 by the military climbers in the Elbrus area, the song adapted the tune of the famous pre-war tango "Let the Days Pass" (words by I. Fink, music by B. Terentyev). In the original version, recorded in Afghanistan in 1985, the performance certainly resembles the original tango. It is sung by a single singer and is accompanied by a guitar.[15] By contrast, in the rendition performed by the pop band Contingent at one of the recent army festivals, the intimate voice and tango melody have entirely disappeared. Instead, it was performed as a rock and pop hit, accompanied by loud instrumentals, special effects, weapon demonstrations, and military marching on the stage.

The history of the war in Afghanistan is considered an important component of the social and cultural memories in the process of constructing contemporary Russian identity (Kadykało 57–58). However, memories—as often witnessed throughout the turbulent history of Russia and especially the Soviet Union—can be easily altered and distorted. As is the case with many other examples of Soviet history, this also has been the fate of the Soviet-Afghan veteran songs in post-Soviet Russia. The same ideological alteration and transformation of the image of the Soviet-Afghan war and the evolution of its veterans' legacy from the early 1990s to the present can be observed in other domains of contemporary Russian popular culture, as well as on state-sponsored social media and on the official Web pages of Soviet-Afghan veteran clubs throughout Russia. For example, a similar interpretation now dominates Russian TV, which still serves as a primary instrument of Russian propaganda, in such recent popular mini-series as *Foul Weather* (*Nenast'e*) and *The Lad's Word* (*Slovo Patsana*). Similarly, the English-language video of "Hello Sister," a song originally about the war in

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15. Hear versions of the song here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3istqL3bts and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o82EUWcuUmI (both accessed on Jan. 22, 2024).

Afghanistan, has been set in the current geopolitical context of the war in Ukraine and incorporates traditional musical themes and styles into contemporary lyrics (Tyran). The altered lyrics and visual backdrop of a landscape ravaged by war demonstrate how these songs continue to evolve according to Russia's involvement in conflicts beyond its borders.

Furthermore, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, most officially established Soviet-Afghan veteran organizations openly supported the invasion, often equating the two campaigns as special military operations initiated to stop Western expansion on Russia's borders and to establish Russian security.

Conclusion

The evolution and transformation of Soviet-Afghan veteran songs in post-Soviet cultural space over the last thirty years serves as a powerful example of the ways in which a new ideological national-patriotic narrative has been created by Putin's regime, beginning in the late 2000s. This narrative manipulates the traumatic memories of the Russian people while touching upon such social and political factors as the collapse of the Russian economy in the 1990s, the political weakness and corruption of Boris Yeltsin's government, the lack of social support for the weaker elements of the society during the same period, and the dominance of criminal movements in the social and economic spheres of the first decade of post-Soviet Russian history. In doing so, it focuses on such factors as the condemnation of the failed democracy of the 1990s, the lamentation over the geopolitical fall of the Soviet empire and the possible role of the West in its disintegration, the quest for its resurrection, and the struggle with a potential future NATO threat. In this new—largely mythological—narrative, the songs written in Afghanistan and originally banned from the official Soviet military and ideological canon have ironically become the pillars of Vladimir Putin's nationalist-patriotic discourse. The nearly forgotten Soviet war in Afghanistan has, rather unexpectedly, become a critical element of a broadly popularized cultural mythology in which Russia perpetually—from Berlin to Kandahar and from Kandahar to Donbas—stands against malicious outside forces that seek to weaken it by destroying its territorial, moral, or spiritual integrity. In this mythology, it eternally fights them, and it always wins.

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PART III

War and Film

Editors
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Representations of World War I in *Jules et Jim*

FRIENDSHIP AND SACRIFICE

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In director François Truffaut's 1962 masterpiece of French *Nouvelle Vague* ("New Wave") cinema, *Jules et Jim*, the two eponymous characters test the limits of friendship when called to fight on opposing sides of the First World War (1914–1918), also known as the Great War. The representations of the conflict in the film allow the characters to have separate-but-parallel experiences in war. The pre-World War I period depicted in the film is a very light and joyous representation of France of the *Belle Époque* ("The Beautiful Era"), a period that lasted from roughly 1871 to the start of World War I. The viewer immediately notices that their all-encompassing friendship is rich in shared activities and intellectual stimulation. Indeed, the two characters seem inseparable with no noticeable hierarchy emerging in their relationship: they work out together and have a very rich intellectual, artistic, and social life as well. This fusion of mind and body, through parallel and shared experience, is the founding trope in the movie, accentuated through the filmic medium, which allows for visual and thematic parallelisms to be developed both simultaneously and over time.

Truffaut based his film on the novel by Henri-Pierre Roché, which tells the story of Jules and Jim before and after the Great War. Truffaut would describe Roché's novel in a 1956 *Cahiers du cinéma* article in these terms: "One of the most beautiful modern novels I know is *Jules et Jim* by Henri-Pierre Roché, which shows how, over a lifetime, two friends and the woman companion they share love one another with tenderness and almost no harshness, thanks to an esthetic morality constantly reconsidered" (qtd. in Truffaut 155).

The narrative spans a period of twenty-two years, commencing in 1912 and concluding in 1934 with depictions of the rise of Nazism in Germany. The two main characters, Jim, a French writer, and Jules, an Austrian translator, are involved in the Parisian artistic and literary scene in Paris before the war. They encounter the impulsive and tyrannical Catherine who resembles a statue they both like. Smitten by both men, she marries Jules after hesitating. When World War I breaks out, each man is mobilized for his respective country. Each fears killing the other. After the war, they are reunited in Germany at a time when Jules' marriage to Catherine is in trouble. The postwar period is full of strife and sadness, with scenes of barrenness and destruction following the trauma of the war. Jules offers to step aside romantically so that Catherine and Jim can be together, but, after much drama, that coupling fails as well. At the end of the film, we see books being burned and the rise of Naziism. Jules, Jim, and Catherine try to rekindle their friendship, but Catherine, increasingly erratic and unstable in the aftermath of their tangled history, invites Jim to go for a car ride with her. She drives off a bridge into the water, killing them both, with Jules looking on.

The film foregrounds a modern and groundbreaking friendship between the two title characters so Truffaut can explore questions of individuality and sacrifice during the Great War and even into the postwar period. Far from being only a period film, the shifting configurations of the three main characters' relationships are reshaped by the war and its trauma. The relationships *à deux* or *à trois* are an anachronism for the period: what was once unthinkable has become possible for them after the war in the hope of preserving their unique bond.

In one of the first scenes of the movie, Jim and Jules are boxing in an unrealistic way, trying to avoid hurting one another in a moment full of friendly banter. This scene is prescient of the very real dangers that await their friendship during the war and its aftermath. Jim professes his deep bond with Jules through his writing of a novel based on their relationship, a novel so autobiographical that the names are almost unchanged (Jacques et Julien). Jules tells Jim that the story of their relationship "is truly very beautiful" (*Jules et Jim* 10:50). The book that Jim is writing about their friendship mirrors what we see in the film. Jules, who wishes to translate the novel into German, contributes to the writing or rewriting of their international story. This close bond between males, which the complex weaving of filmic and literary discourses emphasizes, is rare enough and norm-breaking enough that others spread rumors about them. The voiceover narration in *Jules*

et Jim (the film equivalent first-person discourse in the novel) tells us that "Jules and Jim's friendship had "no equivalent in love" (1:44). Carole LeBerre highlights the importance of the relationship between the two titular characters as the most important of the film (87). I would adduce that it is arguably the most complex, yet, at the same time, the most stable in the film.

When Jules introduces his best friend to Catherine, his newfound love interest, who will become the catalyst of the movie's actions, he warns his friend against seducing her. He reminds his friend that she is off-limits, "not this one, Jim, right?" (*Jules et Jim* 12:40). Marking Catherine as off-limits shows his failure to understand that Catherine will test their friendship as much as the Great War.

In 1961, *Jules and Jim* was prohibited by the French government's censorship board, La Commission de Contrôle des Films Cinématographiques, to be shown to those under 18 years old because of "the continuous amorality" (Biltereyst 108). Although tame by today's standards, its ambivalent representations of friendship, marriage, sexuality, and gender roles played a part in the prohibition. The characters' overall indifference, or even open rejection of societal conventions, was without a doubt another factor contributing to the ban. Considering the characters in a historical context, Charles L. P. Silet argues that the early twentieth century was characterized by "broad changes in social and individual morality, it was the end of one era and the beginning of another. There was a general rejection of the restrictions of the past and an emphasis on a more emancipated future" (211).

The first scene of the three of them together involves Catherine dressing up as Thomas. With this scene, Truffaut's challenges long-held beliefs on gender roles. This is true whether we consider either the film's starting point of 1912 or the year it was released 1962: Catherine's costume and the characters' insistence on testing this walking "trompe l'œil" in the street (metonym for society) demonstrates how art and life have been folded into one; the plausible is now possible. That is just a sample of the whimsical and poetic impulses in the movie that characterize the bond between the characters.

In the film sequence mentioned, Truffaut uses mirrors and reflections to magnify and multiply the male and female gaze, with Jim taking on a large presence in the scene by symbolically drawing the mustache on Catherine. Jim stands between or blocks out Jules while drawing this symbol of virility on Catherine. Jules looks on, either in soft focus or obscured by Jim.

FIGURE 3.1.1   Jim playfully draws a mustache on Catherine as Jules watches, amused.

This scene in the film (13:21) reveals not only the budding love triangle between Jules and Jim and Catherine—which seems to be a visual response to the "Not this one, Jim, right?" from just before—but also the continuously shifting contours of their relationship with Catherine.

Jeanne Moreau's character, Catherine, embodies the filmic medium. She is a *mise en abyme*, placing a copy of herself inside the story, a film within a film. She is both the film we see and the one we do not as her story develops offscreen. Her off-screen adventures, which she subsequently shares with the audience through dialogue, add complexity to the love triangle story. Yet, these stories play a supplemental role and are mostly developed separately, so as not to take away from the fundamental relationship of the titular characters as they navigate their relationships with each other and with Catherine.

Truffaut's use of photographic stills (Figure 3.1.2) of Catherine is similar to hanging movie posters in the body of his film, highlighting the promise and the possibilities of her film or the filmic medium.

FIGURE 3.1.2   One of several recurring iconic stills of Catherine.

In the movie, Jules describes Catherine to Jim as "a force of nature that manifests in cataclysms…. She is a queen. Let me be frank. Catherine is not especially beautiful or intelligent or sincere, but she is a real woman. It's that woman whom you and I love, whom all men desire" (1:17).

Catherine's role in the film is capital. Her desirability comes not only from her beauty but from ability to remain free from societal constraints. Her multiple storylines allow her character's arc to develop separately from the other two. When reintroduced in the main storyline, she provides an instability that threatens the foundation of Jules and Jim's friendship in ways not dissimilar to the war. She is a "cataclysm" that leaves destruction in her path. It is illuminating that when the war is taking place Jules and Jim are surrounded by death yet very much alive. Whereas, at home, Catherine impulsiveness and reckless behavior does not come from an external situation. If Catherine and Jim did not die at the end of the movie in a murder-suicide, a sequel or continuing saga involving her love interests might have been possible. Throughout her life she remains an existential threat to the stability of Jim and Jules' friendship.

The prewar period is full of witty dialogue and fun activities that the three of them do together. Sometimes one of the characters is in a parallel relation with Catherine, sometimes it is the other. One might be in a more supporting role with Catherine, whereas the other takes on the lead romantic role with Catherine. The configurations of the triangle evolve, but the bond between the three characters stays strong, as does the friendship between Jim and Jules. There is never any palpable competition or conflict between the two characters.

The relationship triangle manifests itself visually and thematically in the movie in a number of interesting ways. Roger Greenspun mentions in his 1963 seminal article on the film:

> While life in Jules et Jim naturally expands in circles, the patterns human beings impose on it tend often to be triangular. The central *ménage à trois* enforces the idea of a triangle, and in the artful arrangements of characters and above all in the opposition of camera lenses to the many corner settings the idea is subtly realised. (78)

Here are a few examples from the numerous configurations in the film (Figures 3.1.3 and 3.1.4):

FIGURE 3.1.3   Jim, Catherine, and Jules in a symbolic triangle of love and passion.

- How's everyone else?
- Everyone else is fine.

FIGURE 3.1.4   A stylized composition of the trio, emphasizing geometric framing and visual symmetry.

While Jim is the more traditional ladies' man, Jules is more sensitive and innocent. By comparison, Catherine is represented as impetuous, demanding, and unfaithful. Depictions such as this lead to well-documented claims of misogyny in French New Wave cinema. (See Jonathan Rosenbaum's analysis, "Sexism in the French New Wave" in *Film Quarterly*.) However, as Daniel Biltereyst mentions,

critics have often insisted on the *Nouvelle Vague's* "aesthetic innovation, modernity and authorship on the one hand, but also underlining the societal and moral provocations on the other" (103). The provocations in the film are not limited to Catherine; they also include the sexual promiscuity of the characters, their three-person love triangle, and the rejection of traditional marriage constructs.

Given the power of societal conventions and the surreptitious influence they hold, the survival of their relationship is testament to the strength of its foundation. Both titular characters are part of hierarchical system of values, where tolerance, respect, intellectual curiosity, and shared experience are paramount. This physical and mental proximity allows Truffaut to represent their relationship as a unified whole constructed through parallelisms (split and alternating image shots, comparative experiences, and reversal of situation) and constructed similitudes (shared spaces, shared ideas, and shared axiological values). In other words, the two title characters could be considered reflective representations of each other. At the beginning of the movie, when a character identifies them as Jim and Jules, Jim playfully responds that "it is Jules and Jim" (03:00). While Jim insists on the order of the names (reflected in their order in the title of the film), this reflexive *clin d'œil* suggests that the characters are conscious of shaping their own lives into a story, or even a film. Through their shared interests and the amount of screen time they spend together, their friendship is so all-embracing that the audience might consider them as part of a unified intellectual whole. Jim's demise at the end of the movie signifies the death of a part of Jules' own experience.

There is also a recurring thematic triangle in the film: friendship (*Agape*), love (*Eros*), and war (a death impulse that psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud called *Todestrieb*). The individual points of each are difficult to consider without also weighing the other two. The Great War represents a fundamental test of the characters' friendship and of Jules and Catherine's marriage. The viewer observes the unique relationship between friendship, love, and war in the scene in which Jules and Catherine announce their marriage over the phone, which is also a proclamation of their friendship to Jim. The phone call transitions to the declaration of the war mobilization.

In that scene, we can see the way in which the announcement of marriage cross-fades seamlessly into the war mobilization and newsreel footage of the war (Figure 3.1.5).

FIGURE 3.1.5   Cross-fade of Jules's marriage announcement and war mobilization.

It is telling that it is the Austrian Jules who sings the French national anthem, showing that he is closer to his French wife and best friend than to the German war effort. On the other hand, Jules singing the French national anthem, one of the bloodier national anthems, with gaiety, shows the disconnect between the joyous announcement of marriage and the looming war: the lyrics to the French national anthem show the transition from the *légèreté* (lightness) of the period to the death and destruction of the war. The contrast between Jules' joyous rendition of the national anthem and the lyrics themselves is telling. Here are a few stanzas of the French national anthem, taken from the English subtitles on the film:

> Do you hear in the fields
> The roar of those fierce fighting men
> Who've come right into our midst
> To slaughter sons, wives, and kin?
>
> To arms, citizens!
> Form up in serried ranks!
> March on! March on!
> and drench our fields
> With their tainted blood! (31:00)

With the cross-fade shot of the French national anthem serving as the carryover from happiness to violence, the film transitions into a devastating period for Jules and Jim, even though they both survive the war. Truffaut's churning of luminescent images of love, war, and friendship allows the contours and the edges of the themes to be erased and for them to appear and reappear in one another.

The use of war footage separates the two halves of the film and reveals changes to the characters themselves. T. Jefferson Kline takes a formalist approach in his reading of this important sequence:

> This "battleground" of conflicting intertexts is itself symbolically conflated in the emblematic documentary footage of World War I that erupts into the exact center of this film. In these scenes of war Truffaut makes use of a technique as old as cinema itself but which Tom Conley has reinterpreted by terming it "collage," where by virtue of the "glue" that joins together texts or images of disparate origins the spectator's attention "arrests on the edge of the combination, affixes itself to what binds them," giving them "a plastic and very material substance they lacked before." (68)

Whereas Robert J. Cardullo's reading concentrates on the themes themselves:

> The war—presented in a stunning montage of archival footage, much of it stretched to Scope dimensions—divides the film into two parts and separates not only Catherine and Jules, but also the latter and Jim, whose greatest concern is to avoid killing each other. (The Great War is so graphically documented that it brutalizes the earlier sentiments of film, tossing its character from the merry-go-round down to the ground, where they land, still and stunned. (61)

Using accelerated montage, World War I explodes on the screen as Truffaut juxtaposes archival footage of trench warfare with shots of fallen soldiers on the battlefield (Figures 3.1.6 and 3.1.7).

FIGURE 3.1.6   Newsreel footage from *Jules et Jim* with a fallen soldier.

FIGURE 3.1.7   Archival war footage in *Jules et Jim* captures the chaos of trench warfare and close combat.

The director also shows Jules in the trenches (the viewer left imagining a parallel experience for Jim), contemplating the morally unimaginable—killing Jim. Jim articulates the same concern in the film. Truffaut represents the collective experience of battle while maintaining the individuality of Jules' voice through letters and voiceovers. The soldiers seemingly cross from one filmic or literary medium to reality by jumping from the ongoing archival footage of the battle into the bunkers as seen here (Figure 3.1.8):

FIGURE 3.1.8   A soldier leaps through a bunker opening as the film transitions from historical footage to lived experience.

In the scene, the soldier jumps from the newsreel footage into the bunker with Jules, moving seamlessly from the reality of the war into the fiction of

the characters' lives, and from the collective experience to the individual one. If we think of the camera as a window through which the audience peers, the doubling of this window (camera and window in scene) and the crossing of the threshold invites the viewer to experience the fluidity of the movie's movement between death and love, or from the collective to the personal. Jim's immobilism contrasts with the movement of the other soldiers: the war literally surrounds Jim's voice. The artillery shells serve to punctuate the erotic letter that he pens to Catherine. This passage of the film is even more poignant because of Truffaut's use of voiceover and epistolary form to narrate the deeper emotional and personal battles (Figure 3.1.9):
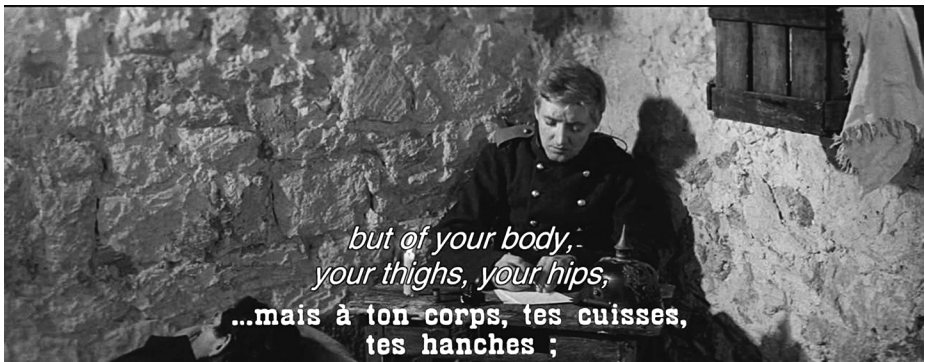
FIGURE 3.1.9   In the bunker, Jules penning an erotic letter to Catherine, merging desire and dislocation.

From the visual reality to the reading of his letter, Truffaut focuses our attention on the individual plight of the Austrian soldier. We see the humanity of the individual soldier with Truffaut, a French filmmaker, refusing to take sides in the war. This is reminiscent of another World War I movie, Jean Renoir's *The Grand Illusion* (1937) in which German soldiers are presented sympathetically by another French filmmaker. The Austrian soldier, Jules, is willing to sacrifice himself at the Russian Front rather than risk killing Jim. Here, the usually contradictory impulses of *Agape* and *Todestrieb* lead him to prefer going to the Russian Front. After penning this erotic letter to his wife, the war ends with an orgasmic display of artillery fire using accelerated montage that transforms the explosions into hats and flowers in the post postwar period. *Agape, Todestrieb,* and *Eros* are part of life, like

in the following passage from the song Catherine sings in the film, "Le Tourbillon de la vie" ("The Whirlwind of Life"), which deals with loss and reconnection:

> We met, said adieu, and then met anew.
> We lost touch and then we lost touch again.
> Once more we did meet, for moments so sweet.
> Only to retreat
> We went our own ways
> In life's whirlpool of days. (1:00)

Love, separation, and the obligations of life have transformed the characters. Truffaut himself conflates the events of life, many of which we do not control with the passage of time. In a 1973 interview, he states: "*Jules et Jim* is a hymn to life. For this reason, I wanted to create the impression of a great lapse of time through the birth of children, but also interrupted by war, by death—all of which give a more complete meaning to one's whole existence" (Fox 97).

The same thematic triangle dynamic extends into the postwar period as well. Jim's trip to Germany to reunite with Jules and Catherine is marked by a hike across a barren and apocalyptic landscape. Death and destruction from the war are apparent everywhere. Along the route, which Jim mostly walks, he visits the monuments and cemeteries to the fallen at the battle sites of the war (Figures 3.1.10 and 3.1.11).
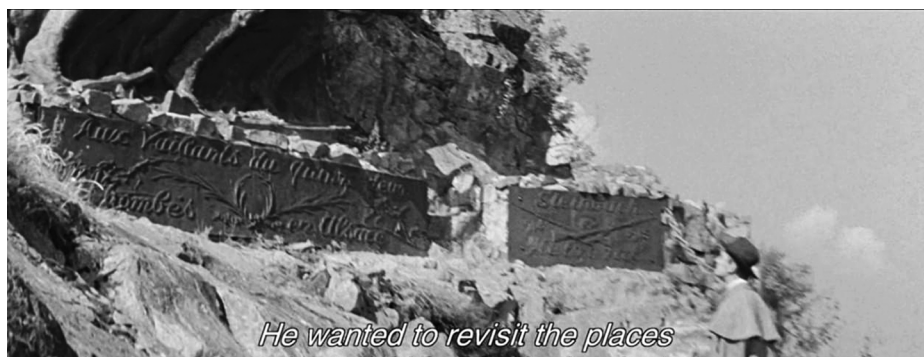
FIGURE 3.1.10   Jim returns to the battlefields, visiting ruins and monuments haunted by war memories.

FIGURE 3.1.11   Jim stands among graves in a war cemetery.

Catherine and Jules' relationship has become sterile as well. In the film, Catherine shares with Jim that when Jules came home from the war on permission it was like being "in a stranger's arms" (54:00). Augmenting their distance from one another is the fact that Catherine has had several lovers and Jules seems to be the shell of who he was in the postwar period. He is content with playing with his daughter and writing a book about dragonflies. He speaks more slowly after the war, his voice permeated by melancholy.

While Truffaut's film intimates that marriage is far from a perfect institution, the relationships between the characters transcend this. Jules is steadfast in his love for Catherine and in his friendship with Jim. After seeing the attraction that Jim and Catherine have for each other, Jules offers to step aside so that Catherine and Jim can be together. The three of them continue to live together. Yet this period in the film is characterized by its instability. Catherine and Jim struggle with infertility, estrangement, and fighting. Catherine's personality becomes more and more unpredictable and erratic, which is chronicled in the letters that she sends to Jim, who reads them while with his lover, Gilberte.

This breakdown in their situation is foreshadowed when Jules, Jim, and Catherine go for a postwar bicycle ride together. Charles L. P. Silet identifies hidden symbolism:

> The second bicycle ride takes place after the war and in Germany (an alien country for Catherine), and it exposes some of the contradictions present in her life. By now the tone of the film has darkened considerably, and the second cycling scene conveys a different sense of the threesome than was conveyed by the first seaside outing. The ride, this time, clearly shows a Catherine whose life has been altered. Now torn between her love for Jim and her lover Albert and with

her marriage to Jules in tatters, Catherine's exuberance during the ride seems less joyful than slightly panicked. The speed is faster, the distance between the riders has increased, and the background of the dark wood is more ominous. (217)

The joy of the end of the war is short-lived. The physical wounds of the war have mostly healed, but its psychological effects are long-lasting. The trauma of war is explored in a scene in which the three war veterans, Jules, Jim, and Albert, discuss the effects of the war on their minds and bodies. Albert, who suffered a head injury in the war, reports that when he opened his eyes to the doctor probing inside his head, he thought of the quote from Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* (1897): "God spare me physical pain and I'll take care of the moral pain myself." Wilde wrote his letter while imprisoned for acts considered beyond the bounds of societal norms, much as all three characters also transgress conventional expectations.

This reference has enough ambiguity to forestall a restrictive application to the film: Which is worse, physical or moral pain? Does Albert (or Wilde) want to keep the moral pain repressed or private? The fact that these ideas are not addressed explicitly reveals the difficulty of speaking of the long-lasting psychological effects of war. Jules makes the case that war deprives man of his individual battle. It is an idea informed by existentialist thought, which emphasizes the individual battle as the most important combat of them all. It is the choices one makes that define the individual in the theater of war. At the same time, war necessitates the execution of commands and the fulfillment of responsibilities. Individual needs must become subordinate. Moral pain in the context of war might be seen as the coming to terms with personal failings or loss: death, unspeakable violence, loss of past relationships, of a past life, of part of oneself. Jim addresses these points by recounting the story of a soldier he met who had a head wound like Albert. He said this soldier was able to carve out his own space to continue his "personal" battles during the war. In the movie, Jim reflects on the story of this soldier, "To understand this extraordinary depucelage by mail, you have to have known all the violence of trench warfare, that collective madness where death is present at every moment." (58:00) Jim's point here is that beauty and desire can be present anywhere, even on the battlefield, to those who can see it. The soldier in question, who engages in erotic correspondence, has constructed a personal space in which he struggles with the fundamental questions of life, death, and desire. Life has been accelerated by war, and those questions have become more urgent (Figure 3.1.12).
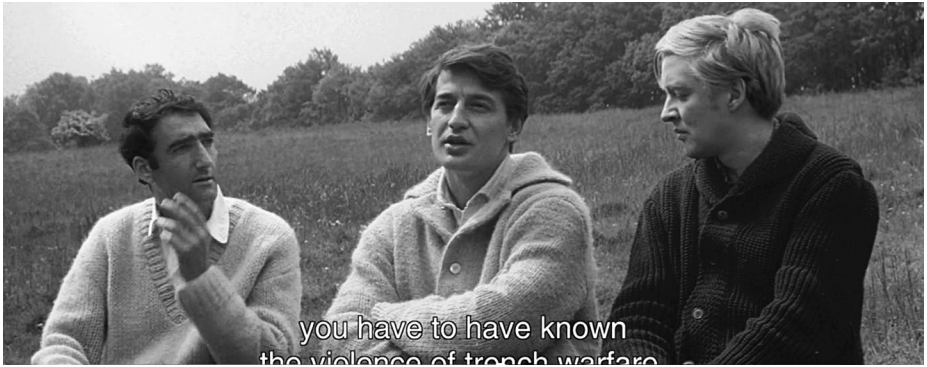
FIGURE 3.1.12   Jim, Albert, and Jules in reflective conversation, sharing the invisible wounds of war.

In this scene, anecdotes from the war converge with the literary. John Anzalone examines the influence of literature on Truffaut's cinema, writing "when Truffaut determined a literary work could 'help' him, he used as principal criterium the work's susceptibility to reshaping for the personal cinema he had called for repeatedly as a critic" (49).

War writing and letter writing in particular is a form of the literary as it breaks open the film to a larger system of signifiers, both textual and contextual. The WWI soldier mentioned by Jim is the war poet Guillaume Apollinaire, who wrote now-famous erotic letters and poems to his lover, Madeleine Pagès. She became his fiancé and his muse during the war.

Apollinaire, whose World War I poetry is celebrated in France, writes:

> My desire is the region that lies before me
> Beyond the Boche Lines
> My desire is also behind me
> Beyond the zone of operations. (258)

> Mon désir est la région qui est devant moi
> Derrière les lignes boche
> Mon désir est aussi derrière moi
> Après la zone des armées. (256)

Apollinaire's poem, "Les Neuf portes de ton corps," or the "The Nine Doors of Your Body," was written during World War I after Apollinaire met Pagès on a train. Although not mentioned by name in the film, it is Apollinaire's war story

and letters which Jim references. The structure of this poem is the poetic equivalent to cinematic montage. It is the arrangement of words, lines, stanzas, and themes. Its constructivity, its "script," is found in its ineluctable progression from door one to door nine—each door being symbolic of a different part of the female anatomy. This poetic narrator proceeds in the manner of the Middle Ages and Renaissance genre, the blazon, which is a poem which describes and praises different parts of a woman's body, often starting at the top and working on down.

The first-person poetic "I" builds the poem as it is being spoken. In this case, the poet/soldier begins by emphasizing the secret nature of the poem:

> This poem is for you alone, Madeleine
> It is one of the first poems of our desire
> It is our first secret poem oh you that I love
> The day is sweet and the war is so sweet. To think you could die from it!! (216)

The myth of the sole interlocutor serves as an enunciative curtain, paradoxically unveiling the forbidden and objectional content in the poem, releasing its contents only by claiming that it is "for your eyes only." A closer reading of the poem reveals that of the nine doors, the poet has already possessed four of them (the eyes and the ears) two of which he will enter (the nostrils), and door gate which he has only seen which is her mouth:

> Mouth of Madeleine seventh door of my love
> I saw you, oh door red gate, the void of my desire.
> And the soldiers ranged there slain by love cried out to me in surrender
> Oh red and tender door. (218)

Of course, Truffaut's cinematic discourses involves the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth as the experience of war is communicated through seeing and hearing the bombs, witnessing the violence, and imagining the scent of smoke and death. Truffaut's film promises a fourth dimension to the viewer, which is a complete sensorial experience.

Catherine interrupts Jules, Jim, and Albert's conversation to remind the viewer that Jules also wrote beautiful letters from the trenches, thus making the connection between Jules and Apollinaire, even though the latter man is not specifically mentioned in the film. Jules' desire at that moment of the war is proof of his continued existence, despite being immersed in violence and death. This

scene elevates Jules' character, his bravery, and his devotion to friends and family. In that way, he was able to continue his own personal battle.

In one of Jules' letters to Catherine from the trenches, he writes, as shown in the film:

> Catherine, mon amour
> I think of you constantly
> And not of your soul
> Because I no longer believe in that.
> But of your body
> Your thighs, your hips.
> I think also of your belly and of our son inside
> As I don't have any more envelopes
> I don't know how I will get the letter to you.
> I am going to be sent to the Russian Front
> It will be tough,
> but I prefer this because I have lived with the fear
> of killing Jim.
> Mon amour
> I take your mouth violently. (35:00)

It is a sensorial and sensual experience viewed simultaneously from the perspective of Jules and from the corroborative point of view of the camera lens (*l'objectif* in French). Thus, Truffaut's cinematic techniques render the war experience on a third level beyond the characters themselves and the historical violence of the moment: that of the viewer. Jules' letter is read to us line by line, like a poem, recited to us in German while we read the subtitles in French. Truffaut conveys the "void of desire" through solitude, separation, and Catherine's silence. Steven G. Kellman posits: "In its treatment of reading, as in much else, *Jules and Jim* is a landmark work, and the land that it marks is the frontier between a culture of readers and a culture of viewers" (175).

As genre, Apollinaire and Jules' letters are infinitely repeatable. Apollinaire's description of his lover's body is not specific to her, and the poem itself borrows from other poems by Apollinaire and from previous genres (the blazon and war poetry, in particular). Madeleine's "body" can be substituted for someone else's. Jules is complicit in this sharing of Catherine. Through words and images, the soldier is banished from real contact. In the reality of war, particularly before the twenty-first century, letters go unanswered, go missing, or are late. In film,

a medium which can make the dead and the missing appear on the screen, the distance and disconnect between the two lovers is "real" and rendered more poignantly for the viewer. If we join Kellman in calling *Jules and Jim* "a cinematic epitaph for an age in which epitaphs were still written" (176), it is of a particular type, transcending the idea of a film about writing while reveling in the interplay between the visual and the written.

     The symbolism matrix in the movie is well developed and demonstrates the importance of the visual in the construction of deep-seeded meaning. The trauma of the war gives a new and darker meaning to the network of visual devices carefully integrated throughout the film, including those from the happier prewar period. For that reason, Allen Thiher associates Catherine with elemental symbols:

> Catherine is not only allied to water, but to fire, as we see when, immediately before the three go on their vacation by the sea, she decides to burn her letters and in doing so sets her robe on fire. It seems to be an ironic foreshadowing that it should be Jim who is there to put out the flames, for the film's denouement reverses, in metaphorical terms, this gesture when it is Catherine who drives Jim into the water and finally quenches the flames of desire that have burned in them. Catherine's burning her letters is again a sign that she is another of Truffaut's characters who deny the value of the past; for, as Catherine says of her letters that contain her past, they are merely a matter of lies. But flames also burn those who live in them, and it would appear that Truffaut in this scene sets forth an implicit critique of that ethic of freedom that refuses all limits in the name of intensifying experience. (193)

     The end of the movie includes a number of intense experiences, including a Nazi book burning, Jim and Catherine's drowning, and subsequent cremation. Thus, the violence continues, the war will be repeated, and the symbols interconnected. When Jim and Catherine's struggle to have a child ends in a miscarriage, Jim tells her, "We gambled with the sources of life and lost" (1:32). This failure not only foreshadows their death from the elements but is also the mechanism by which the film moves toward its tragic conclusion. The arbitrariness of death gives the film a very French vantage point: it could have happened during the war but didn't. Symbolically, Catherine is the force that metamorphoses their friendship into something truly extraordinary. Jules becomes the lone survivor of their passions and battles. He has sacrificed to make others happy, which was a noble impossibility, swept away by the whirlwind of life. While this could be seen as a reversal of gender roles—and a sign of Catherine's power—it makes Jules

arguably the most heroic character, because he embodies selflessness in war, in love, and in friendship, having proved himself in all three of the domains, even as they are being collapsed into each other.

Ironically, it is Catherine, who did not go to the war, who is the most affected by the aftermath and the trauma, as she cannot separate love and violence. The erotic war letters from Jules become passionate and violent letters to Jim. When Albert comes back injured from the war, she nurses him back to health and takes him as her lover. Catherine's war separation from Jules has been replaced by her estrangement from Jim. When Jim informs her that he will choose a life with his lover Gilberte and the possibility of children over her, she threatens him with a gun. Jim and Catherine's death comes as a relief for Jules as he has given all that he has to the point of exhaustion. Truffaut represents war as part of life unseparated from its passions. His representation of the war is modern as it speaks to the enduring trauma of the Great War. Sacrifice and sharing are the defining features of Jules and Jim's friendship, as it proves more stable than romantic love. The lesson from the film might be that violence can be redeemed by love and sacrifice, but only temporarily. Ultimately, life catches up and cannot be postponed.

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From Opium War Heroes to Wolf Warriors and Peacekeeping Martyrs

PROJECTING CHINESE MILITARY IDENTITIES THROUGH FILM

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Wu Jing, the star and director of *Wolf Warrior 2* (2017), stated in a video interview with the *New Yorker* that "in the past, all our movies were about, say, the Opium Wars, how other countries waged war against China. So Chinese people always wanted to see our country one day would have the power to protect its own people and contribute to world peace" (Jing 0:55).

This chapter analyzes a range of Chinese-produced media, from more classic cinema (e.g., *The Opium War* [1997]) to recent blockbusters and documentaries (e.g., *Wolf Warrior 2; Born to Fly* [2023]; *The Blue Defensive Line* [2020]), to trace the trajectory of military identities projected via such expressive cultural productions. Utilizing comparative examples from Hollywood action movies—which are often explicitly referenced—this chapter attempts to parse out what is particularly Chinese about these pictures and military identities, and what are more Western-derived or now-globalized tropes of martial power and masculinity projected in these Chinese-produced media. Ultimately, this chapter argues that such media must be taken seriously as significant contributors to the discourses on

both broader Chinese national identities and international norms and relations, with potential to escalate the mimetic rivalry between the United States and China.

Establishing Shots, Master Narratives: Representations of the Opium War and Reckonings with the "Century of Humiliation"

The *Wolf Warrior* director and star was likely referring above to films like 1997's *The Opium War*, which was funded by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and was released on the eve of the Hong Kong handover, when the United Kingdom ended its rule and gave sovereignty over to the People's Republic of China. This event also announced the arrival of a Chinese film industry able to produce more epic-scale cinema. *The Opium War* falls in the category of "government-sponsored *zhuxuanlu,* or 'main melody' film . . . vigorously promoted in China through state financial backing and government-sponsored film awards" (Yu 166). And while this film was created as state propaganda in a politically sensitive and significant moment, it was also broadly considered a relatively well-balanced treatment of the history, appreciated by both Chinese audiences and Western critics.[2] There are a few reasonable British voices, including a moralizing priest calling out the traders, and a nod to Chinese official corruption and commercial complicity. In promotional materials, the director, Xie Jin, stated the film was a "special gift for the motherland and the people . . . to ensure we and our descendants forever remember the humiliation the nation once suffered" (McDonogh and Wong 35). Many analysts argue these historical events—the opium scourge, resultant conflict over the trade, defeat by the British and the eventual loss of Hong Kong—were the origins of modern Chinese nationalism and national consciousness, driven to this day by the so-called century of humiliation.[3] Signifying a shift "away from mass resistance toward a reflection on China's undeveloped military technology" (Yu 167), *The Opium War* ultimately associates humiliation with a lack of military capability. The film serves as a "never again" sort of reminder, made explicit in the end credits, that the heroic resistance to Britain "failed because of a corrupt government and military inferiority" (02:28:00).

Compared to other action films discussed later, *The Opium War* maintains considerable focus on these discussions between the Daoguang Emperor (1820–

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2. An example from a Western review: "[T]he movie arrives with official fingerprints all over it. The surprise is that it's not simply a slice of xenophobia, and is comparatively even-handed in its treatment of both sides" (Elley).

3. See for example Kaufman (2011) and Metcalf (2020).

1850) and his viceroys as they debate courses of action, dedicating considerable screen time to these conversations among wise, learned elders. For example, the film opens not with a battle or action sequence but with the official stamps on documents and state communiqués (see Figure 3.2.1). Throughout the film, Chinese officials complain about the unsophisticated calligraphy of their British counterparts, as indicative of their general vulgarity and lack of respect for the Celestial Empire (00:45:00). By contrast, there is a Chinese emphasis on the importance of proper diplomatic protocol, the valorization of education, and how leaders should be poets and philosophers who handle state matters almost as an art form. Even when the conversations involve generals, these officials' identities are much less bound up with their martial identity. The pen is considered, if not mightier than the sword, then more civilized and honorable.

In an earlier attempt to resolve the dispute with the British traders, the Imperial administration issues an edict to the British that the Great Emperor issues kindness to all people in the world; and in deference to Queen Victoria of Great Britain (1834–1901), allows for trade and even profit, just not at the expense of others (00:42:00). Thus, the Chinese leaders are depicted as attempting to establish a rules-based order, only to be undermined by these violent outsiders, who are as disingenuous in diplomacy as they are direct in military action. For example, when the expeditionary fleet first arrived, Yao Huaixiang, the local leader of Dinghai, arrives on the British ship to negotiate with those (represented as) having no such intentions; the naval commander demands, "If you do not agree [to our terms, to let us use Dinghai as an outpost], we'll wipe you out" (01:38:06). Huaixiang responds, "We the soldiers of the Qing Dynasty would rather die than surrender" (01:39:25). In the following sequence, the British cannons and rifles overwhelm Huaixiang's fort, and he slits his own throat before he can be killed. The title flashes on the screen: "On July 6, 1840, Dinghai fell. Historical records: Throughout the Opium War, not a single civilian or military officer in the Qing Empire surrendered! Hundreds of people committed suicide and died for the country, and Yao Huaixiang, the magistrate of Dinghai County, was the first among them" (01:39:52–01:41:58).

After this attack, during official discussions about what could be done in response, the Emperor exclaims, "These foreigners are barbarous and ignorant! I decided to try peaceful means before resorting to force" (1:47:00). The senior military officer in the room, General Guan, states that he would rather fight to the death than appease the invaders (1:52:00). Ultimately, acknowledging that

they are militarily at a disadvantage, additional negotiations and attempts to placate the invaders ensue. Throughout the film, the response is always British gunboat diplomacy. The British naval officers mention Hong Kong as being an excellent birthday present for their queen and threaten to take it by force if not gifted: "If you do not agree to our conditions, we will attack Guangzhou at once" (02:01:00–02:03:00).

The themes of diplomatic futility without military force backing it up, along with the Chinese military dying honorable deaths, continue through the end of the film. The larger state-approved framing of *The Opium War* presupposes that corrupting foreign influence and a lack of superior military technology can undermine Chinese civilizational superiority and honor. The final scene drives home this message through a conversation between Qishan, a disgraced emissary, and Viceroy Lin Zexu, who attempted to eradicate opium initially and organized popular militias to fight. As they meet one last time before Qishan is to face capital punishment in Beijing and Lin Zexu is banished to Xinjiang, they grieve the "long dark night" the Chinese will have to face (02:26:31). Lin Zexu then offers Qishan a globe to give to the Emperor to remind him that "there are so many powerful nations in the world. Our Qing Dynasty should no longer be out of touch with reality" (02:27:45).

This caution is also aimed at the contemporary Chinese audience. By acknowledging the missteps, corruption, and military inferiority of the Qing dynasty, the film positions the then-current (1997) administration as the redeemer of these humiliating histories, righting the wrongs of the past as it reclaims Hong Kong. Other film genres, such as historical pieces that reach deeper into Chinese history, also reference—and reimagine for contemporary Chinese audiences—ancient concepts of honor and courage in the context of promoting miliary service.[4] The remaining focus here—however difficult it is considering the sheer scale and volume of the Chinese film industry—is on the proliferation of blockbuster action films set in and for the current moment. Second to none was the massive hit *Wolf Warrior 2* (2017).

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4. See for example, 2008's *Three Kingdoms: Resurrection of the Dragon* (Lee) set in "228 AD. It was a time when China was divided among three kingdoms—Wei, Wu and Shu" (0:02:28), and based on a fourteenth-century novel and one of the most important pieces of Chinese literature.

FIGURE 3.2.1   Qing dynasty officials preparing communiqués with calligraphy and stamps (*The Opium War*, Emei Film Studio, 1997).

FIGURE 3.2.2   Action star and director Wu Jing in *Wolf Warrior 2* (Deng Feng International Media, 2017).

Blockbusters and Wolf Warriors

Twenty years after *The Opium War* was released to celebrate the return of Hong Kong, *Wolf Warrior 2*'s release date also coincided with a significant historical marker, "pay[ing] tribute to the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army" (J. Yang 1). Instead of candlelight communiqués and calligraphy stamped with Imperial authority to open *The Opium War*, *Wolf Warrior 2* (see Figure 3.2.2) opens with our hero diving from a Chinese shipping vessel under attack from what appear to be Somali pirates. As a sort of one-man private military company (PMC), the Wolf Warrior dodges their bullets and fights

a boatful of pirates underwater, eventually disarming them of their AK-47s and machetes with his bare hands, tying them up, getting into the boat himself and picking up a sniper rifle. Perhaps in homage/one-upmanship to the climactic scene in *Captain Phillips* (2013) when U.S. Navy SEAL snipers take out all three pirates simultaneously to save Philips, the Wolf Warrior looks down the scope and fires at another boat of approaching pirates far enough away to be invisible to the naked eye. He strikes one pirate directly between the eyes, and that pirate's rocket launcher then fires straight up and comes down to explode on the title sequence. *Wolf Warrior 2* thus starts with a literal bang, in contrast to *The Opium War* when no real fighting starts until the final thirty minutes. Xiao Yang refers to this "wolf warrior cycle" of films in the mid-2010s as Chinese films "resonat[ed] with the Belt and Road Initiative by presenting 'Hollywoodized' adventure stories constructed under the assumption of China's leadership in regional and global affairs" (1054). Indeed, the director, Wu Jing, elaborates on the forces contributing to the production and domestic success of *Wolf Warrior 2*: "China wants to be a prosperous, democratic, civilized, harmonious, patriotic, vigorous, and friendly country. China does not want to relive the past where other countries would invade us and divide our land" (2:08–2:27).

As a not-so-subtle corrective to images of Chinese subordination and "military inferiority," *Wolf Warrior 2* maintains a through line that Westerners are typically vulgar, power-hungry, and lacking a moral compass. In *The Opium War*, profit-motivated British merchants backed by an ambitious queen seek to capture the whole East and dominate the nineteenth century. In *Wolf Warrior 2*, the villainous mercenaries exemplify rampant Western militarism, beyond the control of any state. In this critique of an unrestrained West, there is a Chinese assertion of its own military prowess but also submission to international institutions— of its use of military power for its citizens and (albeit mostly helpless) Africans rescued, while being careful not to act in unilateral ways. Thus, in addition to communicating an explicit image about China, there is also a differentiation with the West—and the United States in particular.

For example, an early sequence in the film depicts all other militaries leaving the war-torn country, with only the Chinese naval ship having the courage and competence to enter the port to save its citizens (0:28:58–0:30:05).[5] These citizens escape the crossfire in the streets and shelter in their embassy thanks to

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5. This sequence in the film of China's navy resembles the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) promotional videos; e.g., https://youtu.be/0fTp4GzPWuE?si=9rZ6sCHqaIVCRk3B.

Chinese security forces at the gate. Then the ambassador himself walks outside the compound walls to tell the gun-toting rebels, "Stand down, stand down! We are Chinese! We are Chinese. China and Africa are partners" (0:26:55–0:27:12). When these evacuees arrive at the ship, and the ambassador asks the naval commander if he "can send our troops in to help," the commander responds, "Without the UN's authorization, my troops are not permitted to enter the war zone" (0:32:44). The ambassador then calls the prime minister of this unnamed African country to see if he can provide for the safety of a Chinese aid hospital run by a Dr. Chen, who is treating patients infected by and developing a vaccine for "Lamanla," a virus producing a deadly Ebola-like outbreak. Dr. Chen is of high value to the rebels and "the West's most expensive mercenaries," both as a bargaining chip by virtue of the status of his citizenship and as someone with the power to cure the disease (0:32:22). The African prime minister even sacrifices his own life under interrogation by the mercenaries, refusing to divulge Dr. Chen's location. Only after all options are exhausted, the lone special ops warrior pledges to the ambassador and the navy commander that he will return to the fray, without official support. He vows to rescue Dr. Chen at the Chinese aid hospital, as well as a group of Africans held hostage at a Chinese factory; i.e., key markers and nodes in China's Belt and Road Initiative in which nobody will be left behind.

Ultimately, the film is an assertion of Chinese ascendancy. The generative structure of the "century of humiliation" master narrative and the "main melody" that comprise the refrains of glory and redemption culminate most explicitly in the film's climactic scene. The rebels and mercenaries, earlier blowing up the Chinese aid hospital with everyone inside, are now attacking the Chinese factory, killing hostages. Precision-guided munitions from the Chinese naval warship take them out, leaving the Wolf Warrior and the leader of the Western mercenaries, Big Daddy, to fight it out. Having pinned down Wolf Warrior with a blade in his shoulder as the hostages look on, Big Daddy says, "Look at them. You're going to die for those people." Wolf Warrior responds: "I was born for them." Inspired, he removes the knife from his shoulder only to have it an inch from his neck. Big Daddy says, "People like you will always be inferior to people like me. Get used to it. Get f-cking used to it."[6] Wolf Warrior responds, dodging the knife, pinning Big Daddy down. He takes his bullet necklace off to brutally stab Big Daddy repeatedly

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6. The American actor Frank Grillo (known for playing Crossbones in the Marvel franchise) delivers this line in English, and the Chinese subtitles translate it as: "In this world there are the weak and the strong. And your race (*minzu*) will always be the weak." Thus, the semiotic load is even heavier, and connects Chinese racial and national identity.

in the neck, with blood splattering everywhere, and after he delivers the fatal blow: "That was f-cking history" (1:50:35–1:51:47). Wolf Warrior's one true love was killed by this same bullet he recovered from her body, kept on his necklace, and discovered earlier in the film it had an insignia only used by the mercenary unit he is now fighting. So on the level of this particular film's plot, Wolf Warrior avenges her death, but as a contribution to a much larger narrative, Wolf Warrior also avenges "the century of humiliation." *Wolf Warrior 2*, thus, functions as a main melody film and "forces its audience to recall their collective memory and creates a shared narrative . . . [and] reminds the audience . . . they should have a sense of national pride for overcoming the humiliating time" (J. Yang).

On Peacekeeping Martyrdom: "The Blue Defensive Line"

In *Wolf Warrior 2*, we have shades of the ridiculous, with many over-the-top action sequences true to the genre—catching rocket-propelled grenades in mattress springs inches from the hero's face, for example—but with this next example, we are confronted with the often-tragic realities of being deployed in a conflict zone, in a peacekeeping capacity. Documentaries like China Global Television Network's (CGTN) *The Blue Defensive Line*, about Chinese participants in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, present a far humbler servant image of Chinese soldiers. UNPKO and its blue helmets are markers of multilateralism; however, there are other messages in the documentary regarding China's military capacity beyond extolling the virtues of the international system. While the verisimilitude of the documentary form is its credibility and its power, we must remember—and there are quite a few reminders in the film, most notably with the musical embellishments—that this reality remains a constructed, edited one forged by the Chinese government.

According to a CGTN promotional statement, the film "features a Chinese peacekeeping infantry battalion protecting local refugee camps in the war-torn South Sudan. . . . Shot over five years from China to Africa . . . [it] is a true and vivid account of efforts made by Chinese 'blue helmets' to safeguard world peace and development" ("Blue Defensive Line"). The film opens with foreboding music playing over references to a tragedy that has occurred, with interview clips from Chinese soldiers speaking to their resolve and dedication to the mission. Then there are curated news clips setting up the conflict between forces loyal to Salva Kiir, the president of South Sudan since 2011, and those loyal to Riek Machar,

the first vice president of South Sudan, as well as President Xi Jinping answering calls from United Nations officials for additional engagement in South Sudan by pledging Chinese peacekeepers.

After this initial attention-grabbing setup, much of the first half-hour of the film involves fairly mundane clips of Chinese troops getting vehicles out of mud, learning English, playing soccer, demonstrating martial arts, or conducting first aid with civilians sheltering in their camp. Other scenes depict camp discussions about the tensions between the Dinka and the Nuer ethnic groups, roughly mirroring the groups fighting outside the walls. The Chinese personnel recognize that their mission is "simply" to protect those in the camp and to patrol the key route between UN House in Juba and the temporary base in Mundri.

The filmmakers intersperse these more observational clips with standard documentary interview shots. There are frequent scenes about what soldiers had told their families, their preparations for deployment, and the sacrifices they are making. But again, the refrains are resolute. One soldier notes, "For those who have not been in a war, especially our generation … this is something interesting and very appealing" (0:06:10). Another says, "What we are doing seems to be irrelevant [to] others. It might be irrelevant [to] the Chinese people. But in fact we are showing the world that China is a responsible nation. Therefore, we must shoulder our responsibilities" (1:17:26). And still another declares, "We are the defensive line that keeps out all the darkness and the danger. This is our responsibility and our obligation. Only after you see the danger outside, you can truly cherish the peace" (01:47:43).

Eventually, the conflict between the warring parties escalates, and "more than twenty stray shots, including rockets and mortars" strike inside the United Nations compound (0:39:14). A Chinese medic describes hundreds of wounded coming in, with only him and a few others to handle the cases. The film crew closely follows the infantry units in charge of base defense, preoccupied with rebel infiltration with the civilians in the camp and the difficulties trying to discern who is who. Then a shell strikes one of their APCs and it catches fire—an extremely dangerous situation due to the munitions inside. The camera crew is there to document the casualties. Li Lei is the first to perish. According to a medic on his ambulance, Lei coughed up blood, squeezed his hand, and said, "I have dedicated myself to the Party" (0:49:29). Seven others were wounded, with a second death, Yang Shupeng, the following morning after futile hours of CPR. A montage of global news reports of various countries evacuating their citizens includes a CCTV

(Chinese state media) report lauding the work of the Chinese peacekeepers. As the next interviewed peacekeeper states: "In the end, only the Chinese peacekeepers stayed. Unless we receive orders to leave, none of us would leave our positions" (0:59:01). Yet this is edited with footage including Kenyan and other international troops reacting to these events.

After the attack, there are more subdued, yet highly emotive sequences, including prior footage of some of the fallen sending well wishes home before they died, edited with their colleagues in mourning and claiming to have failed them; another of having to call their relatives to notify them; and later a scene of a makeshift ceremony that included carrying their coffins to the vans that would take their bodies home. In a subsequent scene, a European UN official solemnly honors the sacrifices and commitment of China to peacekeeping, mentioning "for the past twenty-six years the country has contributed a total of more than 30,000 peacekeepers to twenty-four different peacekeeping missions. This is by far the largest contribution out of the permanent five members of the security council" (01:16:31).

The concluding sequences include a scene of pouring libations to their lost comrades: "Finish this drink. We will go home together." As they speak of brotherhood and honor, the music swells and one of the leaders reflects, "Now or in the future, no matter what the situation is, if the country needs us, I will [fight]. And I think all of the comrades from the Second Peacekeeping Battalion will also choose to fight for our country without hesitation" (01:19:16). These affective scenes of mourning then transition to the final sequence of the next unit ready to go out on the next mission, with more upbeat music, and finishing with blue beret personnel marching in formation during the National Day Parade at Tiananmen Square for the seventieth anniversary of the People's Republic of China (see Figure 3.2.3). Such a spectacle valorizes the peacekeeping units as an important part of the Chinese military, projecting an image of anything but "military inferiority."

This CGTN-produced documentary does not exactly exhibit the soul searching of *Restrepo* (2010), a U.S. documentary film about the war in Afghanistan, with young American soldiers questioning why they are there. Chinese state media is instead promoting these military identities as peacekeepers and peacekeeping as preparation for and as proof of one's resolve for a more national defense mission— while also communicating China is a competent force, committed to global security and world peace. As one Chinese peacekeeper interviewed stated, "We go to perform peacekeeping missions in a foreign country to protect the peace and stability there. We are willing to sacrifice ourselves. If one day our country

FIGURE 3.2.3   UN Peacekeeper formation during China's 2019 National Day Parade in *The Blue Defensive Line* (China Global Television Network, 2020).

needs us to protect [it], would anyone doubt us?" (01:17:56). The first year that UN peacekeepers, led by Major Generals Xu Youze and Ma Baochuan, had such a prominent role in the National Day parade was in 2019. In refrain with this documentary that came out the following year, CGTN's parade broadcast also proclaimed, "China contributes the most troops among the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council . . . 13 Chinese peacekeepers have died in foreign lands."

Yet one wonders if these sorts of documentaries can compete in the international marketplace or if comparatively more exciting, action-packed films like *Wolf Warrior 2* are required to reach a larger audience. While the blockbuster and the documentary are different genres, some aesthetic overlaps remain; for example, both employ soundtracks that are at turns melodramatic and heart-pounding. There is also the assertion of military competency as a refrain, being well-trained and willing to take risks and make sacrifices. Even if *The Blue Defensive Line* plays better on living-room TVs than on the big screen in cinemas, the valorization of China's military as upholders of Chinese honor and protectors of Chinese citizens everywhere remains consistent. Moreover, Chinese peacekeepers (Figure 3.2.4) get their own blockbuster treatment in the 2022 film *Defense: Secret Escort*, a "touching story of a Chinese blue helmet firmly guarding world peace" (TMDB) (see Figure 3.2.5).

FIGURE 3.2.4   Chinese members in UN riot police training ("UNMISS Conducts Riot Control Training Exercise, Juba," UN Photo/JC McIlwaine, 2015).

FIGURE 3.2.5   *Defense: Secret Escort* movie poster (Yunnan Jincai Vision Film Co., Ltd.).

One cannot avoid the state-supported and -monitored deluge of this genre of Chinese feature films, promoting wolf warriors and peacekeeping martyrs ready for action and sacrifice—projected globally and perhaps readying their

domestic audiences for the same.[7] For decades the Chinese government and the CCP have recognized the power of these "cultural creative industries" and the production of these pictures (Keane 79). However, one cannot deny that Chinese films are often reflections of, responses to, and entanglements with American cultural productions.

Mimetic Rivalry: Projections in a Geopolitical Theater

There are also Chinese-U.S. entanglements in the funding and production of these films, as well as in their narratives, imagery, and overall aesthetics. Very often, these latest Chinese films reference and respond to representations of the U.S. military, with particular emphasis on special operations forces, elite units, and personnel such as Navy SEAL Chris Kyle in *American Sniper* (2014) (see Figure 3.2.6). Scholarly and analytical consensus points to China's "hundred years of national humiliation" as a fundamental animating force of Chinese nationalism, and a master narrative that legitimates CCP policy and rule, and role as redeemer. A narrative employed since Chairman Mao Zedong, founder of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and its leader until his demise in 1976, and particularly expanded after 1989, is now clearly reproduced by both state entities and private capital—often with assistance from Hollywood. In other words, these rapidly proliferating productions do not always or only project Chinese state-funded jingoism.

Many of these Chinese films' "genealogy of performance" (Roach) also includes—and fairly explicitly—that of the Hollywood blockbuster action film with all of its excesses, reenacting Rambo-esque and special-ops repertoires. Moreover, "China-U.S. slate deals were plentiful in the mid-2010s, when Chinese companies were active in Hollywood as investors, finance partners and potential acquisitors." (Frater "China's Bona"). Take, for example, China's second-highest-grossing film ever, *Wolf Warrior 2*, which brought on a range of talent with experience in the American Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). Those involved in the production of *Wolf Warrior 2* included Frank Grillo, the actor who played the antagonist western mercenary leader, Big Daddy; Sam Hargrave as stunt director; and the directors Anthony and Joe Russo as consultants. The Russo brothers "have

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7. In *Defense: Secret Escort*, for example, the five-person China Special Police Unit features a woman as the lone sniper. Another unit member who is a father shares his admiration of his female child with his colleagues. Perhaps the message is Chinese special units are more "evolved," or more so than outside audiences might think, as they promote and normalize women's service and value for a domestic audience, as well.

FIGURE 3.2.6   Stills from *American Sniper* (top, Warner Brothers, 2014) and *Defense: Secret Escort* (bottom, Yunnan Jincai Vision Film Co., Ltd., 2022).

their own production operation in China" (Frater, "Celina Jade"), in addition to directing some of the highest grossing films in the MCU, from *Captain America: The Winter Solider* (2014) and *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) to *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) and *Avengers: Endgame* (2019)—the latter still the highest grossing foreign film in the Chinese domestic market (Yien Entertainment Data).

Seen, too, in the state-funded *Born to Fly*[8]—originally scheduled for release in 2022, the same year as the American film, *Top Gun: Maverick*, starring Tom Cruise—there are other entanglements (see Figure 3.2.7). Considerable mimesis exists on multiple levels, sure of art imitating life, reflecting the current geopolitics, but also of China imitating American militarism. Indeed, it can be tricky to parse

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8. *Born to Fly*'s 2022 Trailer: https://youtu.be/3pt3cpD8Pao?feature=shared&t=80

FIGURE 3.2.7   Juxtaposition of movie posters for *Top Gun: Maverick* (left, Paramount Pictures, 2022) and *Born to Fly* (right, PMF Pictures, released 2023).

out what is particularly Chinese about these military identities, and what are more Western-derived/-influenced (and now globalized) tropes of martial power and masculinity deployed in these Chinese-produced media. Hu and Guan argue, for example, that *Wolf Warrior 2* "employs the trope of 'man-as-nation' to signify the Chinese nation's rejuvenation and strength through the masculine virtues of *wu*, as martial valor, and *wen*, as cultural attainment" (10). Yet they also acknowledge the character of the Wolf Warrior as "a hypermasculine hero with an authoritative identity that combines traditional Chinese martial and cerebral traits with a Hollywood-style persona" (10). From scenes playing beach volleyball out of the original *Top Gun* (1986) to sequences modeled on Tom Cruise's *Mission: Impossible* action series, Wu Jing *looks like* Cruise, a sort of "Hollywood action hero with Chinese characteristics."[9]

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9. This last phrase is a riff on "socialism with Chinese characteristics," a CCP tagline. Also, beyond the scope of this chapter is a fuller examination of the long history of the influence of Chinese and particularly Hong Kong *wuxia* and martial arts cinema on Hollywood films; e.g., the work of Bruce Lee, John Woo and Jackie Chan. This feedback loop and its entanglements are indeed complicated, and the focus of this chapter is more on the influence of Hollywood action movie aesthetics/tropes/techniques on these more recent Chinese films in question. Classic Japanese samurai films also influenced spaghetti westerns, particularly the intensity of stylized violence, with throughlines from 1970s grindhouse kung fu to film that invokes all these genres—perhaps

Hollywood fare certainly associates muscular male bodies with national power (e.g., Captain America and Rocky) and many of them make use of Eastern martial arts to demonstrate fighting prowess. Again, the keyword here is entanglement. Bernays wrote first nearly a century ago: "The American motion picture is the greatest unconscious carrier of propaganda in the world today. It is a great distributor for ideas and opinions. The motion picture can standardize the ideas and habits of a nation" (166). Perhaps, too, such movies can also standardize transnational audiences. Wu Jing noted in an interview all the ways Hollywood action movies have influenced him and said: "So I think it's about time that China uses movies—a cultural expression—to tell the world about our development, and our values, and our desire for peace" (3:59-4:16). And perhaps during the aforementioned "wolf warrior cycle" (X. Yang) of films in the mid-2010s, it was more possible to put other pictures in the mix; as Jane Yang argues, "while privately produced main melody films do contain state-sponsored nationalist messages, they also offer some space for directors and audiences to insert more nuanced ideas and interpretations that do not uphold state ideologies."

However, Chinese-U.S. collaborations have reduced recently. Frater noted how "much has changed since 2018, when the Chinese government put the brakes on what it considered to be excessive dealmaking" ("China's Bona"). To be sure, there remain aspects of imitation, but there are also attempted differentiations— and even confrontations, such as *The Battle of Lake Changjin* (2021), starring the *Wolf Warrior* franchise director and star, Wu Jing. The film villainizes U.S. General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964)—who wanted to use nuclear weapons on China and "lay down a belt of radioactivity along the Yalu" (McCullough)—and the trailer opens with MacArthur's prideful assertion that "this will be a fast war." The rhetorical retort is "not so fast," thanks to the courageous Chinese. The titles that then flash on the screen (while omitting the fact that the Soviet Union had set up a communist government in North Korea): "Korea, 1950, a nation split in two. . . . US Forces cross the 38th parallel into Northern Territory. . . . The PRC sends an army of volunteers to fight back. . . . One of the fiercest battles ever fought. . . . *A battle that changed the world order*" (emphasis mine). Perhaps ironic considering the Chinese government's current valorization of UN peacekeeping service, the

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most notably and densely packed with references: Tarantino's *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003). See, for example: "Kill Bill Vol.1: Where Does Homage End and Originality Begin?" *Art of the Scene.* CineFix-IGN Movies & TV https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XNyA-GLnUk and Brian Camp, 7 May 2019, "Filming Across Cultures: Cowboys, Samurai and Kung Fu Champs in the 1970s" https://briandanacamp.wordpress.com/2019/05/17/filming-across-cultures-cowboys-samurai-and-kung-fu-champs-in-the-1970s/.

United States was actually fighting under the auspices of the United Nations in this conflict, which approved crossing the 38th parallel. But the Chinese soldiers are not killing anyone in a blue helmet in this film.

Neither is strict historicity the actual impetus behind these pictures. *Wolf Warrior 2* was the highest grossing Chinese film in 2017 and *The Battle of Lake Changjin* surpassed it in 2021, both in terms of the scale of production and the box office gross. And though our Wolf Warrior is still the star, films like *Wolf Warrior 2* sought to show a new, bolder, and globally ascendant China while collaborating with Hollywood behind the scenes. *The Battle of Lake Changjin* was perhaps a throwback to propaganda-style narratives like *The Opium War*, with far heavier Chinese state investment and influence, as the CCP's propaganda department commissioned the film (Witte).

Although very much a state-produced film, *The Battle of Lake Changjin* contains a number of lighthearted scenes, such as the one when rural Chinese fighters discover American pin-up girls and Hershey bars in a base they overrun (2:16:34). But otherwise, it is not quite a fun action film in the mold of *Wolf Warrior 2*. The film is deadly serious, of massive scale, and is truly affecting in its portrayal of soldiers from each side killing each other, particularly considering the current, real-world relations between the United States and China. Toward the end of this nearly three-hour epic, the 1st Marine Division is retreating towards Hungnam Port and comes upon dead Chinese soldiers frozen on top of a ridge, almost like a monument to their sacrifice. The American commander stops to salute them and remarks, "Fighting against men with such strong will like this, we were not ordained to win" (02:45:33).

The CCP repeatedly references the Korean War (1950–1953) in numerous sequels and spinoffs. For example, in *Sniper*, a 2022 film about "Zhang Taofang, a young army recruit who at age 22 sets a record during the Korean War by reportedly killing or wounding 214 American soldiers with 435 shots in just 32 days . . . released during the 70th anniversary of the Korean War . . .[with] the tagline: 'Send them all back to hell!'" (Billington).

One must ask why—and why now?—the CCP would fund, and the Chinese market and audience would demand and reward, such a film of epic proportions focused on an albeit pivotal two-week period in the 1950–1953 Korean War, when Chinese "volunteers" and soldiers overwhelmed American forces and forced their retreat. Whether the CCP is priming its population to mobilize and endure massive sacrifices, or producers are just capturing a zeitgeist

to make money, the overarching messages remain: *In "a battle that changed the world order"* (as the film's trailer suggests), *we cannot be outmatched. If we just have the military capability combined with mass and patriotic courage, we will avoid humiliation.* From the "never again" defeats in films like *The Opium War* to the "remember when" victories in films like *The Battle of Lake Changjin,* such narratives thus promote China's own military industrial complex and recruiting in the current geopolitical context.

Visual anthropologist Jay Ruby argues "the filmic illusion of reality is an extremely dangerous one, for it gives the people who control the image industry too much power" especially since so much of what most of us know about the world comes through these pictures (149). Typically, international relations scholars—who study international security and conflict, as well as geopolitics in general—tend to focus on hard-data indicators: GDP, economic growth, and economic-as-political and as military-industrial power. No doubt China's economic strength has been critical to its rise and to its growing military capabilities. Realists in the field of international relations argue that this means a likely-to-inevitable conflict between the up-and-comer and the status-quo power, the United States.[10] But motion pictures and the (re)production of powerful narratives also constitute an industry with significant scale and world-shaping impact. This chapter (and volume) argues for insights and interpretations drawn from the humanities to understand that impact.

Miscalculations can result from misunderstandings and miscommunication—and escalation can result from rhetoric and from these powerful projections. Following the work of René Girard on the mimetic desire for power leading to mimetic rivalry and conflict, I would argue that these mimetic practices of projection—of creating images others imitate often out of desire for what those images signify in terms of status/valor/power—can also signify and even encourage mimetic rivalry ("What is Mimetic Theory?"). This cycle is perhaps even more powerful, or "charged" to escalate, when those images and identities are already violent and/or oriented towards war. "[I]t is urgent to complicate the dominant idea of Homo sapiens as a fully rational, autonomous and purely reflective creature, in order to foster a minor, yet perhaps more realistic perspective that considers humans as embodied, relational and (for both good and bad) mimetic, all too mimetic creatures" (Lawtoo 724).

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10. Perhaps this argument is most exemplified by John Mearsheimer's The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (2001) and Graham Allison's *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (2017).

As we are involved in such a potentially violent memetic rivalry, being rigidly committed to more deterministic models of inevitable conflict substantiated by realist international relations theory could further increase the probability of militarized responses. An emphasis on relationality and harmony—even if "just" rhetorically—would also be good for us to consider lest we add fuel to the fires of self-fulfilling prophecy. Avoid what some claim to be inevitable; it is possible such rhetoric and imagery helps make it so. "Even more emphatically, [pictures] are (as philosopher Nelson Goodman puts it) 'ways of worldmaking,' not just world mirroring. . . . They are not simply manifestations of coherent world pictures . . . but sites of struggle over stories and territories" (Mitchell xiv–xv, 196).

As each actor postures on the other side of the mirror intending to deter their adversary, the back and forth might rather be escalatory, each more and more convinced of their righteous recourse to violence and war—and indeed of its necessity and inevitability—as such narratives become "naturalized" (Barthes). While the former U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was probably not thinking about the respective film industries of the United States and China, General Mark Milley (2019–2023) has suggested "that the rhetoric itself can overheat the environment" (qtd. in Baron). The pictures we put out into the world have already had their effects projected back at us. Rambo, Rocky, and Captain America become Wolf Warrior; *Top Gun* becomes *Born to Fly*. Thus, we co-produce our reality, seemingly less and less cooperative, entangled but unable to coexist, competition driving toward conflict.

Is it possible for stories and pictures to be an actual force for deterrence? Can the production and projection of different narratives and images into this feedback loop, images and ideas that emphasize the virtues of peacemaking, of diplomacy, of solidarity, as much or more than military prowess, do more to truly avoid the war nobody wins? If Margaret Atwood is correct that "war is what happens when language fails" (qtd. in Samet), it seems certain kinds of language, a certain set of signs, of militarized identities projected in call and response, can also lead to war or at least make it more—or less—likely, depending upon what we create. U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953–1961) spoke of waging and spreading notions of peace in his 1953 State of the Union Address: "There is—in world affairs—a steady course to be followed between an assertion of strength that is truculent and a confession of helplessness that is cowardly."

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Sang-il Lee's *Yurusarezarumono* (*Unforgiven*, 2013)

WAR, MEMORY, AND HISTORY

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Japanese film director and screenwriter Sang-il Lee's *Yurusarezarumono* (*Unforgiven*, 2013) is a remake of American director and actor Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992) that "transposes [the] revisionist sentiment in *Unforgiven* . . . with a similarly critical eye toward Hokkaido's role in the making of modern Japan" (Exley 152).[1] Set in 1880 on the fraught frontier landscape of Hokkaido, Japan's northern island, *Yurusarezarumono*, like *Unforgiven*, reflects on a historical moment, the genre with which is it most closely allied (*jidaigeki*, "period piece," but more specifically "samurai film"), and the portrayal of the frontier of an expanding nation. Unlike the original film, however, *Yurusarezarumono* pointedly engages the annexation of the northern island and the violent subjugation of the indigenous Ainu, leveraging genre conventions to "offer new points of entry into established histories of genre and cultural trauma" inflicted on them (Lomax 185). This focus has been central to most academic assessments of the film so far, including Exley's, Grunert's, and Lomax's. Another striking but less often discussed aspect of *Yurusarezarumono* is its elegiac, mournful tone, a characteristic closely tied to situating its tale as the violent aftermath of warfare, steeped in older traditions of narrating warfare.

Yurusarezarumono is a contemplation of historiographies of violence and displacement, which focuses on the explicit narrative framing of the film as a retrospective look at war that is focalized through the voices of its victims. *Yurusarezarumono* relies on longstanding tropes associated with feminized memory

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1. For ease of reference for the general reader, names mentioned in this article are given following Western convention of personal name followed by surname.

holding, even as it simultaneously also relies on other, more modern genres and ways of engaging the traumatic past. Specifically, it directly engages on several levels with narrative practices associated since medieval times with articulating violence and its consequences by situating its story within the context of epoch-changing civil war; its ongoing dialogue between official and affective histories; and its foregrounding of a female survivor at the conclusion of the tale it tells.

Sang-il Lee and Remaking *Unforgiven*

Sang-il Lee (b. 1974) has been active as a filmmaker since the release of his first film, *Chong*, in 1999, which won four awards, including the Grand Prix, in the 2000 Pia Film Festival.[2] *Chong* explores the experiences of a Korean-Japanese high school student growing up in Japan, an experience with which Lee—a third-generation Korean-Japanese and the child of Korean educators living first in Niigata and then Yokohama—was himself familiar. Since that time, he has directed eleven feature films. A number of them, like *Chong*, explore outsider status to one degree or another: *69* (2004) brings Ryū Murakami's eponymous novel about Okinawan protests of U.S. military bases to the screen, and the award-winning *Hula Girls* (2006) focuses on the harsh realities of a mining town in the Tohoku region. Most of his films also explore characters of moral complexity, including his adaptations of Shūichi Yoshida's novels *Villain* (2010), *Rage* (2016), *Wandering* (2022), and, most recently, *Kokuho* ("National Treasure," 2025) (Exley 151). *Yurusarezarumono* similarly pays particular attention to not only the dispossessed Japanese who find themselves on the northern island in the 1880s, but more fundamentally to the Ainu whose lands, lifestyles, and language were being brutally eradicated as Japanese settlers who were moving north.

Lee has stated that although he had a fascination with Eastwood's *Unforgiven* since childhood, the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster constituted by the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdowns at Fukushima Daiinichi Nuclear Power Plant of March 11, 2011 (hereafter known as the 3/11 Triple Disaster), in the Tohoku region prompted him to consider "mak[ing] a film about the Ainu using *Unforgiven*" (Kōyama). Something about the brokenness of that moment, apparently, was one impetus for film. The working relationship between actor Ken Watanabe (who would star in *Yurusarezarumono*) and Clint Eastwood, dating from Watanabe's appearance in Eastwood's *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006), aided the

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2. It was released in 2001 by Pia as Lee's first commercial film.

negotiation process with Warner Brothers, which announced that they had given permission for the remake in August 2012. However, despite many point-for-point echoes of Eastwood's "last Western" (Exley 150), In a 2013 interview, Lee stressed how, rather than focusing on imitating the original per se, *Unforgiven*'s status (as well as Eastwood's) provided the necessary financial and other support for him to make his film about the Ainu (Kōyama). At the 2013 EigaFest opening night in Los Angeles, California, he further remarked, "Rather than a remake, it's a reassessment of that period of Japan's history" ("Ken Watanabe, Sang-il Lee").

Lee's reassessment emerged in the context of early twenty-first century revisionings of Hokkaido's history, which have been closely tied to active support of the rights of the indigenous Ainu. Mistreatment of the Ainu reaches back at least to the eighteenth century in Japanese history, but the annexation and naming of Hokkaido marks the beginning of a concerted effort to colonize the northern island and to prohibit the language and lifeways of the Ainu (Mason 2–3). Scholars emphasize that *Yurusarezarumono* dismantles conventional tropes associated with Hokkaido by foregrounding the brutality with which the Ainu were (and continue to be) treated.[3] Lee's reassessment participates in this larger conversation by calling into question the long-standing place in the Japanese imagination of Hokkaido as a "clean slate," holding the promise of new beginnings for the industrious and the bold. Lance Lomax draws attention to how *Yurusarezarumono* undercuts genre expectations by moving "indigenous populations and issues of colonisation and assimilation to the forefront of the film to counter aspects of this cinematic promise" (197), thus providing "new points of entry into established histories of genre and cultural trauma" (185).

Revising received narratives about the past and accessing cultural trauma in ways that honor its victims are well-trod paths for filmmakers, critics, and academics. Although Lee denies that his interest in telling Ainu stories in *Yurusarezarumono* is connected to his own Korean-Japanese identity, other issues at the forefront of social justice movements in Japan in 2013 did inspire him. These included the victimization of Korean-Japanese following the 1923 Kanto earthquake and the ongoing fight for recognition of (and reparations for) Koreans and Korean-Japanese who had been forced into labor by the Empire of Japan during its occupation of the Korean peninsula (1910–1945). These are parts of the Japanese imperial past that resonate thematically with the story he tells in *Yurusarezarumono*.

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3. The Ainu were forcibly removed from their lands and required to speak Japanese, the consequences of which continue to threaten Ainu heritage. Only recognized as Indigenous peoples in Japan in 2019, their struggles to maintain or regain traditional lifeways are ongoing (Hossain 758–60).

But Lee's remark about the timing of his decision to make *Yurusarezarumono* also deserves attention. The 3/11 Triple Disaster represented a discrete moment in the collective experience of the Japanese. The enormity of the suffering experienced left artists struggling for ways to express unimaginable grief and loss. The months and years after the disasters witnessed an outpouring of creative work by writers, visual artists, performers, and others, particularly those with close connections to the area affected. Although Lee was not from the Tohoku region, the area devastated by the disasters are mapped geographically, culturally, and economically onto the impoverished mining town he had depicted in *Hula Girls* (2006). His decision to remake *Unforgiven* following the disaster suggests that the trauma of the moment—however different from the kind explored in the film—contributed to his exploration of another traumatic past moment, perhaps to provide a meaningful response to the present, and perhaps also to find points of access to other horrific past events.

Works created in the aftermath of the 3/11 disasters seek to capture the newness and inexpressibility of the moment in a variety of ways. Some are extremely experimental, defying traditional forms to express something fundamentally new, such as Fukushima-born Hideo Furukawa's novel, *Horses, Horses, in the end the light remains pure* (2011), or Ryōichi Wago's Twitter poem series "Pebbles of Poetry" (2011). But simultaneously, the disasters proved an impetus for a renewed interest in works from the distant past specifically addressing mourning. Kamo no Chōmei's *Hōjōki* (1212), a Buddhist meditation on humanity's place in a disaster-filled world, popped up in newspapers and in online blogs. Performances of elegiac medieval arts, including medieval Noh drama, which often centered on the placation of a troubled ghost, and recitation of *The Tale of the Heike*, Japan's great martial epic from the fourteenth century, memorialized those lost in the ensuing years.[4] In 2016, Furukawa completed a translation into modern Japanese of *The Tale of the Heike*, a medieval war tale whose framing as a placatory requiem for war dead following the Genpei War, Japan's first civil war (1180–1185), becomes even stronger in his retelling, a topic returned to below. While none of these constitutes an explicit inspiration for Lee's *Yurusarezarumono*, this storyteller of the dispossessed was creating a remake of a genre film set in a period of profound national mourning during another period of profound natural trauma for which

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4. See, for example, announcements specifically linking performances to 3/11 memorial: http://morinohibiki .com/jpn/post_70.html (2015); https://st-gregorio.or.jp/2018-11-18_23th_inheritance_of_the_japanese_ music_culture/ (2018).

centuries-old modes of remembering the dead represented one way in which grief was being addressed.

Outsiders and Insiders: The Backdrop of War in *Yurusarezarumono*

Yurusarezarumono is a fairly faithful adaptation of Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, in which Clint Eastwood stars as former gunslinger William Munny, who joins an untested young gunslinger, the Schofield Kid (Jaimz Woolett), and Munny's old compatriot Ned Logan (Morgan Freeman), to avenge the facial scarring of a prostitute in the frontier town of Big Whiskey. Order there is enforced by the unpredictable and often sadistic lawman Little Bill (Gene Hackman). Famously called Eastwood's "last Western," it is a film that both delights in and deliberates on the violence celebrated in the Western as a genre (Beard 42–43).

Lee's film adheres to the main plot, with men seeking the bounty offered by a group of prostitutes in the settlement of Washiro for the killing of two men who, in a drunken rage, slashed the face of one of them, scarring her permanently and thus lowering her commercial value as a prostitute. Veteran actors Ken Watanabe and Akira Enomoto playing the Munny and Logan equivalents, Jūbei Kamata and Kingo Baba. Yūya Yagira is Gorō, the Scofield Kid character, and Kōichi Satō is Ichizō Oishi, a colder, more brooding version of Little Bill. The veteran actors have star power not unlike Eastwood, Freeman, and Hackman, especially within the *jidaigeki* genre. The adaptation is set in the same year as the original—1880—but the scene is Hokkaido, formerly Ezo, Japan's northern frontier.

The end of the nineteenth century was particularly tumultuous in Japan. The Tokugawa shogunate, which had been in power from 1600, collapsed from both internal and external pressures, and the final shogun stepped down in favor of a constitutional monarchy (the "restoration" of the emperor Meiji) in 1867. Forces resentful of the ouster of the Tokugawa took up arms against imperial troops in the Boshin War of 1868–1869 but were eventually defeated after hard-fought battles at the northern and southern edges of the realm. As the ensuing Meiji period began, the samurai class, which had occupied a privileged social position during the Edo period (1603–1868), was reduced to commoner status, suffering an accompanying loss of livelihood and income. Former samurai were prohibited from carrying swords in 1876, and the suppression of the uprising of Takamori Saigo in 1877—fictionalized in Edward Zwick's film *The Last Samurai* (2003), in which Watanabe also played a starring role—by a conscript army definitively marked the end of the samurai age.

Thus, like Eastwood's film, the temporal setting of *Yurusarezarumono* is in the broken aftermath of divisive civil war, and the location the barely controlled frontier of a forcibly expanding nation. Unlike *Unforgiven*'s opening ironically bucolic prologue about Munny's conversion from gunslinger to family man, *Yurusarezarumono* rather begins in the heat of the war. The film opens against a black backdrop, accompanied by a foreboding orchestral soundtrack. We read:

> As the days of the shoguns ended and Japan entered its modern era, the new government was relentless in its pursuit of the defeated remnants of the shogun's armies. Their enemies never far behind, these former samurai fled into the untamed wilds of the northern island of Hokkaido. But flee though they might, their pursuers followed. (00:00:24–00:00:40)

The soundtrack fades to hoofbeats, as the scene opens on the frozen ground where imperial troops are hunting down the last of the shogunal partisans. The year 1869 appears as an intertitle.

The camera zooms in on one fleeing anonymous partisan—horseless, weaponless, cold, and starving. It eventually closes in on his face, which, although unshaven and caked in snow, is unmistakably that of Ken Watanabe (Figure 3.3.1). A voiceover begins: "If you meet a bear in the woods, stare it right in the eye. You've got to judge whether it's going to attack. Any animal will avoid a fight if it can. That's instinct. But anyone, man or beast, who thinks he's facing death will fight like a demon. 'I don't want to die.' That's the cry of pure instinct" (00:03:14–00:03:54).

We watch the Watanabe character ambush and then skewer a pursuing soldier to death with a tree branch, an ironic counternarrative to familiar tropes of the defeated samurai's heroic stoicism and the sad but inevitable victory of superior technology celebrated in films like *The Last Samurai*.

The scene now fades to the face of the speaker, Ichizō Oishi, dressed and coiffed as a Meiji period modern man and facing the camera with a dulled expression in his eyes. He is illuminated by a flickering flame; heavily falling rain can be heard in the background. His is the first voice heard in the film, and his musings carry us from the desperation of the survivor killing his pursuers in 1869 to the story's present moment (Figure 3.3.2):

> Once when we were chasing down the last of the Shogun's samurai, I saw a bear sacrifice in a native Ainu village. For their god, they took a bear that they'd raised

FIGURE 3.3.1   A close-up of a Shogunal partisan. (*Yurusarezarumono*, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2013.)

FIGURE 3.3.2   The actor Kōichi Satō as Oishi Ichizō. (*Yurusarezarumono*, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2013.)

from a cub and cut off its head. It made me feel sick. The natives (*Ainu*) came crowding around to kill it but it fought back. They'd always been kind to it, but now they were killing it. It looked terrified. (00:04:04–00:04:50)

The camera retreats to reveal that he is sitting inside a western-style building talking to subordinates, all in military uniform, a storm raging in the night outside the windows. He continues: "We're 200 miles from Sapporo here. Beyond us there might be more bears than people. But there's a strange thing about virgin land (*mikaitakuchi*, or "undeveloped land").[5] It draws rats with big ideas. You have to exterminate rats when their small, before they grown into bears" (00:05:21). At this point he is interrupted by a disturbance in the tavern, and as he and his men head over to investigate, another intertitle tells us it is now 1880, the thirteenth year of the Meiji era.

The combination of a visual narrative and a spoken one invite a conflation of the two moments of narration (the war; the rainy night in 1880) and also introduce a series of important motifs. Oishi describes Iyomante, an Ainu ritual in which a bear is raised and then sacrificed by a community over which its spirit (manifest in its skull and skin) are believed to offer protection. For the Ainu, it is a ritual of community building, but for Oishi, it is an act of barbarism that inspires disgust: the willful misreading of Ainu lifeways by Oishi and his compatriots. Yet the introduction of a sacrificial figure seems an appropriate analogy as we watch this remnant of the old ways being hunted down in the name of modernity. But of course that is followed by Oishi's shift from apparent pity for the sacrificial bear to a call to squash the "rats" before they become "bears," underlining the cruelty lying behind his deadened stare: the actual barbarism of the film will be that of the soldiers, eradicating the Ainu: the slippage of image patterns in Oishi's monologue is an evident sleight-of-hand, revealing the unreliability of this untrustworthy narrator, framed cinematically by the conjoining of the moment of war (1869) with the present (1880).

The war continues to reverberate through the story that follows, frequently in flashbacks, but also in larger thematic elements: the juxtaposition of the sword (the now-obsolete samurai) and guns (the modern citizen-soldier); the ongoing forceable displacement of Ainu by the military (begun in 1869); and a recurring question about the identity of the killer of a group of refugee Christians during the war. The past cannot be escaped by the film's present, and that past is the war

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5. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

inexorably interwoven with the broken lives of the individual characters inhabiting the story.

Language and Other Keepsakes

Throughout the film, what is kept and what is lost is a recurring theme, expressed in both tangible and intangible artifacts. Most prominent as a tangible object is the samurai sword. An iconic marker of the samurai past, the sword is culturally linked from Japan's ancient past through the present with the heroic stories of great warriors, as heirloom swords often define the continuity in lineages of great warrior houses. The samurai sword appears in *Yurusarezarumono* only after the re-introduction of the hero, Kamata Jūbei, played by Watanabe (and thus clearly the partisan from the opening scene), whom we now see tripping in the mud as he collects horse dung to fertilize his barren potato field on his tiny dirt farm on an open, windswept landscape. Encouraged by his former brother-at-arms, Kingo, to seek bounty for avenging a scarred prostitute, he at first declines.[6] As Kingo rides away, he remarks to Jūbei, "[Y]ou can deny your past, but the past won't forget you" (00:16:34–00:16:38). The scene then cuts to nighttime, with Jūbei brooding as he looks over his sleeping children. The camera takes the viewer outside, to a distant shot of Jūbei digging by lantern light. He disinters two things representing his buried past—an Ainu necklace and his sword, which will remain guiding symbols throughout the film. They point not only a personal history of violence but also a national one: the sword marks him as a samurai, the defeated side of the conflict that brought Japan modernity. Unlike cherished heirloom swords from the great war tales of Japan's earlier ages, Jūbei's is buried, hidden away and rusted: he had walked away from his samurai past. The necklace is the first indication about the identity of his dead wife, a memento of the other reason he once had for living, and which he had likewise buried. He takes both with him as he leaves, telling his two young children to go to the Ainu if there is any trouble.

The image of the samurai sword is made more complicated later in the film, when a swaggering ex-samurai from the Chōshū domain, Masaharu Kitaoji, rides into the frontier town hoping to win the prostitutes' bounty. As in *Unforgiven*, he is sadistically brutalized by the lawman (Oishi) and sent away, in this case with his sword (rather than a pistol) bent. He has arrived with an adoring biographer,

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6. Kingo is written with the characters 金吾, "gold" and "I" or "me," playing with the theme of bounty-hunting in *Yurusarezarumono* just as Munny's name does in *Unforgiven*.

Yasaburō Himeji. Their first conversation in the settlement's tavern finds them reading a newspaper and commenting on their historical moment. Kitaoji's first utterance in the film is: "These are great times. We can eat meat in public. And this . . . ." (00:38:42-00:38:44). "This" is a newspaper article on the assassination of Toshimichi Okubo two years earlier and the ongoing unrest centered on former samurai of the Choshu and Satsuma domains. Kitaoji's bluster provokes a drunk former Satsuma samurai sitting nearby, and Kitaoji challenges him to a duel. This situation reminds the audience of the unsettledness of the early Meiji period, as well as the increasing peripheral status of the former samurai. It is only here, at the edge of the nation, where the bravado of a swordfight might be meaningful—this is perhaps why Himeji has followed Kitaoji here. Kitaoji and the samurai step outside to duel, but Kitaoji has fixed the show: he has provided his opponent with a sword that cannot be drawn from its sheath. Thus Kitaoji succeeds in embarrassing his opponent only by sabotaging the man's sword. His bravado fails when he is faced minutes later by Oishi's rifle-toting men; he will eventually be sent packing with a bent, useless sword. Like Jūbei's rusted blade, this one, too, provides ironic commentary on the mythologized samurai past.

The story unfolding in town is counterpointed by Jūbei's journey to catch up with Kingo. As Jūbei sets out from his farm, the theme of the forceable near-erasure of the Ainu following Japan's annexation of Hokkaido introduced in Oishi's initial voiceover returns. Jūbei's first stop is an Ainu village, where he speaks with an older man in Ainu language (subtitled in Japanese in the film); their conversation reveals the man to be his father-in-law. The old man cannot understand the ways of the Japanese, where money motivates a man to kill another for cutting up a woman. He asks if the children have learned Ainu language, and when Jūbei shakes his head, the old man says, "Just as well" (00:36:34-00:36:35), initiating a contemplation on language continued later in the film.

Jūbei now joins Kingo, and the two are almost immediately harassed by a young man strongly reminiscent of the Kikuchiyo character played by Toshirō Mifune in *Seven Samurai* (1954): he is young, instinctual, and brash. His name is Gorō Sawada; his enthusiasm for the killing to happen and Jūbei's reputation as a killer serving as a mirror of Himeji's equally adoring attention to Kitaoji. Jūbei and Kingo eventually take him in because he claims to know a quicker route to the town.

The film next shifts between two spectacles of brutality. Oishi, backed by his men, beats Kitaoji senseless. He throws his first punch in response to Kitaoji

balking when asked to relinquish his short sword because "a sword is the samurai's soul." Oishi responds, "I hate ex-samurai," (00:45:58–00:46:14) and begins kicking the quavering Kitaoji as the town looks on. At once apparently a score settled between old rivals, this is also a symbolic clash between the samurai past and the Meiji present. As in the opening sequence, it is imposed with fists and feet, the most basic and instinctive form of violence. In this sequence of scenes, Himeji, the writer of biographies from the metropole, emerges as a focalizer. Unlike Beauchamp, the prototype in Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, who witnesses simply a trouncing of one gunslinger by another, Himeji here witnesses the force of the moment of epochal shift from sword-bearing samurai to gun-toting militia man. The scenes of these Meiji men—all misfits making a place for themselves at the nation's new frontier—brutalizing each other between scenes of feasting on flesh serves as metaphoric foreshadowing of the scenes that immediately follow.[7]

Meanwhile, moving through the open and forbidding landscape, Jūbei's party stumbles upon a group of militia harassing a family of Ainu. Watching from a distance, Gorō interprets the scene for Kingo: it is the funeral of the family's mother. Jūbei explains to Kingo that the Ainu custom is to burn a woman's house when she dies so she can take it to the afterlife; the militiamen are harassing the Ainu for burning the house, echoing Oishi's willful misunderstanding of the Ainu ritual from the film's opening. When the head of the militia commands one of the Ainu men to take off his earrings and becomes enraged when he doesn't, Gorō runs in and translates the command to the Ainu, but to no avail, and the brutality escalates. As Gorō is about to pull a knife, Jūbei intercedes, saying to the Ainu man—again in the Ainu language—"Don't try to fight them. You'll make your mother cry" (01:01:09–01:01:11) (Figure 3.3.3).

This scene is pivotal for its foregrounding of Gorō, the young man caught between things: he embraces the vicarious thrill of being the sidekick to a famed killer, but also impulsively cannot help but protect the Ainu family; he is an observer who cannot simply watch; he is a mixed-race child, born, he tells the others that evening, "a piece of shit with the blood of Wa (Japan), whose men trample everything, and the Ainu, too weak to fight back" (01:02:20–01:02:32). Whereas his status as young admirer of Jūbei's reputation echoes Himeji's of, first,

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7. The cinematic gaze here offers further bitter commentary at this historiographical register in a sequence of scenes of carnivorous excess: when we first meet him, Himeji is gnawing greedily on a plate of ribs while he just as eagerly consumes Kitaoji's bravado. As the scene shifts outside to the abortive duel, a bucket and table covered with boar spines and a cooking pot sit in the foreground. As Kitaoji swaggers back into the tavern, Oishi awaits him, sucking on more bones. The larger framing of the tale as the aftermath of war and the end of the samurai age finds these dispossessed men of violence and swagger feasting on the bounty of this wild place.

FIGURE 3.3.3   The character Kamata Jūbei, played by Ken Watanabe, admonishes mourning Ainu natives. (*Yurusarezarumono*, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2013.)

Kitaoji, and later Oishi, his position in relation to the plot is more complex: Both witness and participant, he harbors growing ambivalence for Jūbei, a man of Wa who, like his own father, tramples everything.

Gorō's depiction of his birth genders the conquest of the Ainu conventionally, and nowhere more specifically than in the context of Ainu language. Jūbei and Gorō here are intermediaries because they know the language of the mothers. But it is also "just as well" that Jūbei's children don't know their mother's tongue. And ultimately, language is both futile (the men's interpretative skills are of little help to the Ainu) and suppressed in the name of mere survival. Jūbei's admonition to the resistant Ainu mourners is silent acquiescence in the name of the maternal: "Don't try to fight them. You'll make your mother cry." This advice is born of abjection and reflective of the adage that the victors make history—an assertion made later by Oishi, as he admonishes Himeji to portray him favorably. Through this sequence of scenes, the two younger men emerge as parallel yet different sorts of focalizers: Himeji is the outsider looking for tales of the last samurai (and his sword) as the modern nation expands its frontiers, whereas Gorō, keeper of the language of the mothers, seeks to find a voice as the reviled hybrid child of the brutality of that expansion.

The plot from here follows the original *Unforgiven* fairly closely: arriving into town in the rain, the feverish Jūbei is beaten badly by Oishi, who then carves a "villain's mark" on his cheek. Jūbei is nursed back to health by the scarred prostitute, Natsume. The men who slashed her face are killed by Jūbei and Gorō, and Kingo is beaten to death by Oishi, thus unleashing Jūbei's final rampage. But the larger context of the conquest of Ezo lingers in telling deviations from the original. One is the dialogue between Natsume and Jūbei as she nurses him back to health. Where in Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, there is an awkward moment when Munny turns down Delilah's offer of a "free one," here, the relationship between scarred prostitute and scarred ex-samurai is cast in familial terms. Passing Jūbei his belongings once he is recovered enough to leave his sickbed (Figure 3.3.4), Natsume tells him that he reminds her of her father, "like a man who would die with the weight of his sins upon his back" (01:19:38–01:19:40). Jūbei removes his wife's necklace from the pouch Natsume has handed him and gently strokes it as he responds, "My wife said something like that. Kill and kill and kill, and then be killed in turn. That's all I thought my life was. It took me years to realize there

FIGURE 3.3.4   The characters Jūbei and Natsume. (*Yurusarezarumono*, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2013.)

was another way." When asked where his wife is, he responds, "watching over my children" (01:19:51–01:20:46). The young woman sees him as perhaps he sees himself: a man broken by life, aching over the choices that have defined it, and yet willing to murder for money. The necklace, originally paired with the sword as a symbol of the domestic sphere in contrast to the military one, here also emerges as a *katami*, a memento of a lost beloved, and a talisman that watches over him, even as he turns away from his promise to his wife to give up his life of killing.

Unlike in the original film, where Delilah remains essentially a victim, here we see a subtle alignment pointing to the different ending of *Yurusarezarumono*. Natsume, like Jūbei's dead wife, is able to imagine Jūbei as a father, even as she also recognizes him as a killer. She also inspires him to speak of his wife and of his regrets, even as he also conceals some of his story from her. She is the first character to actually evoke from him something connected to his wife and the promise he has abandoned. The necklace that had remained tucked away resurfaces here, marking an affinity as Natsume begins to emerge as yet another member of the younger generation to bring a voice to the film's story.

Stories, Silences, and the Last Word

What narrative voice reveals and what it hides is also thematized in a recurring question about Jūbei's responsibility for massacring a group of "hidden Christians," which emerges at crucial moments and draws attention to narrative and authoritative voice in relation to the settling of the northern island. Shortly before Jūbei, Kingo, and Gorō encounter the Ainu funeral, they rest at a stream, where Jūbei and Kingo drink, while Gorō urinates into the water. He says: "Jūbei! Did you really kill those Christians hiding at Yūbari and the soldiers hunting them? Hiding in their village was smart. The religion was illegal. They needed to hide. But somehow the government found out. You thought they'd betrayed you, and you killed them all. Women and children, too. So, how many have you killed?" (00:55:50–00:56:40). Jūbei refuses to answer. In private, Kingo chides his friend for letting Gorō believe that it was Jūbei, rather than the soldiers, who had killed the innocents, but Jūbei remains unresponsive.

Later, upon recognizing the feverish Jūbei in the tavern, Oishi says, "Himeji! This is 'Jūbei the Killer' of the Shogun's elite force!" Himeji responds, "Jūbei the Killer?! Who killed those Satsuma samurai? And those Christians at Yubari?" "Women and children, too," Oishi responds. Natsume witnesses this

confrontation and the beating that follows. The later scene in which she hands him his belongings after nursing him back to health ends with her, too, asking about the massacre. After asking if he really intends to kill her attackers, she says, "Did you kill those women and children for money, too?" Again, Jūbei gives no answer (01:10:00–01:10:20; 01:21:20–01:21:29).

Yūbari was one of the early coal mining settlements established as part of the nation's project to "develop" (*kaitaku*) Hokkaido; the backbreaking work spurs Kingo to try to win the prostitutes' bounty. The violence done to a group practicing a forbidden religion (going "underground" in a town built for working underground) points to the various kinds of devastation occurring at the northern borderlands: the promise of refuge denied; the displacement of people and the destruction of the land by the coal mines; the ambiguous enforcement of "law" by the soldiers there. This resurfacing past, for which no definitive assessment of responsibility is ever offered, stands as a critique of the narratorial reliability of the makers of history in a context where its victims are forced into silence. Tellingly, the younger generation disinters this story, if only in pieces: first Gorō, then Himeji, then Natsume.

It is these three that bring the film to its conclusion, in an ending that diverges significantly from Eastwood's *Unforgiven*. Here, it is Natsume who tells Jūbei of Kingo's murder. As he leaves to avenge Kingo, Jūbei leaves the reward money with Gorō, to be given to his children, and his wife's necklace with Natsume, entrusting the two of them with what is left of his broken life. The final showdown in town is fought primarily with swords, but also with guns used mostly as bludgeons. There is little valor in it; both camera and hero careen about over a somber soundtrack, the brutal frenzy to kill or be killed reminiscent of the opening sequence. It is a stinging indictment of the samurai spirit as well as the civilizing hand the Japanese government used as a justification for its annexation of Hokkaido.

Memory, history, and narrative, thematized throughout the film, are further emphasized at its conclusion. Once Jūbei has killed or scared away all of the soldiers at the tavern, the quivering Himeji emerges from under a dead body, realizes he is uninjured, and stutters to Jūbei, "I'm a writer. Just a writer. For newspapers, magazines. Sometimes I write books." "A writer?" Jūbei, bloodied and doubled over in pain, asks. "I didn't see anything. I don't know anything. I won't write anything!" the frightened Himeji promises. Jūbei's response is, "Write it just as you saw it . . . But write one word about the whore or the Ainu, and I'll find you and kill you" (01:58:56–01:59:51) (Figure 3.3.5). Like his warning to the Ainu

FIGURE 3.3.5   Himeji and Jūbei. (*Yurusarezarumono*, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2013.)

mourners, and evocative as well of his unwillingness to talk about the hidden Christians, here silence becomes the only response this damaged soul can offer against the repeated victimization of the weak.

As Jūbei leaves, the tavern is engulfed in flames, and snow falls heavily in the night. The prostitutes look up from where they are carefully taking down Kingo's body. Jūbei mounts his horse, then rides slowly into the dark, snowy landscape, the tavern engulfed in flames behind him. The camera cuts to Natsume and Gorō watching from afar; Natsume breaks into uncontrolled weeping. The scene fades to black, and a voiceover by Natsume begins:

> That was the day I saw Jūbei for the last time [the scene lightens to a shot of Jūbei's wife's grave, then cuts to the homestead]. He entrusted his beloved to Gorō and me, and he departed [cut to interior of the house, where the children await their father's return; they go to the doorway and see a horse approaching; as the horse draws closer, it's evident the riders are Gorō and Natsume]. The morning sun gives me strength. I've begun to think that I can settle down here. Jūbei loved his wife, he loved his children. This is the place where he once harbored hope. [scene cuts to Jūbei, his back to the camera, trudging through a snow-covered landscape]. I believe that someday he will return. (02:03:38–02:05:04)

The film ends with a prolonged shot of Jūbei's face, then just his eyes, as he moves falteringly forward through the snow, his snow-covered, grizzled countenance an echo of that at the film's opening scene.

This layered ending thematizes two kinds of storytelling. The first is articulated through Himeji, intentionally documenting Japanese history as it

unfolds. His dress and manners mark him as an educated, modern man of the times and someone from the center; he is also the antithesis of the rugged, stoic former samurai he idolizes. Here, the boundary between narrator and subject are clearly demarcated. Unlike Beauchamp (his *Unforgiven* prototype), he is also keenly aware—and frequently reminded by his former samurai companions—that he bears witness to the death of one age and the birth of another. Oishi chides him when he first arrives: if he is a writer, he must be able to read, and the sign at the entrance to town said "no weapons." But immediately apparent is that Himeji in many ways indeed cannot read the situation. He only learns to as he witnesses the brutalization of Kitaoji and then Jūbei, and finally the killings of Kingo and Oishi. In his final scene, he cowers as he watches what should be a grand swordfight quickly deteriorate to a slugfest.

Himeji's impulse to extoll the samurai past—an urge born of a long tradition of glorifying one-on-one combat, a legacy reaching back to medieval war tales and stretching through modern and contemporary *jidaigeki* film—is refocused on the mayhem and capriciousness of the lives of barely controlled former samurai on the modern frontier, and it frightens him into promising silence. Jūbei's admonition (for which there is no equivalent in *Unforgiven*) is instead to write what he has seen: the cruel brutality of the Japanese settlement of Hokkaido. His warning to not speak of or for its victims is intended to forestall a misreading and miswriting of the colonists' barbarism as samurai heroics, while also implicitly acknowledging that there are stories that an outside observer is not qualified to tell. Gorō, for his part, has equally been silenced by the horror of actually having killed a man: both the metropolitan reporter and the mixed-race son of the violent border are scared into silence by their entanglements in the ongoing brutality.

But the heroic samurai narrative called into question here has always been imbricated with loss and memorial, and Lee taps into this corollary cultural motif by focalizing his revision of the samurai narrative through Natsume. Her return to Jūbei's children, carrying the necklace of their mother and the memory of their father, strongly echoes memorial narrative practices emerging in war tales stretching back to the late fourteenth century with *The Tale of the Heike*, a record of the Genpei War, and the most important antecedent for samurai narrative from the fourteenth century through contemporary times.[8] In its most widely

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8. A work extant in approximately 80 variant lines, *The Tale of the Heike* comprises recensions intended for recitation, which tend toward affective memorial narrative, as well as those intended for reading, which range from quasi-official history to historical fiction. The oldest variant dates from 1309, and the most recent from the late fifteenth century.

circulated form, the tale serves as a requiem for the losing side, concluding with lone female survivor of the defeated Heike clan having retreated to a convent to pray for her kin killed in the war. Enfolded in the tale are vignettes mirroring this final scene: a woman, sometimes entrusted with a memento, dedicates her life to prayer for a fallen hero, guarding his memory into the future. Such female memory holders are prevalent in other arts as well, ranging from the medieval noh theatre to early modern kabuki and puppet theatres and beyond: the role of the female survivor is to remember, to help others remember, and to pray for the dead.[9] In *Yurusarezarumono*, Lee seems to suggest that this older mode of narrative might be useful in finding ways to recount more modern tragedies. Entrusted with what Jūbei cherished, Natsume tends his wife's grave and the children at his home. Unlike Himeji's history, hers is personal, affective, and runs both counter and parallel to history written by the victors. As the film ends, her fragile narrative has replaced Oishi's menacing one at the film's opening.

Whether or not Lee intentionally invokes this motif, the power of the kinds of memorializing performed by *The Tale of the Heike* in the context of the 3/11 Triple Disaster was as a way to memorialize the disaster's victims. As noted above, Hideo Furukawa undertook a translation of *The Tale of the Heike* that he explicitly links to his experience of 3/11 (Furukawa). One important contribution of Furukawa's 2016 translation makes to the tale is a foregrounding of a mournful narrative voice that comments with sorrow and sympathy on each individual loss in the story. The translation was sufficiently noteworthy that it served as the basis for an anime series in 2021, *Heike Monogatari (The Heike Story)*, that transformed this voice into the character of Biwa, a supernaturally gifted young girl who preserves the stories of the fallen Heike clan.[10]

Filmed in in the same cultural context and moment, *Yurusarezarumono* likewise taps into the potential for the memory-holding female voice to access something other than the histories told by the victors; it is a voice intimately connected to the specific story it tells. It is also inherently partial in both senses of the word. By retreating to Jūbei's homestead to care for what he cherished, Natsume inherits the role of his dead wife, caring for the children and remembering their

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9. The main characters (some ghosts, some living people) in the noh plays *Kinuta*, *Matsukaze*, or *Ohara gokō* or the wives and daughters in the jōruri and kabuki play *Kanadehon Chūshingura*, for example, all are memory minders.

10. In Naoko Yamada and Studio SARU's 2021 eleven-part animated series based on Furukawa's translation, Biwa bears witness to the fall of the Heike clan. She is the child of a *biwa hōshi*, peripatetic blind minstrels who chanted the tale with the intention of putting the souls of the war dead to rest; she herself can see the future and never ages.

father with and for them: it is an act of displaced affection (and partiality), born of her seeing her father in Jūbei. But she is only ever an incomplete surrogate (as is Gorō, who returns with her), struggling to vouchsafe something she barely knows, to preserve a family history that is not her own. She does not share the mother's language, and the insights she has into Jūbei's past are complicated by his silences: the film at once asserts the meaningfulness of the memory-holding female voice while simultaneously underlining that this voice can never speak the fullness of the story it aims to preserve. It is at once an embrace of traditional modes of affective history and an indication of their inevitable incompleteness: they will always also point to the silences that cannot be recovered, especially where language itself is being systematically suppressed.

The film's final scene underscores this point. As Natsume concludes her final monologue, there is a slow fade from the homestead to Jūbei trudging through a snowy, desolate landscape. For a moment, there is a ghostly interposing of the two scenes, as the voice of the memory-holder gives way to the uncertain future of the exiled, ghost-like hero (Figures 3.3.6 and 3.3.7). Her memory-holding is also a haunting, his spirit both ever at his home and ever wandering further away. Thus although ultimately the damage already done is irreparable and the stories of the lost are unrecoverable, that knowledge exists beside the memory of "another way" of engagement that Jūbei's wife shared with him and that Natsume now struggles to find. Ultimately, the film rests on her giving voice over the unsteady, flickering image, holding close the violence and the pain of the past even as it can never fully express them.

FIGURE 3.3.6   Jūbei's image appears against his homestead. (*Yurusarezarumono*, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2013.)

FIGURE 3.3.7   Homestead fades and is replaced with image of Jūbei in snow. (*Yurusarezarumono*, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2013.)

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PART IV

Military Sound and Image

Editor
John Pendergast

Wozzeck Goes to War

BERG'S ADAPTATION AS COMMENTARY ON WORLD WAR I

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National identities develop through the creation, destruction, and alteration of cultural meaning. The German Army General Staff theorized in 1902 that "a war . . . must seek to destroy the total intellectual[1] and material resources of the enemy state" (2). Thus, when the German Army bombarded Reims Cathedral and destroyed the university library at Louvain in September 1914, it was intentionally attacking the cultural artifacts of perceived enemies in promotion of a German nationalist narrative of cultural supremacy (Kramer 31). German artists during World War I also understood cultural production in this way. Thomas Mann (1875–1955) referred to the war as "a purification, a liberation, an enormous hope," a future victory for the "German soul" (qtd. in Tuchman 311). During the war, German concert halls hosted performances of German music almost exclusively; French composers were absent (Watkins 213). The French too affirmed this view of identity. While the composers they associated with humanism—Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert—were heard in French concert halls, more recent composers seen as promoting nationalism and militarism—Brahms, Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Schoenberg—were banned. Brahms (1833–1897) and Wagner (1813–1883), who had died long before the war, prompted these associations due to their compositional styles, themes, and views on nationalism. Schoenberg and Strauss, however, held clear opinions. Strauss, for example, stated in August 1914 that "one feels exalted,

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1. The adjective here is "geistig" which also means spiritual or related to the soul. In German, the word for humanities is *Geisteswissenschaften*—the study of *Geist*.

knowing that this land, this people . . . must and will assume the leadership of Europe" (qtd. in Watkins 227).[2]

The Second Viennese School, led by the modernist Arnold Schoenberg and two of his disciples, Alban Berg and Anton Webern, fought for German culture, literally and aesthetically. Each served willingly in the Austro-Hungarian Army. Schoenberg felt "proud to be called to arms" (224). In their music, they saw themselves as continuing the work of the "First" Viennese School of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven to promote German modernism in opposition to French neoclassicism (Simms 4).

When Alban Berg (1885–1935) composed his opera *Wozzeck* (1923), adapting Georg Büchner's (1813–1837) play *Woyzeck* (1837), he transposed the tale of an abused shell-shocked soldier to another cultural-historical moment: when Germans in Habsburg Austria and Imperial Germany were allied across borders in a war against France. Scholars have long considered Berg's opera as an adaptation, that is, "an announced and extensive transposition" of existing meaning (Hutcheon 7). According to Theodor Adorno—whose musicological writings return later in this chapter regarding distinct German and French modernisms—"what Berg composed is simply what matured in Büchner during the intervening decades of obscurity" (*Alban Berg* 84). Douglas Jarman suggests—with more specific reference to the historical moment—that "through [Berg's] choice of musical structures . . . the opera becomes . . . a protest against both an inhuman and sadistic social order and an uncaring and hostile world" (60).

This chapter considers Berg's opera as a multimodal adaptation, which recontextualizes Büchner's work as commentary on World War I. By interpreting his opera as an example of an alteration of cultural meaning in service of national identity—here within a German musical tradition in opposition to the French—this transformation is read through both content and form, drawing from Berg's own experiences in the Austrian military, music theory and history, and the opera's sociohistorical context. Following background on the play and the opera adaptation, this chapter presents a theoretical and historical context for Berg's

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2. Another example of the French recognition of the cultural element of World War I is the 1915 song "Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison" ("Christmas for Children Who No Longer Have a Home"), L 147, by Claude Debussy, who himself plays an interesting role in German nationalist views of music as discussed below. In the song's text, Debussy tells of what the Germans have done to French children—and focuses specifically on cultural meaning: "The enemy took everything, / everything, everything, / even our little bed! / They burned the school and our teacher too. / They burned the church and the Lord Jesus Christ" ("Les ennemis ont tout pris, / Tout pris, tout pris, / Jusqu'à notre petit lit! / Ils ont brûlé l'école et notre maître aussi. / Ils ont brûlé l'église et monsieur Jésus-Christ"). All translations are by the author.

nationalist views of German music[3] and interprets the opera as anti-French war commentary and nationalism.

Büchner based *Woyzeck* on the life of Johann Christian Woyzeck (1780–1824), an impoverished former soldier from Leipzig who was arrested and tried for murdering his purportedly unfaithful mistress, Marie. Though he suffered from delusions and the defense pleaded insanity, he was found guilty and publicly executed (Perle, "Woyzeck and Wozzeck" 212). In Büchner's play, Woyzeck, a poor soldier, is tormented by everyone he encounters: the Captain, the Doctor, the Drum Major, Marie—their child's mother—and even Andres, a friend who cannot understand him. Enraged over an affair between Marie and the Drum Major and the resulting mockery by the Captain and the Doctor, Woyzeck kills Marie before guilt and paranoia lead to his own death by drowning. The play focuses on oppression, alienation, and a man's descent into madness, central themes in Büchner's wider work.

Büchner left *Woyzeck* unfinished as twenty-six short scenes with abrupt caesurae, reinforcing the sense of alienation. When Karl Emil Franzos obtained the manuscript in 1875, he added content and imposed a clear order, publishing an 1877 version, *Wozzeck*,[4] that was already an adaptation of Büchner's original. A 1909 edition by Paul Landau retaining Franzos's title added text and further reordered the scenes. This edition was used for its first performance in Munich in 1913 and its 1914 Vienna debut (Jarman 9; Perle, "Alban Berg" 157). Present at the latter (Jarman 1), Berg reacted strongly: "Immediately there arose in me an inescapable necessity to create music for this work" (*Pro Mundo* 322). He published his own *Wozzeck* in 1923. Some but not all differences between the original play and the opera adaptation are attributable to these distinct editions rather than specific choices by Berg.

Berg reduced Büchner's work to fifteen scenes that were evenly divided into three acts.[5] He retained the original text while omitting scenes that provided further development to the main characters, several transitions, and alternate versions absent from the Landau edition. In another case, he combined two scenes.

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3. To refer to the use of music to promote a German national identity, I use formulations such as "German nationalist approaches to music" to avoid confusion with the more specific "musical nationalism"—the use of folk melodies and themes in music by Bartók, Chopin, Dvořák, Sibelius, Wagner, etc.

4. Franzos misread the title because its text was so faint he had to chemically treat the manuscript to decipher it (Jarman 8). For clarity, this chapter refers to the play and its protagonist as *Woyzeck*/Woyzeck and the opera and its protagonist as *Wozzeck*/Wozzeck.

5. For a detailed account of Berg's restructuring of Büchner's *Woyzeck*, see Jarman (11–15).

Finally, he cut a scene in which Woyzeck buys the murder weapon from a Jewish merchant—perhaps to avoid accusations of anti-Semitism (Gilman 165).

Wozzeck is the work of a soldier. From 1915–1918, Berg served in the Austro-Hungarian Army. Though he did not enlist, he wrote to Schoenberg in September 1914—shortly after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo—of his shame at being "merely an onlooker at these great events" (qtd. in Ross 72) and expressed "the urge 'to be in it' . . . to serve my country" (qtd. in Perle, "Alban Berg" 148). George Perle describes these views in terms of a popular and militaristic nationalism: "Berg succumbed to the war fever. Along with so many other persons of learning, culture and refinement, on every side, he assumed that the material sacrifices demanded by the war would ennoble and purify society" ("Alban Berg" 152). After conscription, Berg completed infantry basic training, but, due to lung problems, he performed guard duty in Vienna and then worked an office job at the War Ministry until the end of hostilities (Watkins 235).

During the war, Berg adapted *Wozzeck*'s libretto and, as Patricia Hall's research shows, determined the music's formal structure. Hall also notes how he planned from the start to use the Military March from the Three Orchestral Pieces, Op. 6, completed in August 1914, shortly after the war began (10). While on medical leave in 1917, Berg completed the first full scenes. Otherwise, he had great difficulty finding time to compose and became increasingly disillusioned with the war. By 1918, he deemed it a "filthy war" (qtd. in Watkins 235). Finally, by summer 1919, he had composed seven of the fifteen scenes, and by November, he saw himself as a "fierce antimilitarist" (qtd. in Perle, "Alban Berg" 152), a shift that did not, as shown below, alter his views on the supremacy of German music over French.

Berg's *Wozzeck* is remarkable for several reasons. First, as an extremely popular twentieth-century opera, it is the sole example from the Second Viennese School to remain in the standard repertoire (Hsieh 324). Second, while similarly inventive in its fusion of post-tonality and early music forms to contemporaneous works by Schoenberg, it is also clearly indebted to post-Wagnerian Romanticism, including in its use of the *Leitmotiv* (Stein 175). Finally, as a *Literaturoper* (Dahlhaus 238–48)—an adaptation of a literary work to opera[6]—bearing close textual fealty to the original, Berg gave his musical composition a clear narrative structure while many works of his peers were produced with more oblique forms by design.

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6. Though Dahlhaus uses *Literaturoper* to refer to German literature opera adaptations beginning in the nineteenth century, it is now often used more broadly to refer to any opera closely based on a work of literature.

Linda Hutcheon defines adaptation as both a process and a product. As a process, it is the "transcoding" of an existing cultural artifact that may "involve a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a novel), or a change of frame and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view, for instance, can create a manifestly different interpretation" (7–8). When to a new medium, as is the case for Berg's adaptation, the process of "intersemiotic transposition" (16) requires specific choices as to how meaning will be rendered. The building blocks of semiotic forms—volume, timbre, color, meter, articulation, etc., or, more generally in Berg's case, music and verbal text—are referred to by scholars of multimodality as modes (Kress and Van Leeuwen). Modes are chosen by producers of meaning—here Berg as composer and librettist—for their specific affordances in unique contexts. Multimodal inquiry thus considers the modes chosen, their interaction, and the interpretation of the resulting sociohistorical meaning—cocreated here with an audience, which would have held many experiences of World War I in common with Berg when the opera was first performed and shared much less with the public of Büchner's time.

Early scholars of adaptation studies largely focused on fidelity criticism by evaluating a given adaptation's resemblance to its source. The initial scholarship on *Wozzeck* as adaptation thus considered the narrative differences between Büchner's and Berg's works, especially in scene order. Many of these claims, however, have since been negated through research on the edition Berg used. For example, both Hans Ferdinand Redlich and Willi Reich discuss Wozzeck's death by drowning and the final scene in which children, including Wozzeck and Marie's son, play near the lake in which the couple's corpses rest. They interpret these moments as Berg's commentary on the cyclical nature of Wozzeck's societal torment—his son, now an orphan, is destined for more of the same. Yet these innovations came from Franzos, through Landau, rather than Berg.

An important consideration specific to opera adaptations is how the added music works. Hutcheon notes that "music is arguably as important a narrating component as are the words; this function is in addition to its manifest affective and even mimetic power" (41). In his study of *Literaturoper*, Gary Schmidgall opposes a composer "ignoring [the text] and composing thinly disguised absolute music" (14). Applying this view, Schmidgall praises Benjamin Britten's *Death in Venice*, remarking that had the composer relied on the more elaborate musical textures of Wagner, Mahler, or even his own *Peter Grimes*, Mann's original text would be altered too much for his tastes. Referring to the ambiguity surrounding the

protagonist, Schmidgall notes: "Mann achieves this dismantling of Aschenbach's 'reality' through the subtlest minutiae and altered tone, and Britten matches this low-profile artistry . . . through similarly understated local musical effects" (347). Regardless of this example's reliance on fidelity criticism, it demonstrates the central importance considering the music itself in opera adaptations and how it relates to and affects the interpretation of the libretto's text.

Adaptation studies further looks at shifts between specific multimodal ensembles, or normalized sets of modes, as each carries unique affordances. For example, Hutcheon argues that for a novel to be dramatized it must be "distilled, reduced in size, and thus, inevitably, complexity" (36). Schmidgall refers to this process in *Literaturoper* as "selective heightening" (319), that is, determining appropriate moments in the source material for greater focus or exaggeration. This heightening requires the excision of content extraneous to the essential elements of a *chronotope*—the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 84). John Pendergast highlights two such processes in his discussion of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*: "telescoping," which reduces the forces and settings of a work of literature and "transvocalism," which is the transposition of words among characters. These result in what he calls "neochronotopes," or altered and often streamlined spatiotemporal settings in an opera adaptation (26–27). For example, Lensky's aria in Act II, Scene 2 of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, "Where, where have you gone?" (Куда, куда вы удалились?, *Kuda, kuda vy udalilis'?*), comes at the beginning of the duel in which he dies at Onegin's hand. In Pushkin's original, the text was in a goodbye note composed at home the night before the duel. This spatiotemporal shift heightens the event's meaning by reducing the number of scenes and connecting it more immediately to Lensky's death (Pendergast 54–55). Beyond the effects of the music, a second central issue in opera adaptation is thus not only what composers and librettists change from the original, but also what they choose to profile—or heighten—and to what end.

In considering *Wozzeck* as a multimodal adaptation, this chapter thus focuses on how the addition of music by Berg, as well as his use of selective heightening, changes the original play's meaning to comment on Austrian-German national identity and military culture in the turbulent era at the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Residents of late Imperial Austria were caught between a range of potential identities. Benedict Anderson refers, for example, to the burgeoning "double status:

'universal–imperial' and 'particular–national'" of Austrian identities (84). It is possible to differentiate yet further among state, national, linguistic, and regional identities (Bruckmüller 22). In Habsburg Austria, German was the dominant linguistic and national identity. German nationalists—those who concerned themselves with the construction, establishment, and promotion of a national identity—viewed this status as a given, understanding German in "universal, nonterritorial, and largely cultural terms" (Beneš 15). In short, German nationalists in Austria were less concerned with state than national borders and viewed themselves as German before Austrian (Watkins 213). Berg presents himself in precisely these terms in his writings. Unlike his teacher Schoenberg,[7] Berg, expressing no allegiance to the Habsburg state, makes almost no mention of Austria in contrast to his repeated references to German, Germans, and even Germany.

In Vienna, German nationalism came to prominence in the nineteenth century (Anderson 84) in the form of constructed beliefs and invented traditions. Eric Hobsbawm defines the latter as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1). These traditions are ideological and created for a specific goal. Composers and critics holding German nationalist views intentionally and explicitly borrow from existing music in terms of content and form to embed themselves in an imagined history. Further, these invented traditions are produced discursively through mass media (Hobsbawm 1) and enabled through a common language[8] or set of cultural practices. As a relevant example in music that will be discussed further, Berg draws a formal continuity across hundreds of years, from Bach to Schoenberg.

Nationalism is by nature exclusive. Given the many competing identities, German nationalists in late Habsburg Austria defined themselves in opposition to specific "others," both internal and external. Among the former were a variety of groups throughout the empire,[9] most notably Jews. Hobsbawm explains anti-Semitism in this context, noting that considering Jews as the other "provided a demagogic appeal against both capitalist liberalism and proletarian socialism

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7. In 1950, Schoenberg wrote: "As a soldier I did my whole duty enthusiastically as a true believer in the house of Habsburg, in its wisdom of 800 years in the art of government and in the consistency of a monarch's lifetime" (224).

8. German first became the state language of Austria-Hungary in the 1780s (Anderson 84).

9. For a discussion of Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians, etc., as others, see, e.g., Bruckmüller, Judson, and Wingfield.

which could mobilize the great masses of the lower middle class, handicraftsmen and peasants who felt threatened by both, under the banner of 'the nation'" (79).

While anti-Semitism dominates the German nationalist scapegoating of internal others,[10] the present consideration of the connections of German identity to military culture requires a focus on the nation's external foes. France figures centrally here due to the establishment myths of the German and Austrian states through military liberation from French domination. "Like many another liberated 'people,' 'Germany' was more easily defined by what it was against than in any other way" (Hobsbawm 278). And this historical narrative survived beyond founding myths. In the lead-up to World War I, nationalists delimited the German nation "by the concept of a secular national enemy against whom the German people had defined their identity and struggled to achieve unity as a state; and by the concept of conquest or cultural, political and military supremacy" (Hobsbawm 274).

As Germans across Europe fought together during World War I, the connection between Austrian culture, German nationalism directed at the French as external other, and military culture might seem self-evident and inevitable, but it also had a long history. "Military culture," according to Laurence Cole, refers specifically to "a web of meanings, reference points, norms, and social customs pertaining to everyday life" (3) as well as "the impact and meaning of military symbols, ideals, and behavior in society as a whole" (15). Cole outlines the close ties between military culture and national identity in Austria well into the twentieth century (1) and discusses the state as a "military monarchy" defined at least in part "by the use of the army as a force for internal order and by the functioning of conscription as an instrument for establishing collective identity" (11). He argues that this martial state helped to unify the multinational population and provided a stage for the internal fight for identity (3). Germans thus sought to establish themselves as culturally dominant through military culture, and other nationalities within the empire viewed these aims with disdain, as Czech nationalist Václav Choc demonstrates: "Warfare denationalizes us Czechs. Militarism is the most forceful means of Germanization" (Cole 293).

Cole summarizes thus that there is "little doubt that a German-centralist nexus permeated many aspects of military culture in imperial Austria" (321–22).

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10. Sander Gilman refers to late-Habsburg Vienna as "the most anti-Semitic city in Central Europe and the one in which the Jewish visibility in intellectual circles was very high" (103). See also Schorske (116–80) for discussion of Georg von Schönerer, Karl Lueger, and Theodor Herzl and the rise of both populist anti-Semitism and Zionism.

It is in this way that Austrian identity is most clearly linked to the German nation and to military culture. Further, the acute cause of the outbreak of World War I—the killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the German heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb student—further helps explain the German identification with the military in opposition to perceived national enemies. These circumstances clarify the origins of the initial broad support for the war effort, the unity of the German nation and military culture, and the connection of identity to war.

The representation of this exclusionary and martial German national identity in and through culture, especially in education, the sciences, literature, and music, was already nascent in the seventeenth century prior to the age of nationalism (Blanning 236–40; Watkins 213). Thus it was hardly new when Frederick the Great, the king of Prussia from 1740 to 1786, claimed that "only the Italians can sing and only the Germans can compose" (Blanning 234). And by the late eighteenth century, Mozart identified France as an "other" when he reacted menacingly to a commission for a French opera: "I tremble from head to foot with eagerness to teach the French more thoroughly to know, appreciate and fear the Germans" (Blanning 272–73).

German composers holding nationalist views specifically defined themselves and their opponents through culture and the concept of *Bildung*—education and self-development (Wingfield 4).[11] In 1741, the publication *Der musikalische Patriot* (*The Musical Patriot*) stated: "Indeed, I believe that we Germans can go on instructing foreigners in how music can be developed still further, in much the same way that our fellow-countrymen, notably Leibniz and Wolff, have demonstrated how the philosophical and mathematical sciences can be raised to a still greater pitch of perfection" (Blanning 238). Such nationalists viewed French composers as superficial—focused on melody and rhythm representing current popular and local tastes—and saw themselves as complex, sophisticated, *gebildet* (learned, in the sense of *Bildung*), and also timeless and universal (Blanning 272).

It was thus no novelty for German composers in the period preceding World War I to understand their work as an "intellectual resource" connecting identity and conflict, as defined by the German Army General Staff in 1902 and discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Musicians often participated intentionally in this invented discursive tradition. When Germans triumphantly sang the Lutheran chorale "Nun danket alle Gott" ("Now, Thank We All Our God") in Berlin

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11. For more on the connection of *Bildung* and German identity and nationalism in Austria, see Brodbeck.

following the announcement of the war, they acted as their forbears had after a 1757 military victory over Austria and in 1871 in Versailles at the birth of the German Empire, and as Hitler would again in March 1933 (Blanning 231–33).

The Second Viennese School as the musical avant-garde of late Habsburg Austria shared these nationalist views of music. As Adorno notes in his differentiation of German and French national modernisms, Schoenberg saw his music as existing within a German tradition that he believed was superior to that of the French (*Alban Berg* 12). And Schoenberg explicitly connected these views to the war with France in a letter to Alma Mahler in August 1914: "Now comes the reckoning! . . . We will throw these mediocre kitschmongers into slavery, and teach them to venerate the German spirit and to worship the German God!" (qtd. in Ross 72). For Schoenberg, German music, despite a modernist surface aesthetic, was painstakingly and historically tied to organized and logical forms. Thus, his goal in his work was not the invention of new atonal forms, but rather—especially in his free atonality period—the "emancipation of dissonance" (Schorske 343; Stein 175), not outside of but rather intentionally within historical forms. Carl Schorske makes this distinction between appearance and form when he notes that "Schoenberg worked almost unconsciously with camouflage, using traditional aesthetic forms to screen his subversive work" (343). According to these claims, German nationalist views of music relied upon an invented tradition in a historical continuity while attacking French modernism for lacking the same depth.[12] Berg clearly understood German music in these terms, stating in 1924 that "today, on Schoenberg's fiftieth birthday, one need be no prophet to say that through the works that he has already sent forth into the world, the supremacy of his own art seems assured—as well as that of German music for the next fifty years" (*Pro Mundo* 195). Finally, Berg located his own music within this history:

> I have been influenced by Schoenberg but also, for example, by Beethoven, Bach, Wagner, Mahler. . . . All the moderns have learned from Schoenberg. But Stravinsky or Hindemith expresses himself differently from us. . . . Everything that German music has always had—richness of forms, harmonic richness, chord steps, polyphony, etc.—characterizes Schoenberg's music and that of his circle. (*Pro Mundo* 327–28)

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12. For a wider discussion on the opposition of German and French modernisms, consider Adorno's discussion of Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky (*Philosophy*). Stravinsky, though born in Russia, wrote his main works for Paris's Ballets Russes and later became a French (and American) citizen.

When Berg composed *Wozzeck* during and after World War I, he constructed it intentionally within an invented German tradition of historicized formal complexity. And he viewed this tradition in stark contrast to the music of the German nation's central military adversary, the French.

In creating his adaptation within this martial aesthetic conflict, Berg significantly alters the meaning of Büchner's original without—as Schmidgall cautions against—writing absolute music independent of the text. He does so through the recontextualization of the work through music and minor text alterations, allowing it to be read anew. In this chapter's reading, Büchner's soldier protagonist, oppressed by society, becomes a German soldier during World War I with France. Glenn Watkins suggests:

> Büchner's *Woyzeck* . . . dealt openly with the plight of humankind through the image of the downtrodden soldier, but it was not set in wartime, and its locus was not the battlefield. . . . By the time of the premiere of Berg's opera, its principal topic now clearly pointed to the pervasive alienation that had come to settle over the whole of Europe because of the war. (238–39)

The following expands on Watkins's claim, beginning with musical formal considerations, followed by textual changes, and concluding with specific multimodal examples.

The opera's musical formal structure reflects this invented tradition of German national musical identity. Each scene in the opera is composed using specific forms. Act I is constructed of five character pieces, each of which introduces one of the opera's main characters: a suite (sc. 1, the Captain), a rhapsody (sc. 2, Andres), a military march and lullaby (sc. 3, Marie), a passacaglia (sc. 4, the Doctor), and a final piece marked as Andante affettuoso (quasi Rondo) (sc. 5, the Drum Major). Act II is a five-movement symphony: sonata movement (sc. 1), fantasia and fugue (sc. 2), largo (sc. 3), scherzo (sc. 4), and rondo con introduzione (sc. 5). Finally, Act III is made up of six inventions, each based on a different musical element: a theme (sc. 1), a note (sc. 2), a rhythm (sc. 3), a hexachord (sc. 4), a tonality (Orchestral Interlude), and a regular eighth note movement (sc. 5).[13] While these musical forms had been widely used internationally since the Baroque and Classical eras, many were strongly associated with German composers from the eighteenth into the twentieth century. For example, the invention is synonymous with Bach

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13. This overview is from Pople (148).

and the symphony largely with Germans, especially Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Bruckner, Brahms, and Mahler. Even within these forms, Berg preferred German innovations. Consider his use of a scherzo movement in Act II, Scene 4, a symphony substitution Beethoven pioneered for the previously more standard Minuet and Trio form, itself derived from French Baroque dance forms. And Berg himself believes German composers had perfected these forms, as he asserts in a 1930 lecture on *Wozzeck*:

> Only in music that is based on the great tradition of German music—with its moving harmony, its diverse rhythm, especially with its polyphony and immeasurable richness of forms and shapes—is there a straight path leading from Bach to our own time. The music of *Wozzeck* does not stray from this path of German music—and when I think of music pure and simple it is . . . the only one that I find to be music at all. (*Pro Mundo* 258)

Finally, even criticism of the structure as overly formal has been linked to German views on aesthetics. Consider, for example, Emil Petschnig's claim that "only in Germany . . . could such aesthetic confusion, such a jumble of theories arise, receive acclaim and even material support" (149).

Berg's allegiance to German music in *Wozzeck* goes beyond larger forms to include vocal lines and melodies as well. Claiming that the value he places on the voice is not in superficial beauty but rather emotion and depth, he states:

> The treatment of the voice [in *Wozzeck*] is much more in line with many works of the *German* classicists, in which the voice is thoroughly emotional. . . . It has nothing to do with so-called atonality if a melody . . . lacks the broad phrases of Italian cantilena. You will look in vain for this style of singing in Bach as well, and hopefully no one will question his melodic power, much as we German composers cannot be taken to task if we . . . learned from Bach rather than from Puccini. (*Pro Mundo* 238, emphasis in original)

A further reflection of his views on melody in German musical history is his use of the *Leitmotiv*, closely associated with Wagner. The most famous *Leitmotiv* in the opera is introduced with the words "Wir arme Leut'!" (We poor people!), sung by Wozzeck in Act I, Scene 1. Initially, it consists of an arpeggiated minor major seventh chord beginning on the 7th, then the 5th, the 1st, and the 3rd (see Figure 4.1.1).
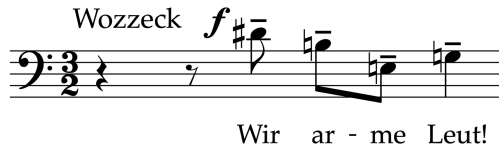
FIGURE 4.1.1   "Wir arme Leut'" *Leitmotiv* (act I, sc. 1, mes. 136, *Wozzeck Klavierauszug* 22).

Finally, lest there be any question that his support for an invented German musical tradition is specifically opposed to French composers, he explicitly says so in his lecture on *Wozzeck*:

> There was never any intention here to imitate the musical style of the French (such as Debussy).[14] In fact, everything [in Wozzeck] that may seem impressionistic in this sense is far removed from the vague, foundationless sonorities in that style, which has nothing essential in common with German music. (*Pro Mundo* 257)

Berg's shifts in content reflecting the war extend also to changes to the libretto. Here, he directly connects his own experiences as a soldier to his protagonist (Jarman 66). In a 1930 interview, he states he saw a "natural relationship between me and this poem" (*Pro Mundo* 327). This claim helps with the interpretation of several changes from Büchner's original. First, Berg substitutes the peas of Büchner's protagonist with beans, central to the diet of Austro-Hungarian soldiers (Perle, "Alban Berg" 157). A similar change is the addition of *Schöpsenfleisch* (sheep meat) to the diet the doctor prescribes; *Schöpsenfleisch* was primarily intended for Bosniaks in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I (Scheer 6). The inclusion here of food intended for non-Germans further supports the reading of an intentional nationalism; it is another indignity Wozzeck faces as a German. Finally, Woyzeck's public urination in Büchner's play becomes a cough for the opera's Wozzeck requiring health restrictions, much as Berg himself experienced in the army due to his bronchial asthma (Gilman 166–71). Thus, in Act I, Scene 4 of the opera, the rabid positivism of the Doctor, depicting the author's parodying of Enlightenment absolutism, becomes a personal attack on a soldier facing real health issues through this content shift. In fact, on August 7, 1918, Berg wrote: "I

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14. Interestingly, elsewhere Berg seems to view Debussy, unique among French composers, as equal to Germans. "If I were to name the artists whose work . . . lies on the path from Bach to the present . . . I would, in addition to the greatest, Gustav Mahler, name only Reger, Debussy, Zemlinsky, and Webern. In their works I find the same elements that made up the greatest of our classicists, that is, melody, motivic and thematic work, harmonic richness, artfully formed structure, polyphony, and rhythm. Where even one of these components seems lacking, the musical artwork, in my estimation, falls below what we have come to understand as German music" (*Pro Mundo*, 320–21).

have been spending these war years just as dependent on people I hate, have been in chains, sick, captive, resigned, in fact humiliated" (qtd. in Perle, "Alban Berg" 154). It is difficult to believe that Berg's Doctor torments a nameless everyman destroyed by class without any connection to the composer's life. Each instance here analogizes Wozzeck's societal mistreatment to Berg's experiences in the war, which importantly, as Hsieh notes, would have been clear to contemporary audiences (325).

Several further changes and additions concern the effect of the music on the narrative. One example is in Act II, Scene 5 when the soldiers snore in chorus. No words are sung, and the events are entirely unique to the opera. Berg presumably added the scene to locate the work within his own war experiences (Hall 6; Reich 43).

Berg's treatment by superiors also figures in another such example that is best read multimodally, that is, where Berg's music causes Büchner's text to be read anew in the new semiotic context of opera. In Act I, Scene 1, Berg reformulates Büchner's menacing and moralizing Captain as an absurd and arrogant monster through the large intervals, staccato laughter, ghost notes, tremolo, and *Sprechstimme* (speech-like singing) of his vocal line.[15] In a 1919 letter to a friend which helps explain this shift, Berg recalled his clerical army work as "two and half years of daily duty . . . of onerous paperwork under a frightful superior (a drunken imbecile)" (qtd. in Perle, "Alban Berg" 153). Though the words remain Büchner's, the multimodal potentialities of opera change how their meaning is understood.

Thus far, this chapter has presented a variety of concrete examples in *Wozzeck* of how an invented German musical tradition and references to Berg's personal war experiences in both text and music create new meaning promoting a German national identity in wartime. The chapter concludes by offering two interpretations of how the interaction of the opera's libretto and its score produce commentary on the broader meaning of World War I. The first is Act I, Scene 2, a rhapsody, during which Andres and Wozzeck speak in a field. Andres sings a hunting song while Wozzeck repeatedly warns "this place is cursed" ("Du, der Platz ist verflucht") (Berg, *Wozzeck* 10). The climax of the scene comes through descending block chords, which Wozzeck interprets as the fires of hell—or war. He exclaims, "A fire! A fire! Running from the earth to the heavens and a crash comes down like trombones" ("Ein Feuer! Ein Feuer! Das fährt von der Erde in

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15. For more on the musical characterization of the Captain, see Hsieh (330–32).

den Himmel und ein Getös' herunter wie Posaunen") (Berg, *Wozzeck* 11). This sound perhaps reflects the incessant bombs raining down throughout Europe and the resulting flames. The connection to the war and military is reinforced at the conclusion of the scene. As the large chords fade, Wozzeck describes the aftermath: "quiet, everything quiet, as if the world were dead" ("still, alles still, als wäre die Welt tot") (Berg, *Wozzeck* 12). This calm falsely hinting at the ceasing of hostilities is then interrupted by a military march ushering in Act I, Scene 3, which itself quotes the Military March from his Op. 6 that was composed as war broke out in Europe. The implication is that war and death do not cease. The reading here is derived from Watkins, who finds the scene "as vivid a projection of impending world doom as any to come out of the Great War" (236).

The second example comes in twin moments in Act III, at the ends of Scenes 2 and 4 respectively. In the former (see Figure 4.1.2), Wozzeck stabs Marie. As the curtain falls, a long and dynamic crescendo on note B is followed by thunderous percussion. Then, after a pause, the crescendo repeats on B:

FIGURE 4.1.2   Marie's murder, with timpani and dynamic shifts signaling the enormity of the occasion (act III, sc. 2, mes. 109–21, *Wozzeck Klavierauszug* 197).

After Wozzeck is discovered with blood on his hands in Scene 3, he drowns in Scene 4 while trying to cleanse himself and hide the knife. The Orchestral Interlude begins, and a long rallentando culminates in a threnody in D Minor. Here (see Figure 4.1.3), Berg inserts a wordless final instance of the "Wir arme Leut'" Leitmotiv leading to a tremolo half-note chord, followed by massive doubled inverted minor ninth chords descending in whole tones framed by timpani blasts.

The sound recedes, and the opera ends with Wozzeck and Marie's son left orphaned by the two deaths. These two moments of mortality appear as clear examples of Schmidgall's heightening (or Hutcheon's distillation), though their enormous scale—Kristine Forney and Roger Hickman refer here to "the full brute force of the orchestra" (620)—suggests a more significant change in meaning. Alex Ross, public scholar and classical music critic for *The New Yorker*, asserts these moments are "something more than a lament for two human beings" (78). Berg suggests as much when discussing the latter passage in his 1930 lecture on *Wozzeck*: "From the *dramatic* standpoint it is to be construed as the 'epilogue' following Wozzeck's suicide; as a confession by the composer, who has stepped outside of the theatrical action; indeed, as an appeal to the audience, inasmuch as it represents mankind" (*Pro Mundo* 258). This scale accords with Jarman's reading of the opera as "a protest against both the social order and . . . the nature of the world itself" (4). It seems that Berg is speaking directly to a mass audience of "Wir arme Leut'," to a world of poor children orphaned by the war—note that the insertion of the wordless *Leitmotiv* leading into the threnody is an innovation of Berg's adaptation and only possible through the previously established multimodal interplay of music and text. To emphasize his point connecting this moment to the mass casualties of World War I, Ross equates the music to the meaning of Thomas Mann's characterization of the war in the concluding words to *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*)—"this worldwide festival of death" (706). Indeed, this climax representing the mass death of World War I depicts precisely the power of cultural production to shape identity in real historical time; Mann's claim early in the war that the "German soul" was at stake seems to have held true after all. Berg received, reflected, participated in, shaped, and ultimately created through adaptation a narrative of German national identity through his work and his relationship to the war.

This chapter has presented a reading of how Berg's operatic adaptation created new content unavailable to Büchner's original, due to the multimodal interaction of the music he composed and the libretto he constructed through what at first appear to be only slight alterations. It builds on the related contexts of the composer's

FIGURE 4.1.3   Wozzeck's death, with descending minor ninth chords depicting the mass death of World War I (act III, sc. 4, mes. 362–71, *Wozzeck Klavierauszug* 228).

experiences in World War I and the connection of a German national musical identity to Austrian military culture. In this reading, Berg adapts Büchner's theme of an individual alienated from society into the troubled relationship of man to war in 1914–1918. The opera's structure and its musical elements including form, melody, and *Leitmotiv* are thus read as linked to an invented national musical tradition in German music. Berg's reimagining of content in Wozzeck's diet and the behavior of the Captain and the Doctor can thus be viewed through his army career. And finally, this reading enables the interpretation of sound as war in Act I and as mass death in Act III. Understanding adaptation—and *Literaturoper* specifically—requires the consideration of a variety of multimodal choices and the social construction of meaning in real historical contexts. The result here is that Büchner's work about oppression in the abstract becomes pointed commentary on military culture and national identity in German Austria with specific reference to the horrors of World War I.

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The Moral Complexity of Occupation

THE EXPERIENCE OF
TWO PEASANT WOMEN, 1942

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Two peasant women—originally interviewed by linguists studying peasant dialect but who were also interested in history and biography—provide oral histories of life in the wake of Soviet collectivization (1928–1940) and under Nazi occupation, which began with the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. In these stories, the moral complexity of life under such conditions is never resolved intellectually or ideologically, but rather through a distinctive combination of pragmatic judgment and intuitively humane sentiment. The sensibility that emerges from these uneducated women's testimonies unknowingly echoes assessments and insights more famously articulated by Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), among the most significant political philosophers of the twentieth century, and especially Vasily Grossman (1905–1964), the noted Soviet author who dared to expose the brutalities of Stalinism.

This chapter is based on stories by two peasant women, Pelageya (born 1924) and Raisa (born 1925 or 1926), about their lives under German occupation in the Stalingrad area in 1942. Their stories were recorded in 1999 and 2000. The dates of birth and the dates of recording are significant: the women were born early enough to preserve pre-World War II (1939–1945) dialects and to remember

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collectivization, and they lived long enough to outlast Soviet censorship, so their stories could be recorded and published. In the years between the beginning of collectivization in 1928 and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet state had inflicted terrible violence on Russian peasants. But even after peasant life had much improved, all topics related to this history remained heavily censored because the state did not want the previous violence scrutinized.

It is legitimate to ask whether oral recollections from a small surviving population separated by a half-century from the recalled events can serve as historical evidence. Writing about an episode of the Holocaust (1941–1945) in Poland, the historian Jan Gross argued that survivor testimony must be taken seriously:

> When considering survivors' testimonies, we would be well advised to change the starting premise in appraisal of their evidentiary contribution from a priori critical to a priori affirmative. By accepting what we read in a particular account as fact until we find persuasive arguments to the contrary, we would avoid more mistakes than we are likely to commit by adopting the opposite approach. . . . The greater the catastrophe the fewer the survivors. We must be capable of listening to lonely voices reaching us from the abyss. (139–40)

Russian peasants who survived the oppression of 1928–1953 and the ensuing decades of totalitarian censorship are also survivors, whose testimony must be considered trustworthy. This is especially true when they describe events of life-or-death importance. They are publicly telling their stories for the first time—and yet the details are vivid. In the examples below we will sometimes encounter obscure but accurate historical details that the barely literate narrators could not have heard of or read about. They experienced them and remembered correctly. The precision of detail is striking.

Also striking in the peasant stories are peasant reactions to the political situations that entrapped them. Their responses to collectivization are not shaped by the propaganda that was the constant backdrop of their lives, nor by anything they read. Private political discussions—philosophical discussions of any kind— were not part of their toolkit. Yet they are quite clear about collectivization; indeed, they make some of the same Nazi-Soviet comparisons that animate the thinking of, for example, the political theorist Hannah Arendt or the novelist Vasily Grossman, neither of whom they had ever heard of.

Even more interesting is their response to the moral complexity of life under Nazi occupation, where individual "enemy" soldiers were encountered as cruel and violent oppressors and murderers—but also as humane benefactors or even as suffering victims themselves. In the peasant stories, this moral complexity is never resolved intellectually or ideologically, but rather through a distinctive combination of pragmatic judgment and intuitively humane sentiment. The contemporary thinker who best captures this sensibility is Grossman, who, as a reporter for the army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (*Red Star*) was in the same area around Stalingrad (though never himself under occupation). Grossman listened to everyone and wrote unusually sensitive stories from the front. *Zhizn' i sud'ba (Life and Fate)*—Grossman's postwar novel, which the government attempted to confiscate and did not see publication until 1980, in Geneva, Switzerland— also features descriptions of morally complex situations under conditions of totalitarianism and war. Grossman's descriptions recall the peasant women's narratives discussed here in their emphasis on intuitive moral choices and humane conduct toward captured oppressors.

The Narrators, Their Interviewers, and Historical Background

The narrators described as "two peasant women" would strongly object to that characterization. They did not see themselves as Russian or Ukrainian "peasants," but rather as Cossacks, who did not live in villages but in the *stanitsa* (rural locality) of Raspopinskaya, in Raisa's case, or the *khutor* (farmstead) of Evlampievskij, in Pelageya's. Cossacks started arriving in the Volga region in the seventeenth century, either on their own or because they had been sent by the imperial power to defend and fortify the borders. Unlike peasants, they had never been serfs. This distinction was, in practice, obliterated by Soviet collectivization, but Cossacks were still proud of their origin, and their speech still preserved their distinct dialects.

Our material owes its existence to a single fortuitous scholarly undertaking: it was recorded by a group of linguists who were studying Cossack dialects of the Don and the Volga. The group included two prominent scholars—Leonid Kasatkin from Moscow and Christian Sappok from Bonn—and some younger people, including Elena Moshkina, at that time a graduate student in Vyatka. Kasatkin transcribed Pelageya's story and included it in his collected works (2:616–625). Elena Moshkina's participation was mentioned in Kasatkin, and I contacted her to ask about other recordings. She remembered Raisa's story, which had never

been published. It turned out that Christian Sappok had the recording, and he generously uploaded it to his unique RUREG archive, by far the greatest archive of Russian dialects in the world.[2]

To understand many details of the narrators' stories we need some background on the history of Russian peasants under the Soviet rule. The historian Andrea Graziosi aptly calls the first fifteen years of that history, the Great Soviet-Peasant War, which is also the title of his book. That war can be divided into three distinct periods.

The Civil War (1918–1922) started immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution that began in 1917. Peasants, as always, constituted the majority of the fighting forces, while at the same time, their food and animals were confiscated for the army and the state. Initially, peasants welcomed the revolution because Bolsheviks had told them to take all land from the landowners and redistribute it among themselves. By the end of the war, however, Bolsheviks were hated for continuing the mobilization and the confiscation of food. The final chapter of the civil war thus saw the Red Army brutally suppressing peasant revolts, even using poison gas left over from World War I (1914–1918) (Figs 627–48).

With the country in ruins, it took only a minor drought to produce a huge famine, in which millions died. Unlike their behavior in later famines, in this case Bolsheviks did not even try to hide what was transpiring, and in fact accepted Western help. The most prominent of these interventions was the American relief effort, organized by Herbert Hoover, then the U.S. secretary of commerce, who would later become president of the United States from 1929 to 1933.

With the end of the civil war came an imperative to revive the economy. In 1922, Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), the Russian revolutionary and the first head of the Soviet government, pushed through a liberalization reform, the New Economic Policy (NEP), which allowed for private property, small private business, and private trade, including trade in agricultural products. All these activities, with their obvious implication for peasants, had been punishable by death during the Civil War. The economic effect was immediate and striking. Lenin probably intended the policy to last at least ten years, but he was incapacitated by a stroke in 1923 and died in January 1924. By 1928, Stalin was in control.

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2. To get to Raisa's recording on RUREG, go to Audio in the top menu, South Region, Expedition CHOI1 (the river Khopyor), file name 50. The tracks will appear in the right column. Both the .mp3 and the .wav files can be downloaded. The page for track 1 contains meta information about the narrator and recording. All references to this source accessed June 15, 2024. Raisa's recording is divided into 57 tracks, about two minutes each. In this paper, quotes from Raisa are referenced by their track numbers. Occasionally the precise time within the track is also indicated: 26 for 26 seconds from the beginning; 1.24 for a minute and 24 seconds from the beginning.

Stalin instituted radical reforms—a combination of collectivization and "dekulakization"—that over the course of some six years, from 1928–1933, transformed and destroyed peasant lives. Lenin's NEP had resulted in economic inequality in rural villages: some peasants (*kulaks*) did extremely well, while others became impoverished. A free-market response would have been to let the rich expand further, producing more, improving productivity, and paying more taxes, leaving the poor to be hired locally by the rich or migrate to the city to meet the labor needs of rapid industrialization. A faction within the Communist Party did in fact advocate this kind of approach, but for Stalin it was unacceptable. If rich peasants formed a power center independent from the party, they could largely control the production and distribution of grain. Stalin insisted on total control of these processes, as grain export was his main source of capital for industrialization (in addition to gold and diamonds from Siberia and artwork from the imperial museums). Besides, the capitalist way was slow, while industrialization needed to be achieved immediately, to counter a war with capitalist Europe that Stalin either believed, or professed to believe, was imminent. In short order, Stalin initiated a revolution in agriculture.

The inspiration for this revolution came from two incompatible sources. One was American agriculture, with its large, mechanized farms that employed relatively few people, thus liberating labor for industry. The second was the Bolshevik belief in the supremely rational state, guided by a party whose motivating communist theory precisely predicted the future. Combining the two, the Soviets established large, mechanized farms controlled by the state and guided by the party. Their purpose was to generate capital from the export of agricultural products and free excess labor for industrialization. The farms were called "collective," maintaining the fiction that they were cooperatives of *voluntary* participants. The Russian abbreviation for them was *kolkhoz* (collective farm); its members were *kolkhozniks*, and the process was called the "collectivization of agriculture."

The new *kolkhozes* needed land, tools, and animals (tractors would have been very helpful but there were none). All these building blocks had to come from the peasants—specifically, of course, the rich ones, which made the division into rich and poor politically useful. The rich *kulaks* were declared an enemy that had to be eliminated, a policy called "liquidating *kulaks* as a class" that Stalin introduced in a speech of December 27, 1929 (Stalin 167–69). Stalin specifically emphasized that liquidation could not be accomplished through taxation: more forceful methods were needed. To set the process in motion, *kulaks* were divided

into three categories: rich, mid-rich, and low-rich. The rich were jailed or sent to the Gulag; the recalcitrant among them were executed. The mid-rich and their families were sent to remote settlements in Siberia and Kazakhstan, where they frequently had to build their own housing upon arrival (Viola, et al. 33–53). The low-rich were exiled locally, but everything they owned was confiscated for the newly formed *kolkhoz*. Since poor peasants thought they were the recipients of all this property, they had an incentive to identify as many *kulaks* as possible.

Raisa's Collectivization Story

Raisa was a witness to much of this history—almost a third of her story is about pre-war years. She was six when her father was jailed as a *kulak*, and Raisa, her two sisters, mother, and grandfather were sent to a settlement in Kazakhstan. The exiles were unloaded from horse carts in the middle of nowhere (the state provided rations and water). The men started building shacks in a hurry because of the approaching winter. When winter came, the grandfather and a sister died: child mortality in those settlements was so high that even Bolsheviks felt uncomfortable and allowed unexiled relatives to come and take the children back. Raisa's fifteen-year-old brother (who, in World War II, would die from wounds in a Moscow hospital), came to fetch Raisa and her remaining sister. The two girls had to stay with their older married sister, as their family house had been taken apart and rebuilt elsewhere for a *kolkhoz* member. In the meantime, Raisa's father escaped from prison and found his way to her mother in Kazakhstan. Soon after that, many exiled settlers, including Raisa's parents, were allowed back home. Raisa's mother was pregnant; when the baby boy was born, she didn't have anything to make a diaper from and had to use her own shirt. The family lived in a shack, but at least her parents were allowed to work in the *kolkhoz*. Life improved enough in the mid-1930s that they even managed to save enough to buy a house: "So we live in that house a year, two years, a beautiful house, not very far. . . . Thank the Lord! . . . and then boom, this f-king war. . . . Oh, Lord, (laughing) forgive my sinful soul, what if somebody hears that" ("Raisa," track 22). Raisa enjoyed occasionally dropping a swear word but always followed by asking the Lord for forgiveness.

Pelageya's *Kolkhoz* Story

Pelageya starts her story of occupation by making a startling comparison between Soviets and Nazis. "Well, Germans also made us work," she recalled. "We were digging bunkers for them, trenches. Whatever they told us, we would dig" (Kasatkin 616). For a peasant, it was just like the *kolkhoz*: you worked without pay and did what you were told to do. The *kolkhoz* system perfectly prepared peasants for what would happen under occupation. It was designed for exploitation.

That system was based on two simple ideas. The first was simply not to pay *kolkhozniks* for their work. From harvest to harvest, *kolkhozniks* were "paid" in abstract units called "labordays," whose value varied depending on administrative whims. At harvest, the *kolkhoz* first gave its quotas of produce to the state. Those quotas arbitrarily changed from year to year—sometimes even in the middle of the harvesting season. The remaining produce was divided by the total number of labordays, giving the all-important value of "produce per laborday." This value was multiplied by the number of labordays earned by each household, which determined how much food the family would have until the next harvest. In much of the country, especially in poorly managed *kolkhozes*, laborday handouts were not nearly sufficient. Hunger was common, with nettle soup—composed of nettles, water, and salt, when salt was available—being an important staple. In the rich "black earth" regions that stretch from Ukraine to South Siberia, including the plains around Stalingrad, laborday handouts were usually enough to let the recipients live through the winter and spring—except in the years 1930–1933, when the political and economic chaos of collectivization; adverse, though not catastrophic, weather; and big government quotas combined to produce famines in which millions died. In Kazakhstan and Ukraine, these are major historical events identified by name (*Asharshylyk* and *Holodomor*, respectively)*,* and suspicions of genocidal intent behind them are strongly held. Kazakhs became a minority in their republic after the famine and remained so until the 1990s.

The second simple idea, which helped avoid annual starvation, was to give each *kolkhoz* family a small private plot where they would work after hours to feed themselves. They could have a cow, a couple of goats, and a few chickens—but no horses, as those were considered "means of production," and could be owned only by the *kolkhoz*. Produce from private plots could be sold at "*kolkhoz* markets," generating cash income. No cash came from *kolkhozes* and their labordays.

Although private plots constituted additional work imposed by the state—and badly needed by the state to maintain its labor force—*kolkhozniks* were extremely grateful to the state for the opportunity to work for themselves, without being told what to do. (Those brave souls who declined to join the *kolkhoz*, received, in perfect Soviet logic, smaller private plots.)

The Moral Complexity of Occupation: Stories from Pelageya and Raisa

A simple binary moral judgement of the war would go like this: "The evil enemy invaded our motherland; we will do all we can to protect our motherland and destroy the enemy." But what do you do if your motherland has been cruel to you and your family? Or if you feel immediate compassion for a suffering person even if he happens to be your enemy? These are conditions of moral complexity, in which one has to make a choice, either consciously or instantaneously, following an ingrained moral judgement. War often imposes such choices.

There are records of Russian women giving bread to emaciated German prisoners paraded by the victors through the streets of Moscow (Lungina 175). Grossman's novel *Life and Fate* includes two similar episodes. In one, a woman described as simple and uneducated—not necessarily a peasant—gives bread to a captured German soldier. The incident, which most readers of this enormous novel would likely not remember, is morally complex. The soldier initially draws the anger of local women. Then, suddenly, one of them gives him a piece of bread. "Afterwards," writes Grossman, "she was unable to understand what had happened to her, why she had done this" (*Life and Fate* 805–06). The explanation goes along with Grossman's theory of "senseless kindness" (*besmyslennaya dobrota*) as a moral motive entirely separate from intellect or ideology. In a second episode in *Life and Fate*, a lieutenant stops a Russian from abusing a German prisoner of war (713). The lieutenant is very much not a peasant—he is an educated man—but here he is acting according to the moral intuition that you do not hit a person when he is down.

Like Grossman's characters, our real-life peasants are not ideological. Their way of navigating occupation—of perceiving the moral problems it posed—is shaped in part by their experience under the *kolkhoz*, but even more by inherited peasant codes of conduct. In the previous section, we saw Pelageya comparing work under Nazi occupation with work on the *kolkhoz*. She goes on to develop the comparison, articulating pros and cons that concern her local, lived experience,

rather than abstractions like patriotism or the goals of either army. One of her most significant objections to the Germans was their insistence on discipline. In the *kolkhoz*, it had been normal after working for a while to sit down and rest, maybe have a smoke. The Germans, by contrast, posted an armed guard who watched the peasants work and would not allow breaks. Pelageya explains:

> With Germans, you couldn't sit down, like we had it—work for a while and sit down—no, you would. . . . We would have been like "Let's rest, have a smoke." But no. . . . There's a guard walking around. . . . And you don't have to rush, dig slowly, dig a hole and stand quietly for a while, but sitting down—no way! Once you try, the guard would "Pan, Pan [Polish and Ukrainian for Mister], Pan, no, no." So, we keep digging, what can you do. (Kasatkin 618)

Note how Pelageya both explains both the new rule and a way to work around it ("you don't have to rush, dig slowly"). This is a classic example of "weapons of the weak" (Scott 241–303), practiced by peasants around the world. Also worthy of note is Pelageya's inclusion of an accurate historical detail: talking to Russians, Germans often deployed Polish and Ukrainian words. They were primed to do this because they had spent two years in Poland and a year in Ukraine before arriving at Stalingrad. Readers of war novels would expect German occupiers to use some acquired Slavic vocabulary, but Pelageya did not read war novels and did not know the history.

The occupation also had some good features. In an unimaginable abandonment of *kolkhoz* rules, the Germans allowed the peasants to conclude their workday by taking home a little food. In particular, Pelageya explains, you could pick up ears of grain lying on the ground. After the war, behavior like that could result in a prison term.

While Pelageya's experience of working under Germans centers on these pragmatic contrasts, Raisa's was much more eventful and dangerous. From the beginning, her account describes morally complex situations.

The German army occupied Raisa's village, Raspopinskaya, in August 1942, on its way to Stalingrad, still 100 miles away. Describing how the occupation started, Raisa focuses on a loudspeaker screaming orders and threats: "For each killed German, 40 villagers will be killed." As everywhere in Russia, Germans immediately collected anything that could be turned into protein: goats, chickens, eggs, milk. "Everybody was full of hatred for them," Raisa said (track 25). That much was pragmatic.

But Raisa's narrative soon turns to an exception—a man in Raspopinskaya who became involved with Germans in a way that cast them as lifesavers rather than predators. That man had been wounded earlier in the war and came home an invalid; he owed his life to German doctors who had amputated his leg. There is no way of historically verifying the existence or frequency of humanitarian interventions like this one.[3] Information about doctors in German military units, rather than concentration camps, is sparse. It is significant that Raisa's narrative includes one more reference to a kind doctor in the German army: when Raisa herself was wounded and bleeding heavily, her sister ran to the German hospital and was given a bandage ("Raisa," track 37, 1.59).

The narrative about the man with the amputated leg includes two significant twists related to morality under occupation. In the first one, Raisa talks about him walking through a field where he comes upon a wounded German soldier; he then saves the wounded soldier's life by taking him into his own home. Explaining this unusual act, Raisa moves to a first-person narrative, assuming the man's own voice: "Whatever you do to me or report on me [go ahead], but Germans saved me, and I have to save him" ("Raisa," track 25). Giving information through a character's direct speech is a common device in peasant narratives (Nakhimovsky, *Language* 12–13). Raisa may not even have spoken to him herself, relying instead on discussions about the incident in the village. That villagers did talk about it comes up further on, when she notes that some people condemned the amputee and that, furthermore, the Germans later gave him a job. Her own take is contrarian: "Why condemn? Everybody wants to live. He didn't do anything bad, just brought him in, and Germans gave him a job as a clerk" (*pisar'*; "Raisa," track 25). The second twist takes place a few weeks later and concerns the same amputee, now working as a clerk for the occupation. Something new develops that is not benign: the Germans catch some teenage partisans and execute them. This time, the amputee does not act as a collaborator. The night after the execution, he secretly visits the

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3. Similar stories can be found in the autobiographical notes of Evgeniya Grigor'evna Kiseleva (1916–1990), written in 1976 and published after her death by N. N. Kozlova and I. I. Sandomirskaya in *Opyt lingvo-sotsiologicheskogo chteniya* (1996). Kiseleva had been born and raised in a peasant family in the village of Novozvanovka in the Lugansk province of Ukraine, but considered herself Russian; she later became a waitress in the mining town of Pervomaisk. She describes an incident during the war, in which one German army doctor refused to help her badly wounded father, while another one amputated his leg—though, forbidden to treat local patients, he did not hospitalize him and the father died (91). In another incident from post-war Pervomaisk, one German prisoner-of-war ("an engineer," she specifies) gives her hungry children bread while another (a "rough guy") disapproves. Kiseleva comments that the German prisoners, who worked in a mine, were given bread, while the locals ate mostly rotten potatoes. She then adds that, while she, like "Soviet authorities," understands that the Germans had been forced to fight under threat of execution, still she "could not look at them" (228). On another occasion, she opines: "People are people, although they are our enemies" (226).

victims' parents and tells them to escape (as the relatives of partisans, they faced arrest). Here Raisa tries to sort through the complicated situation: "That fellow who saved a German—they took him in, he was writing something for the Germans, helping them—but he was one of us, from the village—not everybody was a viper" ("Raisa," track 25). Here again, she is making a subtle moral distinction. There is an *us* (people from the village) and a *them* (collaborators) but categories can shift. A collaborator can emerge to do good. Also worthy of note is that Raisa does not say "he was one of us, a Russian." There is no trace of abstract national patriotism in peasant life stories, only local commitments.

While abstract patriotism is absent, the "us" and "them" of Raisa's stories is more complex than a story of Cossack villagers engaging with Romanian and German occupiers. At one point, a rumor spreads in the village that she is Jewish. Why Jewish? Because she wore a long braid, and the name Raisa was "kind of Jewish" ("Raisa," track 37). Everybody knew that being Jewish was lethal. Raisa describes what happened, and what she had to do:

> A neighbor comes and says: "They executed the Jews, all of them." They came here and did their executing here too. How many they executed, there's no end to it. [F-ing] idiots. Lord forgive my sinful soul. That's why they came, to kill us, no surprise. So my mother comes and says: "Raisa, go away somewhere, anywhere. . . . So where would I go? My mother had a sister in Belovsk—a khutor not far from us, 12 kilometers. She says "Raisa, sweetheart, go to your auntie, before they kill you." ("Raisa," track 38)

Raisa's vehemence toward the murderers is unequivocal. More subtle, and more confusing, is where she fits in. When she says, "that's why they came, to kill us," she seems not to be describing how she might be misidentified as a Jew, but rather includes Cossacks together with Jews as ultimate targets.

In the recording, Raisa's manner is heavily influenced by practices of silence she had absorbed under the Soviets. She is not sure that she should, in fact, be telling this story to somebody outside the village. In the middle of her narration, she abruptly stopped and addressed Elena, the graduate student who was conducting and recording the interview:

Raisa: Maybe you don't want this part?
Elena: Yes, we do, we do.

Raisa: Because maybe I'm telling something that maybe . . . Or do we want exactly this? I'm thinking that you want exactly this—you're not after some kind of news story—the real thing.

Elena: Yes, yes, the real thing.

Raisa: Okay. ("Raisa," track 35)

Then Raisa returns to her story. She had never told it before visiting scholars from Moscow asked her. In 1999, long after the brutalities of the Soviet regime and the Nazi occupation, she was still apprehensive about revealing the truth about the past. But it is clear she was not naïve. Throughout the recording, she completely understands the difference between an officially sanctioned story and "the real thing."

When her narrative turns to issues that have moral implications, Raisa's touchstone seems to be her father, a veteran of World War I whom she adored and admired. Several of her stories about him reflect his pride and courage during the occupation. One day, for example, a German passed by their house and saw their hog. "Good hog," said the German, "tomorrow I'll come and get it." (Raisa does not explain how they communicated, but by that time many Germans knew enough Russian to express this very common idea.) When the German left, her father said the equivalent of "That [motherf-er] wants our hog? No way" ("Raisa," tracks 26–27). That night he slaughtered it, and together he and Raisa disemboweled it, cut it up, and buried the meat (presumably salted) in a box in the ground. The German in fact never came, and when all of them retreated, the family retrieved the meat and ate it.

Another example of her father's independence relates to the Romanians who were part of the occupying army. On church holidays, the Romanians—Orthodox Christians, like the Russians—pressured the villagers to come to their services ("Raisa," track 43). The women in the family obeyed, even though her father never did, and he kept the children home as well. When the women tried to tell him that he was committing a sin, he replied that Romanians were praying for the defeat of their enemy: "Their enemy [Russian soldiers] is not my enemy, they are like my children to me." Raisa laughs and adds a comment: "And he would cuss them good" ("Raisa," track 43).

Ignoring the Romanians, Raisa's father drew a sharp line separating himself and his family from the generic enemy. Yet when a possible enemy appeared before him in distress, his reaction was different. Raisa recalls that, in the morning,

mother started the stove and put up some water to make soup . . . but there's no salt, no nothing, it's some kind of water. So, she started cooking, the door opens, and there's somebody, I still don't know if he was ours or a German, and nobody knows, we never could figure it out. He had a gold ring, he was dressed like, you know, a uniform . . . but he was a Russian, spoke Russian like us (1.03). My father was lying in bed. So he walked in, and he had no weapons, nothing, and he looked like a pilot. . . . And my father—he served in the war, he knows those things—he says: "Hey, woman, give him hot water, fast. Give him a piece of bread and hot water." He didn't know the man, they didn't know each other, but there was a man, alive. Mother rushed to draw some water, and gave him a piece of bread, and he ate and drank. ("Raisa," track 47)

Even 57 years later, Raisa is unclear about the identity of the man in German uniform who looked like a pilot but spoke native Russian and, strikingly, was wearing local Cossack woolen gloves, rather than the leather gloves sported by German officers. Most likely he was a Russian pilot fighting on the German side, a possibility that would have been scary even to contemplate. So they did not. The main point of the story, however, is clear: if a human, still alive, is in great distress, give him hot water and a piece of bread before deciding whether he is a friend or an enemy.

The story continues. Romanian soldiers bang on the door, looking for the pilot, who walks out and speaks to them with authority, probably in German. As they are about to take him away, the Romanians summon Raisa's father to come along—but the stranger says something that made them back off. Raisa comments: "He [the pilot] told them not to take him. Because my father, he said right away: 'Give him hot water,' and so he said: 'There's a divine spark in that man, do not take him'" ("Raisa," track 47). Once again, the words Raisa quotes are her direct-speech rendition of the stranger's thoughts, which she could not know. The phrase "divine spark" (*iskra bozhi'ya*) seems particularly important. She uses it again when describing how a cook in a Romanian field kitchen would dish out soup to soldiers, and "if he had a divine spark in him, he would give a ladle of soup to a villager ("Raisa," track 39). On both occasions, the "divine spark" indicates a religious compassion that transcends the division of war. In Christian thought, each person is a child of God with a divine spark, so even an enemy possesses it and may recognize and help someone else because of it.

In Raisa's telling, her father was the first man to predict the Soviet counter-offensive. Raisa depicts him as attentive to sounds that would indicate a change in the village's fortunes. Early in the morning—or even, in violation of the curfew,

in the middle of the night—he would run out to the river and listen; sometimes he would lie down on the frozen earth to sense the distant movements of heavy machinery ("Raisa," track 37, 1.22). Coming back, he would tell her: "Our men are coming soon. . . . They are shooting. They are getting ready." He would start explaining how they were getting ready, what the distant sounds meant. Raisa comments with her usual refrain: "He served, he knows" ("Raisa," track 46).

The father's predictions came true on the same day that the Russian-speaking stranger appeared in the house. That evening there were sudden wild screams from the Romanian camp. In the morning, the village was empty of troops. In the recorded interview, Raisa recalls: "There's nobody, not Romanian troops, not ours. No bosses" ("Raisa," track 49). She did not seem to look forward to being liberated by Soviets.

The interlude without occupiers of any kind did not last long: "Ours are coming," her father said. "How do you know they are ours?" "They are swearing like us" ("Raisa," track 50). Within minutes, Romanians started emerging from a nearby gully, surrendering their weapons. "Crowds, huge, a great many people. Oh well, they were also drafted, they had to serve. Whatever they were, they had to serve" ("Raisa," track 51:28). As the Romanians were led away, her father brought out bread and started giving pieces to both the Russian troops and the Romanians. It is not clear whether he would have shown the same compassion to actual, unambiguous Germans. Throughout the occupation, peasants could frequently observe the difference between arrogant Germans and subservient Romanians, and showed some sympathy for those who were, like them, oppressed.

Pelageya's Life in Occupation

Pelageya's life was much more peaceful than Raisa's, the result of the geography of the battle (Beevor 111–51). That geography is largely defined by two great rivers, the Don and the Volga. The Don originates in the north and initially flows south until it reaches the area where Raisa lived. There it turns south-east and makes a big arc ("the big bend of the Don") that comes closest to the Volga at the city Kalach-on-the-Don, at the latitude of Stalingrad on the Volga. From Kalach to Stalingrad is about 50 miles. From Kalach, the Don turns south and west and proceeds directly west towards the Azov Sea.

In the summer of 1942, the German 6th Army, commanded by General Friedrich Paulus, was fighting its way eastward into Russia on a broad front, whose south flank followed the Don. They occupied the western bank of the big bend,

defeated the Soviet troops at Kalach, crossed the Don, and in a narrowing triangle, converged on Stalingrad (today known as Volgograd). Much of the frontline to the north and south of Kalach was along the Don and was manned mostly by Romanian troops; the central triangle aimed at the city was mostly Germans. Many volumes have been written about the urban fighting that followed, but Alexander Nakhimovsky's work seems to be the first to describe peasant life under occupation in the villages within the triangle.

Paulus established his headquarters in the village of Golubinskaya, about 15 miles north of Kalach. The village still has a museum to commemorate its role in history. During the war, Pelageya lived in Evlampievskij, 15 miles north of Golubinskaya, though at the time of her interview, she was living in Golubinskaya itself, where the interview was recorded. That is why she remembers the dates of the Soviet counter-offensive, which broke the Romanian lines on November 19, 1942, not very far from Raisa's village. On November 21, a second counter-offensive began in the south of the triangle. A day later the two pincers connected at Kalach, encircling the remaining 300,000 men of the German 6th Army. On that day, Pelageya was at her friend's bridal party and had great difficulty getting home.

During the war, Pelageya lived with her little daughter at the home of her in-laws, whom she calls simply father and mother. Her husband was in the Soviet Army. Many senior German officers settled in Evlampievskij, and one of them took over the house, while the family moved to a kitchen shack in the yard. With so many officers around, life was orderly from the very beginning. There was no screaming on the radio about killing 40 peasants for one German soldier.

The day the Germans arrived, Pelageya was with Uncle Semën, her father-in-law's brother. Semën had dug a deep, comfortable trench where his family and Pelageya were hiding when they heard German spoken. At this point Semën becomes an important character, because he had learned German as a prisoner of war in World War I. He must have been a talented linguist because he had no contact with the language between 1918 and 1942, except for a brief episode in 1941 when a Jewish family stayed in the village on their way from Ukraine to Central Asia. Semën heard them speak Yiddish, realized that he could understand it, and spoke to them in German (Kasatkin 619). When the German soldiers arrived in August 1942, he spoke to them, and soon the family was able to return home.

That evening when they sat down to eat, a German soldier walked in, and Semën invited him to join the meal. Pelageya remembers a brief exchange that Semën interpreted: "Is this your family?" "Yes." "And where are the husbands?"

"At the front." Semën's ability to speak German undoubtedly helped smooth relations. But throughout that summer, as the Germans advanced through the Cossack country along the Don, the troops were often warmly greeted by the locals who vividly remembered the Bolshevik anti-Cossack policies during and in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War (Beevor 115–16). This tolerance is very different from Raisa's story about Cossacks and Jews as victims, which caused her to leave the village and go into hiding for some time.

Still, just as in Raisa's village, when the Germans first arrived "they took everything—they would walk in, 'Chicken, eggs!' and everything down to the axe, they would cook and eat" (Kasatkin 617). They also slaughtered most of the cows, leaving only three to provide milk for their own use. Later, in their panicked escape from the Soviet counter-offensive, retreating Germans also took everything they could. But in between, the German occupiers of Pelageya's village were surprisingly friendly. The family shared their yard with guards, cooks, and the field kitchen. The guards would sometimes walk into the family shack, perhaps to get warm, and Pelageya remembers them saying, in broken Russian, the equivalent of "We wish Hitler kaput, Stalin kaput, war kaput, and we would go to our mamas and papas, and your people would also go. But it's war" (Kasatkin 617). This was a rare example of German soldiers sharing anti-war sentiments with Russians, probably because their interlocutors were only peasants. Pelageya acknowledges the family's surprise: "Just like that. And we were sitting there, father and mother also" (Kasatkin 617).

If the guards were occasional visitors, the German army cooks were a constant source of goodies, beginning with salt. Raisa's mother felt lucky if she could salt her soup at all. Pelageya's mother-in-law never had this problem: "She would go ask for salt, and there was a young cook there, he would pour it for her into a can. And sometimes a piece of bread, too" (Kasatkin 617). She remembered German army bread in packages stamped 1938, the year it was baked. There were also buns.

One comic episode stood out, obviously often retold in the family. The mother went to get salt, the German cook gave her a generous amount, and she used it for her cabbage soup, *shchi*. After a while she got confused. She turned to her daughter-in-law: "I added salt, and then more salt, and the *shchi* still isn't salty. Could you taste it?" "Mama, why would it be salty," replied the daughter-in-law, "it has sugar in it" (Kasatkin 617–18). In those years, salt was precious, but sugar was simply beyond reach for most people.

Sometimes the cook offered food without being asked:

They [the Germans] often cooked lentils. There was an older one, I never approached him, but the younger one would wave me over: "Come on, let me give you lentils." We were very happy about those lentils. So he would fill up a can—they had tin cans from some kind of food. I'd bring an empty can, and he'd fill it to the brim. Tea also—he would say: "I can pour you some tea." I would go get a jar, not a glass jar, we didn't have those, but a clay pot, and he would pour me three liters or so. (Kasatkin 617)

The old cook was a bit scary, but one day, as he was making dumplings, he gave Pelageya's little girl a plate with a dumpling and a piece of butter. "Here, little one," he said (Kasatkin 618). At home Pelageya washed the plate and brought it back to the cook, addressing him as "Pan," the same Polish-Ukrainian word that Germans used addressing Russian men.

Pelageya's Uncle Semën: Problems of Collaboration

Like Raisa, Pelageya had to come to terms with a collaborator—in her case, her own uncle. The occupiers needed a minimal administration: a mayor and two policemen. Semën was well respected and spoke German, so everybody agreed that he should be the "elder" (Kasatkin 620). In the interview, Pelageya presents his appointment as a kind of election, but she is clearly uneasy about this act of active collaboration, because she quickly adds: "Germans in our village, we haven't heard of them doing anything bad." Leonid Kasatkin, the interviewer, had served as a junior officer throughout the war. So he responds sharply: "Did Germans kill anybody here?"

Pelageya's response shows the complexity that persisted decades later. First, she says "No, not here." Then she corrects herself: "Well, they killed prisoners, of course." (The killing of Jews and officers was expected, hence not worth mentioning.) Then she inserts the usual disclaimer: "I didn't see it myself, but some of our people were taken prisoner" (Kasatkin 620). In Stalin's army, surrendering was a criminal act punishable by death or a long sentence in the Gulag.

A little later in her narrative, it turns out that she actually did see two prisoners in the village arrested, one the commander of a Katyusha squad and the other of an artillery battery. Somebody asked them why they confessed to being officers. Relating this, Pelageya uses direct speech, her reconstruction of what she imagines they were thinking: "There's no way we would remain alive. Nobody will pray for us, but we told the truth." The two prisoners of war were taken away and shots were heard. Their bones were found the next spring (Kasatkin 620–21).

Like Raisa's father, his fellow World War I veteran, Semën sensed early that the tide of the battle was turning. He started thinking about how to survive. "If we stay," he told the family, "when our [Soviet] soldiers come, they'll kill us on the spot, just shoot us. Let's retreat for a while." So they retreated. Semën reappeared a week or so later. He was immediately arrested but not killed. There was an investigation of his collaborative activities. Semën had two points of defense. First, as an "elder" he had been good to his people. Second—again, like the collaborator in Raisa's narrative—he had been hiding and aiding partisans, giving them food and helping them escape across the frontline. She even quotes conversations between Semën and the partisans and describes how Semën asked the interrogators to find those partisans as witnesses, some of whom were found (Kasatkin 625).

At the end of this complicated story, Pelageya says simply: "He got a long term." She then lists other people who did not have his quick thinking or good fortune: "So in our area he was the only elder who survived. The others who did not retreat, they were grabbed and killed right away" (Kasatkin 625).

Pelageya does not say anything about her own life after the war, but she does, in a few bitter sentences, summarize Semën's. After serving his time, Semën came back. His son had been killed in the war, but unlike other parents in that position, he was not given a pension. He got one much later—Pelageya does not specify when, but it was most likely 1964, when Khruschev introduced the law granting *kolkhozniks* old-age pensions (Zakon SSSR o pensiyakh i posobiyakh chlenam kolkhozov. 1964). By then, Semën—a veteran of World War I—would have been over seventy years old.

Without explicitly saying so, Pelageya clearly indicates that in her moral judgment, the authorities were unfair to the complex collaborator Uncle Semën.

Raisa's Post-War Story

When we last encountered Raisa, she had to run away to her aunt's *khutor* because her name sounded Jewish. Since she arrived suddenly and alone, there was suspicion that she was a partisan, and she was again close to arrest ("Raisa," track 39). Finally, she returned to Raspopinskaya and reunited with her family.

After the war, Raisa first worked in the village office but soon switched to more exhausting field work because she could not bear the daily burden of handing out death notices to crying mothers and wives. Her own brother had died in a hospital in Moscow, but her sister's husband came back alive. Raisa wanted to leave the

field to greet him, but she was not allowed. "No rush, he didn't bring anything," she was told. "Everybody was bringing whatever they could from Germany," Raisa commented ("Raisa," track 54).

Soon Raisa married. Because her new husband was a year younger than she was, he had not been drafted. She did not like him and did not want to marry him, but her parents decided for her, and there was no such thing as divorce in the village ("Raisa," track 55).

A year later, when she was already pregnant, the enmity between them came to a head. He said something she thought was outlandish, and she responded: "Come on, you're [bullsh-ting]." He punched her in the face and then followed her as she left and hit her again ("Raisa," track 55).

The remainder of the story highlights the limits of her father's compassion: he felt sorry for the defeated occupiers, but not for a woman who dared to argue with her husband, even if that woman was his daughter. Raisa ran crying to him, because, she explains, he had always been kind to his children: "He never ever hit us or yelled at us. He would only say sometimes 'I'll tell your mother.' And mother [laughing] would give us a good spanking" ("Raisa," track 56, 1.12). She told him that she had left her house. He demanded an explanation. When she told him the story, he hit her with a spatula he was holding: "I'll show you how to say '[bullsh-t]' to your husband. Who would ever say '[bullsh-t]' to her husband?" He hit her again. "I'll tear your tongue out if you repeat what you said to your husband. Don't you dare [say such a thing] to your husband" ("Raisa," track 56).

Raisa's story about this pivotal confrontation is three hundred words long. But she summarized the rest of her life in seventy-five words: "So I lived with him, but only for 18 years. He was killed. By our people, in the village. So I was alone. One way was bad, and the other was not great. I had five children, the oldest 15, the youngest just one. And so, I was alone with five children, all five I raised. Now I'm alone again. All my children are married. All good children" ("Raisa," track 56:2.25).

Raisa married her husband before she was 20 and lived with him for 18 years. Before she had turned 40, she was already a widow. She does not say how he was killed or why.

Conclusion

The brief occupation of the area around Stalingrad was quite different from the much-studied occupation of the western parts of the country, like the three-year

occupation of Ukraine. The invading army was at the end of a long summer campaign, hoping for a quiet winter with little action. Administration was minimal, most of it delegated to collaborators. Collaborators were also different: they had no uniforms, no weapons, and no joint operations against partisans or Jews. In these circumstances, the German army behaved unusually but not unpredictably. The peasants' response to the occupation was, also unsurprisingly, filtered through their recent traumatic Soviet past, but otherwise followed the inherited moral code of Russian peasantry. This is, of course, a mixed bag. It includes, as our text shows, both compassion that transcends the division of war and despicable cruelty toward women. But most importantly, the women who have been the subject of this chapter display remarkable powers of observation, great skill in conveying those observations in compact, precise, occasionally emotional prose, and independent moral judgement, unaffected by old age and decades of Soviet rule.

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Rebellion on Reel

THE IRAN–IRAQ WAR IN FILMS BY IRANIAN DISSIDENTS

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The Iran–Iraq War was a terribly destructive conflict that devastated Iran and cost hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of lives between 1980 and 1988. Not only did the war traumatize generations of Iranians, but today it still holds a significant place in the collective memory of the nation regardless of political persuasions. The fact that the war, with its overturning of everyday life, took place so soon after the 1979 Iranian Revolution that had fundamentally reshaped the society, only exasperated the shock and the trauma. Criticizing the war or any other form of dissent, was risky in a political system of Islamic fundamentalism devoid of the freedom of speech or expression. Indeed, the Islamic Republic executed thousands of political prisoners and dissidents. Nevertheless, dissent did occur in the Islamic Republic in the 1980s, in opposition to the war and other issues as well. Opposition to the state and the war manifested itself in the streets as well as on the silver screen. This chapter examines two films—*Bashu, the Little Stranger* (*Bāshu, Gharibeh-ye Kuchak*), by Bahram Beyzaie,[1] which was released in 1989, and *The Marriage of the Blessed* (*'Arusi-ye Khubān*), by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, which was also released in 1989—that express strong dissenting viewpoints about the Iran–Iraq War. Even under the yoke of theocratic rule—and despite their works being funded by the Islamic Republic itself—these two filmmakers still managed to challenge the status quo through cinema. Effectively, their works contradict the validity of Marxist cultural theories that reduce artistic expression to mere reflections of economic forces.

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1. Transliterations in this chapter follow the Association for Iranian Studies scheme, but only for Persian terms or phrases; proper nouns appear in their established English spellings.

The Iranian Revolution and the Islamic Republic

To situate these works in the historical context of their production and reception, it is necessary to explore the history of twentieth-century Iran, specifically the leadup to the Iranian Revolution and the Iran–Iraq War, as well as the development of post-revolutionary Iranian cinema and some of the dominant contemporaneous trends of the industry.

The 1979 revolution was the culmination of decades of dissent against the autocratic rule of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1919–1980), the last monarch of Iran. Owing in large part to the United States' involvement in the 1953 coup d'état—which with the aid of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) overthrew the democratically elected nationalist prime minister of Iran, Mohammad Mosaddeq (1882–1967), and replaced it with a repressive regime—many Iranian dissidents viewed the Shah as an American puppet, despite the fact that the Shah was asserting his own, autonomous agenda by the time of the revolution. The rapid pace of modernization and of Western influence, especially as manifested in imported television shows, Hollywood films, fashions, and also new gender norms coming from the sexual revolution, which had begun in the 1960s in the West, caused much anxiety and consternation among the traditional religious classes. Even secular Iranian leftists joined in such critiques in a popular discourse that labeled Iran's social malaise "Westoxification" (*gharbzadegi*).[2] Despite an increasing standard of living under the Shah, discontent against his dictatorship had spread among a variety of sectors within the Iranian society. Consequently, diverse religious, political, and ethnic factions, whose social and political ideologies and goals oftentimes contradicted one another, coalesced in 1979 to help overthrow the Pahlavi dynasty and more than 2,500 years of monarchy in Iran.

Even though many Iranians regarded Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900–1989) as the spiritual leader of the revolution, in actuality only his Islamist followers wanted to see him as the head of state in the new post-revolutionary system that arose after the Shah had left the country. Through the use of terroristic tactics, the Islamists ultimately emerged triumphant as the new dominant power in the post-revolutionary political landscape and (through a national referendum) established an Islamic republic in February 1980. Khomeini, who

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2. This term, alternatively translated as "Weststruckness" or "Occidentosis," was first coined by the Iranian philosopher, Ahmad Fardid (1910–1994), and later popularized in a book published in 1962 with the title *Gharbzadegi* by the Iranian writer and intellectual, Jalal Al-e Ahmad.

had masterminded the sociopolitical concept of the "guardianship of the Islamic jurist" (*velāyat-e faqih*), became the supreme leader.

In September 1980, Iraq, under the leadership of its tyrannical president, Saddam Hussein (1937–2006), invaded Iran. That invasion unleashed an eight-year war with enormous casualties ranging from one to two million, by some estimates, and at least half a million dead on both sides. As terribly destructive as the war was, it had constructive aspects for the nascent Islamic Republic: The war granted the new regime emergency powers and also ideological fodder for its propaganda machine. Thus, the war became part and parcel of post-revolutionary nation building in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Additionally, the pretext of war enabled the newly founded Islamic Republic to crush political rivals and opposition groups. The nationalist parties, members of which had initially even held some positions in the Islamic Republic, as well as the communists and other leftist groups, were suppressed. Ethnic minorities, especially in the Azerbaijani and Kurdish provinces, faced tensions with the government, and consequently the Islamic Republic forcefully crushed an uprising in the Kurdish region of Iran (Razoux 160). Summary executions of members of the old ruling elite and of political prisoners ensued. A "cultural revolution" (*enqelāb-e farhangi*) purging Iranian universities of Western and/or non-Islamic influences also took place. Many Iranians, especially activists, artists, and intellectuals whose political views were at odds with those of the Islamic Republic, went into exile during and after the revolution. In short, the Iranian Revolution led to a new system of authoritarian rule, albeit now under the cloak of the Shia clerical establishment rather than the historic mantle of Iranian monarchy.

The Iran–Iraq War and Post-Revolutionary Iranian Cinema

Because the Iraqi invasion of Iran occurred less than a year after the founding of the Islamic Republic, the formative development of the post-revolutionary state and society occurred in the crucible of war. As a result, there was a powerful synergy between the propaganda that provided justifications for the war (and its prolongation by Ayatollah Khomeini) and the ideology of Shiism which the Islamic Republic had begun to employ throughout public life—from education and the media to the visual arts, cinema, and beyond.

The rivalry between the nations' two leaders was existential. Saddam Hussein sought to annex the bordering oil-rich region of Iran and to contain the spread of

radical Shiism among Iraq's majority-Shia population, while Khomeini looked to export the Islamic revolution. Khomeini succeeded in mobilizing the country to war, but public support was not unwavering. Initially, many Iranians, irrespective of their political beliefs, supported the war because they considered it the rightful defense of the homeland. As Iran succeeded in repelling Iraqi forces, the rationale for fighting changed from defense to offense. The initial goal was the defense of Iranian territory, but Khomeini eventually sought to overthrow Hussein and capture of the Shia holy cities, such as Karbala and Najaf, located in Iraq. These geopolitical and expansionist motives for continuing the conflict led to increased dissent. Years of war had already strained the Iranian economy, with increasing hyperinflation and devaluation of the Iranian rial, as well as rationing and shortages of essential goods. As the body count rose, so did the number of Iranians who questioned continuing the war. Leftists and nationalists began to advocate for peace negotiations with Iraq. Political opposition and anti-war demonstrations also increased. By late 1984, war mobilization in Iran was floundering. By 1987, there was widespread war fatigue (Karsh 74). Of the social and economic situation in Iran during this period, Richard Wilbur writes:

> Finally, general war weariness—born of years of sacrifice and economic and military hardship—and flagging revolutionary zeal revealed anti-war sentiment in Iranian society. Increasing anti-war demonstrations, public statements from dissident politicians and a mass failure of the population to mobilize itself for the war effort illustrated the level of domestic unrest. Psychologically, the spiralling inflation rate, fear of chemical weapons and the continuing missile attacks on major cities created an atmosphere of chaos and impending collapse. (124)

Facing growing pressure, Khomeini finally accepted a ceasefire brokered by the United Nations. Symbolic of Khomeini's zealous drive to see the war to the very end, he infamously described the ceasefire as "more deadly than taking poison" (Pear).

Amid all the chaos foisted upon Iranian society in the aftermath of a foreign invasion that took place so soon after a turbulent revolution, one might not expect the cinema industry to be able to thrive; however, far from coming to a halt, Iranian cinema flourished during the 1980s. In the words of Mohammad Beheshti, the former head of the Farabi Cinema Foundation (*Bonyād-e Sinamāyi-ye Fārābī*), one of the state-sponsored institutions created after the revolution to promote the country's film industry, post-revolutionary Iranian cinema "was born

in the conditions of war" (*L'Iran* 56:30). The Islamic Republic used cinema as a propaganda tool not just for the war mobilization effort, but also in their attempts to implement revolutionary social and cultural changes according to their Islamic ideals. This was a somewhat ironic situation, since Iranian Islamists had long disdained cinema, viewing it as a Western vice. The antagonistic view of Islamists toward cinema was formed because of the extensive importation of Hollywood films into Iranian movie theaters, as well as the indigenous genre of FilmFarsi that had developed in Iran with significant influences from Bollywood and Hollywood cinema. Depictions of dancing and singing, not to mention drinking and sexual relations, offended traditional Iranian and Muslim sensibilities. During the revolution, Islamic militants burnt nearly half of the country's cinemas, murdering hundreds in the process (Zeydabadi-Nejad 34). The most notorious incident of arson was the 1979 Cinema Rex fire in Abadan, a city in southwestern Iran, in which 377 men, women, and children perished. Though Islamic militants had committed arson against cinemas and other venues which they deemed sinful in the decade leading up to the revolution (Amanat 716), the number of arson incidents skyrocketed—from 29 up until August 1978 to 180 by the time of the founding of the Islamic Republic (Naficy 3: 21–22). Surprisingly, in a twist of fate after the revolution, Khomeini declared that cinema was an acceptable tool for reeducating the society, so long as it abided by Islamic values. By 1982, the newly established Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (*Vezārat-e Farhang va Ershād-e Eslāmi*) instituted a three-pronged policy of financial support (*hemāyat*), technical guidance (*hedāyat*), and supervision (*nezārat*)—the government's euphemism for censorship—for controlling and aiding in the development of the post-revolutionary cinema industry (Zeydabadi-Nejad 37). Though different types of movies fitting the state's mold of Islamic morality were made in this new state-funded media landscape, movies about the war became an especially popular genre, known in Persian as *sinamā-ye defā'-e moqaddas*, that is, the "cinema of the Sacred (or Holy) Defense."

The Cinema of the Sacred Defense

Echoing the Islamic Republic's wartime propaganda, these Sacred Defense films promoted the values of sacrifice and martyrdom which, since the seventh century, have been central in the ethic and aesthetics Shiism. In 680 CE, the second Shia imam, Husayn, was killed in the Battle of Karbala, a city which lies in present-

day Iraq. For centuries, Shia Muslims have mourned the martyrdom of Husayn in Karbala on the Day of Ashura. The cosmological significance of Karbala and Ashura in Shiism is exemplified in the Arabic slogan, which also appeared in the wartime propaganda: "Every day is Ashura and every land is Karbala" (*Kull yawm 'Āshūrā' wa-kull arḍ Karbalā*).[3] The fact that Karbala lay in Iraq, and that Saddam Hussein suppressed the Iraqi Shia, made invocations of martyrdom more powerful, for part of the rational for the offensive drive against Iraq in the war was the liberation of the Shia holy cities of Karbala and Najaf. The Islamic Republic's propaganda depicted Saddam Hussein as Yazid, the Sunni caliph whose forces had killed Imam Husayn at the Battle of Karbala. Conversely, the Islamic Republic's propaganda depicted fallen Iranian soldiers as martyrs, directly linked to the holy martyrs of the Battle of Karbala. The Islamic Republic even promised passage to paradise to any Iranian soldiers slain in battle. Accordingly, the Sacred Defense cinema, which was epic and mystical in style, echoed these religious sentiments of martyrdom and self-sacrifice in order to encourage Iranian men—and even boys— to enlist and fight on the front.

Unsurprisingly, there was a focus on male characters in the Sacred Defense cinema that also represented an emerging discourse on Muslim masculinity in the revolutionary ideology of theocratic Iran. Most of the stories in this film genre were about heroic men, with women serving only as secondary characters to support the men and mourn the fallen (male) Iranian soldiers. As Aghghaleh and Özad explain: "Martyrdom is regarded as an art form of the men of God, showcasing the Shia ideology that has created a new form of heroism that is dramatically distinct from pre-revolution heroes. Death in the way of Allah (martyrdom) is the main characteristic of these heroes" (75). Essentially, a new archetype of Muslim masculinity developed in the wake of the Iran–Iraq War. This archetype became integrally linked to the conceptually interrelated defense of the faith and the defense of the homeland, as epitomized by the volunteer fighters, or *basiji* (77). In short, the Sacred Defense cinema (as a new type of "Islamic" cinema) replaced the models of masculinity that had hitherto existed in the cinematic and popular culture of Iran before the Islamic Revolution, with a new image of the ideal man: one willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to his God and to his country.

The Sacred Defense films, rife with their imagery of new forms of Muslim masculinity, dominated Iran's cinema in the 1980s, and very few films about the war deviated from the moral framework of the genre. From 1980 to 1988, fifty-six

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3. The transliteration used here is Library of Congress (LOC) Arabic romanization.

war films were produced in Iran. Some were documentaries and others fictional, but all mostly focusing on military operations on the frontlines. Significantly, the Sacred Defense genre accounted for approximately one-quarter of Iran's cinema output in the 1980s (Naficy 4: 7). To be sure, the genre persisted after the end of the Iran–Iraq War; for the purpose of brevity, though, this chapter will focus on the contemporaneous forms of the genre, as they existed in the 1980s.[4]

During that time, various governmental organizations within the Islamic Republic funded a "war culture industry," as Naficy puts it, producing not just films but a great variety of other art forms to promote the war effort (4: 8). "Considering the number of governmental and pseudo-governmental organizations and ministries involved in the production of the cinema of sacred defense," Partovi explains, "it is difficult to attribute the origins of the genre to just one of them" (516). However, the origins are often traced to the establishment of the Farabi Film Foundation in 1983, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in the War Films Bureau. The mission of the bureau was to "produce feature films that embodied the true spirit of the war as a 'sacred defense' . . . a defense of the correct . . . and pure Muhammadan Islam . . . that national leaders had declared the Islamic Republic represented" (Partovi 516). However, that mission quickly expanded beyond the purview of the War Films Bureau, the Farabi Film Foundation, or even the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, to a far more widespread social and political mission of nation-building and national defense. Regarding this "war culture industry," Naficy writes:

> The diversity of governmental and paragovernmental organizations supporting war movies demonstrates the state's impact in overdetermining the official war culture nationwide. A vast "war culture industry" produced and marketed a plethora of plays, musical recordings, journalism, television and radio programs, poetry, slogans, literature, visual arts, photography, documentary films, fiction movies, celebration and mourning rituals, wall graffiti, postage stamps, and even jokes, which in turn celebrated and commemorated the war and its heroes and victims, generally the leaders of the Islamic Republic and Iranian fighters, and criticized and condemned the perpetrators of the war, generally Hussein and his U.S. supporters. (4: 8)

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4. Regarding the forms that this genre took after the end of the Iran–Iraq War, Aghghaleh and Özad write: "Most of the Iranian filmmakers have made war movies . . . but by the end of the war in 1988 and from the late 1990s onwards, movies that belonged to the Sacred Defense genre have been mostly considering the things that happened behind the frontlines. By the beginning of the year 2000, the theme of the Sacred Defense movies had changed, and these films have mostly been paying attention to the effects of war on soldiers and their families. War filmmakers start mourning for the values that they went to war for. They began making films about governmental pragmatism, hypocrisy, and corruption" (78–79).

Three exceptions to this filmmaking formula were *Second Search* (*Jostoju-ye Dovom*) by Amir Naderi, and the previously mentioned *Bashu, the Little Stranger*, and *The Marriage of the Blessed*. Naderi's *Second Search*, made in 1981, deals with missing-in-action soldiers—a grim topic that highlighted the tragedy of Iranian families unable to bury their dead and mourn properly, which is exceptionally important in Shia rituals. Naderi's innovative film was banned and never released, which has made it largely inaccessible and therefore not a focus of this chapter. The remainder of this analysis will discuss the two other films that were exceptions to the conventions of Iranian war films: *Bashu, the Little Stranger*, and *The Marriage of the Blessed*, both of which are fictional narratives.

Bahram Beyzaie, the director of *Bashu, the Little Stranger*, began his artistic career in the 1960s. He was one of the founding members of the Iranian Writers Association, a group that included socialists and Marxists critical of the Shah's regime; however, Beyzaie did not embrace Marxism, nor the competing ideologies of Islamism or Iranian nationalism (Talajooy 58, 129). Unlike many directors, he was able to continue his career after the revolution, although he did lose his position at the University of Tehran. Despite falling out of favor during the Cultural Revolution that took place in Iran in the early 1980s, he nevertheless received funding from a governmental organization—the Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (*Kānun-e Parvaresh-e Fekri-ye Kudakān va Nowjavānān*), a branch of the Ministry of Education (*Vezārat-e Āmuzesh va Parvaresh*)—to make *Bashu, the Little Stranger* in 1986. However, censors banned the film because of its negative portrayal of the war and the vibrant female protagonist, Nai, who appeared too strong and too beautiful for Islamist sensibilities. (After the revolution, the state dictated only demure depictions of women in cinema.) According to Beyzaie, the censors demanded over eighty changes to the film (Naficy 4: 37). When he refused, the film was shelved for years without any distribution. It was not until after Khomeini's death in 1989 that it was shown. During that period of relatively relaxed censorship, Beyzaie was finally able to have his film released in theaters without making all the required changes.

Though some definitions of the genre of the Sacred Defense cinema include any films dealing with the war, *Bashu* differs fundamentally in several ways from the predominant and widespread tropes of the war film genre. First, unlike the majority of those films, Beyzaie's film has not just a female protagonist, but one who is a powerful figure in the story. Second, his film focuses on civilian life as opposed to any military operations or the front lines. Military images only appear

in an animated sequence of Iraqi fighter jets in the opening credits, representative of the planes that execute the aerial bombardment in the first live action scene. That opening scene depicts civilian casualties during that bombardment in Khuzestan, a province located in southwestern Iran historically known as Arabestan because of its large Arab population, which is also where the war began. Third, the film revolves around Bashu, an ethnic Arab boy orphaned in that same attack, who, after hiding in the back of a truck that departs in the middle of that attack, wakes up the next morning to find himself in Nai's village in the northern province of Gilan.

Beyzaie's inclusion of an Arab protagonist has special social and political import. Though the war began in a conflict over territory, specifically the Iranian province of Khuzestan, ethnic and religious differences played a role in public and international perceptions of the conflict as one between Persians and Arabs, or, alternatively, between Shia and Sunni Muslims.

Saddam Hussein named his invasion "Echo of Qadisiyyah," referring to the historic Battle of al-Qadisiyyah in 636 CE, in which the Arab armies of the early Islamic caliphate defeated the Sassanid rulers of the Persian Empire (Razoux 21). Under the Baathist Party, Iraqi propaganda was quite anti-Persian (Ahmadi 98). Khomeini, however, did not demonize Arabs but rather regarded them as religious brethren to Iranian Muslims. Instead of casting Arabs as the national enemy, Khomeini vilified Hussein and his Baathist regime as infidels and enemies—not just of Iran but also of Islam (Paul 201). Nevertheless, anti-Arab sentiments did exist in Iran at the time and can be traced back at least to the inception of Iranian nationalism in the nineteenth century (Zia-Ebrahimi 1058). The foundational figures of secular nationalist thought in Iran from that era, such as the writer Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani and the playwright, philosopher, and literary critic Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh, argued that Iran's backwardness was caused by the Arab conquests of Sassanid Persia and the subsequent spread of Islam throughout the formerly Zoroastrian empire (Akbar 607). Not only was this ideology based on a notion of Iranian national identity rooted in Persian ethnicity, but it also perpetuated myths of Iranians' racial supremacy as Aryans (Indo-Iranians who migrated to the Iranian plateau and the Indian Subcontinent some two thousand to three thousand years ago) over the Semites, specifically the Arabs.

This nationalist discourse constructed an "us" versus "them" binary of a Persian self and an Arab other. This tendency became more widespread in the twentieth century and was the sort of thinking that Beyzaie implicitly challenges in *Bashu, the Little Stranger*. The nationalism promoted by the Pahlavi monarchy

touted the glories of pre-Islamic Persia in the tradition of these nineteenth-century nationalists and highlighted Persian culture (as opposed to Islam) as the basis for Iranian identity. Indeed, the very name given to the dynasty by Reza Shah, the father of Mohammad Reza Shah, was derived from the historic name for the Middle Persian language that had existed in the pre-Islamic era.

During the Iran–Iraq War, anti-Arab sentiments still existed in parts of Iranian society, despite the reconceptualization of Iranian national identity by the Islamic Republic as being fundamentally Shia in nature (Rastegar 76). These sorts of xenophobic nationalist sentiments, despite their mass appeal, were of course deeply flawed and failed to account for Iranian Arabs, who were essentially a contradiction in terms according to secular nationalist formulas of Iranian identity. Despite the exclusionary notion of Iranian identity in secular nationalist discourse, many ethnic Arabs still had a sense of belonging to the Iranian nation. Though Saddam Hussein attempted to foment an insurrection among the ethnic Arab population of Iran by trying to underscore ethnic ties between Iraqi and Iranian Arabs, ethnic Arabs in Iran rejected these calls to rise up against Iran and join the Iraqi cause (Farzaneh 94). By virtue of living in the war-torn province of Khuzestan, the effects upon the ethnic Arabs of Iran were disproportionately high. Consequently, in his groundbreaking film, Beyzaie highlighted Arab Iranians' suffering in the Iran–Iraq War and contrasted their calamitous experience with his depiction of the northern province of Gilan, which was virtually untouched by the catastrophic conflict.

In place of the exclusionary notions of Iranian national identity, Beyzaie sends a message of interethnic unity in *Bashu, the Little Stranger*. This is particularly notable in the dialogue, which is almost entirely Arabic and Gilaki (an Iranian language spoken in Gilan). The language barrier between Bashu and the Gilaki villagers is broken through the use of Persian, their common language. After fighting with the local boys who taunt him because of his differences, which include his darker skin color, he chooses to pick up a Persian textbook instead of throwing a rock. From that textbook, Bashu reads a central message of the film: "Iran is our country. We are from the same land. We are the children of Iran" (01:00:20). Notably, all of the other children accept Bashu after he recites that passage in formal Persian, and because of his devotion and service to the family, Nai and her husband ultimately adopt him. Beyzaie's representation of Iran as a multiethnic nation and his promotion of the Persian language (as opposed to Islam) as a unifying force stand in contrast to both the secular nationalism of the

Pahlavi dynasty as well as the religious nationalism of the Islamic Republic. Aside from focusing on the consequences of the war for civilians instead of military operations, Beyzaie's film also departs from the pre-existing norms of Iranian cinema by being the first film ever to feature languages and characters of Iran's ethnic minorities.

Unlike Beyzaie, whose focus in *Bashu, the Little Stranger* is on the society and not necessarily the state, in *The Marriage of the Blessed*, released in 1989, Mohsen Makhmalbaf implicitly criticizes the corruption and the hypocrisy of the Islamic Republic itself. Born in 1957, he joined a guerilla group as a youth in the 1970s and spent years in prison until the revolution (Dabashi 45). A zealous Islamist, after his release he served the newly founded Islamic Republic as a propaganda filmmaker (46). Makhmalbaf disdained Beyzaie and most other pre-revolutionary filmmakers as "idolaters" (*tāquti*) and as agents of the Shah's regime (Naficy 4: 39). By the mid-1980s, however, his thinking changed. Makhmalbaf came to reject Islamism, and became a "rebel filmmaker," as Hamid Dabashi labeled him in his biography, *Makhmalbaf at Large: The Making of a Rebel Filmmaker* (5). Reflective of Makhmalbaf's own ideological trajectory, the film's protagonist, Hajji Pakdel, is a war veteran disillusioned by the failures of the Islamic Republic and the Iranian society to live up to the ideals of the revolution.

As in the case of *Bashu, the Little Stranger*, the government also produced *The Marriage of the Blessed* through the Organization of Cinema Affairs (*Sāzmān-e Omur-e Sinamāyi*), which was a branch of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. However, Makhmalbaf also departed from the tropes of the Sacred Defense cinema in his movie. Firstly, this film also has a female protagonist, Mehri, who is a socially engaged photographer and the fiancée of the male protagonist. Secondly, the film deals vividly with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among veterans, instead of military operations or soldiers who die in the line of duty. As Naficy argues, this film is about the "living martyrs" of the war (4: 40). Indeed, though Hajji is a real name, it is rare and usually only used as an honorific implying that a person has completed the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca. Hajji's surname, Pakdel, comes from the Persian words *pāk* and *del*, which mean "pure" and "heart," respectively. His last name allows the viewer to see the protagonist as an everyman: the devout Muslim veteran of the war. Through his creative use of color, sound, and cinematography in the film, Makhmalbaf conveys the psychological distress and suffering of living martyrs, for which he casts Hajji Pakdel as an emblematic representative.

From the start, the film situates the story as one about PTSD and society's failure to take care of its veterans. The first scene of the film is of traumatized veterans who are being treated in a psychiatric hospital. In the opening shot, the camera is placed on a metal cart carrying medications that is being pushed through hallways of the psychiatric ward. This level of framing accentuates the effects of the medical treatment, which seem quite grim given that the metallic clamoring caused by the cart actually triggers the patients. Through his cinematography and use of sound, the director casts the healthcare system for the war veterans in a critical light. He reiterates this implicit criticism later on, while Hajji receives outpatient care at a hospital. Isolated in a room under a large, loud machine, Hajji begins to lose touch with reality. In that scene, the film fades from color to black and white. This usage of color mirrors Hajji's sense of derealization, or sense that the world around him is not real. Suggestive of Hajji's dissociation and his lost sense of self, liquid spills on a photograph and erases his own image. He suffers from what we today can classify as the dissociative subtype of PTSD (Schiavone et al. 1). Despite Hajji's service to the nation, his future father-in-law views Hajji as damaged and tries to call off the engagement. Far from honoring his service or even sympathizing with his condition, the society (except for his fiancée) stigmatizes Hajji. In this manner, Makhmalbaf brings attention not only to the PTSD afflicting war veterans, but also to the societal hypocrisy and injustice.

Makhmalbaf's cynical portrayal of the hypocrisy of Iranian society, and the violence of the state, sets his film far apart from ones that dominated the Sacred Defense cinema of the time. In one scene, he juxtaposes the hood ornament on a Mercedes Benz with anti-capitalist and socialistic slogans by Khomeini, Imam Reza (one of the twelve Shia imams), and others: "The *basiji*: the lion of the front, the oppressed of the city. . . . The country belongs to the shanty dwellers. . . . We will drag all capitalists to the court of justice. . . . The crop always belongs to the farmer" (00:05:30). The title of the film is interspersed amid these shots, thus underscoring their centrality to the film's messages.

Class-based criticism appears later in the film when we see that Hajji's wealthy father-in-law lives in a huge home with Greco-Roman statuary, which can be interpreted as an idolatrous symbol of Western influence. In a later scene, Hajji sees a photograph of his father-in-law making a toast holding what must be an alcoholic beverage—forbidden in Islam—symbolizing his moral corruption. The theme of economic corruption also appears in the film. Hajji overhears two men haggling over land deals in a government office. A property owner has returned

from abroad to reclaim and sell his estate that had been confiscated, presumably because of his ties with the *ancien regime*. Then Hajji becomes delirious as he hears about the sale of a village belonging to an ex-colonel (another member of the pre-revolutionary elite) who cheated the system to avoid having his "feudal" estate confiscated. These questionable transactions take place in plain sight of a bureaucrat at a typewriter, that is, under the nose of an agent of the very regime that had made promises of wealth redistribution. Through this imagery, Makhmalbaf implicates the Islamic Republic in the unfulfilled redistribution of wealth that Khomeini had promised poor Iranians, as well as in the economic corruption in the country.

It is also worth noting that the director implicitly calls into question the legitimacy of the regime as a so-called Islamic republic. Hajji goes to that government office with his fiancée in order to finalize their marriage with a civil license, as they have already concluded their *'aqd*, or Islamic marriage vows. The clerk at the typewriter impatiently tells his fiancée that the fulfillment of the religious ceremony does not suffice for the civil license because, "Religious rules and civil laws are two different matters" (00:27:34). The distinction made between religious rules and civil laws can be seen as a cynical statement about the purported legitimacy of the theocracy, which claimed to uphold the religious values for which devout Muslim Iranians such as Hajji, or even Makhmalbaf himself, had fought.

During his delirium in that same scene, Hajji experiences a flashback to the war that not only signals the character's derealization but also makes further implications against the state. The image of the typewriter appears again, but this time juxtaposed with a battle scene. The typewriter fires bullets like a machine gun. The bureaucrat, an agent of the state, becomes the perpetrator of violence, gunning down Iranian soldiers. Notably, the camera is set at the same level as the camera on the cart in the hospital that triggers the psychiatric patients in the film's opening shot. This camera placement implies a semantic connection between the two shots, connecting the suffering of the veterans at the hands of the state after the war with the horrors of the battlefield itself. Moreover, the typewriter-machine gun betrays the complicity of Khomeini and the Islamic Republic in prolonging the war at the cost of countless lives. This is the only time after Hajji's disassociation that we see color in the film, which suggests the vividness of his hallucination. That same hallucination reappears, albeit in black and white, as the film's second-to-last shot. A sound bridge connects the sound of shelling to the final image: an extreme long shot of Tehran, which can be read as the violence of the state being perpetuated upon society at large even after the ceasefire.

Although Makhmalbaf and Beyzaie differed significantly in terms of their political persuasions and their treatment of the war in their films, both *The Marriage of the Blessed* and *Bashu, the Little Stranger* constitute two rare examples of representations of the war that departed from the mainstream norms exemplified in the Sacred Defense cinema in the 1980s. During that era, there was ubiquitous state control of the cinema, rampant censorship, and the all-too-real threat of political persecution. Not coincidentally, both films were released in 1989, after the end of the war and the death of Khomeini, which marked a relative relaxation of the overzealous brand of Islamic fundamentalism that had been the norm in post-revolutionary Iran. Considering the political climate of the time, with more than 5,000 dissidents executed in 1988 alone, it is a wonder that these two films were made at all, let alone financed by the government through various organizations. This seeming inconsistency reflects the free thinking of the filmmakers, despite their lack of freedom of speech and expression. Additionally, this inconsistency contradicts Marxist cultural theories about the economic base, or means of production, determining ideas expressed in the arts.

Although Beyzaie and Makhmalbaf resisted the pressures of the Islamic Republic, the situation in the country was far from ideal. The failures of the reformist movement of the 1990s and early 2000s, championed by President Mohammad Khatami, made hopes of change from within increasingly remote. Makhmalbaf ultimately left Iran after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a hardliner, defeated the reformists in the 2005 presidential election, which ushered in tightened censorship. Four years later, a mass uprising known as the Green Movement erupted after widespread allegations that the 2009 presidential election had been rigged in favor of Ahmadinejad, who remained in office until 2013. After the Green Movement's defeat, the Islamic Republic cracked down even harder on dissent. The filmmaker Jafar Panahi was placed under house arrest and banned from filmmaking for twenty years for his activism. Beyzaie left Iran soon after, in 2010. These two twenty-first-century moments not only drove Makhmalbaf and Beyzaie into exile but also laid bare the regime's enduring repressiveness.

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PART V

War's Influence on Language

Editor
Elizabeth Robinson

De-Russification Attempts in Revolutionary Kyiv of 1917

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This chapter examines the situation in Kyiv, Ukraine between the two revolutions in Petrograd (now known as Saint Petersburg), Russia, in 1917: the February Revolution that ended with the abdication of Czar Nicholas II (1868–1918), and the October Revolution that signaled the upcoming advent of the Bolsheviks. To a considerable extent, our observations are based on selected Kyiv newspapers that serve as an important source of information about that time period. It should be noted that despite multiple concurrent movements in Kyiv between the February and October revolutions of 1917, such as the Bolshevik movement, pro-Russian and monarchist elements, and the anarchist movement, this chapter concentrates on the Ukrainian efforts during this time. The Ukrainian national movement gained dominance in Kyiv with the establishment of the Central Rada and the declaration of the Ukrainian People's Republic. The Central Rada succeeded in asserting its authority and implementing policies to develop a national government and cultural institutions.

In particular, the residents and representatives of Kyiv took advantage of the unprecedented freedoms of speech, press, assembly, local self-government, and public use of the Ukrainian language in formal, educational, and cultural contexts to foster the city's cultural life. Indeed, compared to the many previous decades of stagnation, cultural processes in 1917 were progressing with considerable momentum, since more was accomplished in just a few months than in the entire previous century. The period right after the February revolution was very productive in terms of holding numerous assemblies that resulted in the establishment of various Ukrainian cultural institutions, in contrast to the former monopoly held by Russian institutions. Based on our observations from the press of that period,

the most visible and large-scale project during these months was the project of Ukrainization, or rather de-Russification, of Ukraine and Kyiv as its capital.

The term Ukrainization received some attention in scholarly literature, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, the phenomenon that is usually referred to in post-Soviet research is the Ukrainization that took place in the early years of Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s. Examples can be found in the works of Michael Moser and George Shevelov. The latter does mention the efforts of the Ukrainian government in 1917 in the implementation of the Ukrainization policy, but the focus remains on the 1920s. This paper maintains, with the support of newspaper publications from 1917, that the term Ukrainization and the respective policy were well underway already in 1917.

Overall, the notion of Ukrainization includes activities, policies, and developments aimed at the comprehensive spread of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of life. While the Ukrainian authorities primarily sought to assert Ukrainian identity, promote the use of the Ukrainian language, and establish a national government during this critical period, it was, in fact, the process aimed at reversing Russification. Russification was a set of policies encouraging non-Russians to adopt Russian language and culture, aimed to increase Russian political domination. Following the Pereiaslav Treaty of 1654, Ukraine faced increasing Russification pressures, resulting in the gradual restriction and eventual abolition of Ukrainian autonomy.[1]

It is important to elaborate on the methodology of using newspapers as a primary source. As Jane-Louise Secker noted, newspapers are not written or produced with the historian in mind since the press is primarily a source of current information and news, having little further value once events have moved on. However, she continues, "the accumulation of knowledge in newspapers, each day, creates an important resource of information, highly valuable for historical inquiry. In many instances, the newspaper report will be the only surviving record of events, and even where other sources do exist, the newspaper will provide a uniquely accessible summary" (2). Louise McReynolds argued that "the history of the mass-circulation press weaves together the variety of components that comprised the daily newspaper: it is at once the story of political, social, cultural, and economic transformation" (3). Newspapers allow a researcher to triangulate historical events: each newspaper, even though it will claim to be objective, has to

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1. See more here: *Russification*, www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%2FR%2FU%2F Russification.htm.

a certain degree its own agenda. Thus, exploring the same historical period from the viewpoint of newspapers with contrasting political or social affiliations creates a more comprehensive picture of a specific time period.

Unlike official documents, which often convey the ideal picture of how things were supposed to happen, newspapers published not only information from official sources but also incorporated a broad range of genres and reflected how people perceived current events, including their hopes, fears, prejudices, and convictions. The significance of Kyiv's newspapers in studying the life of the city has been long recognized. Michael Hamm, one of Kyiv's most prominent historians, noted: "As I pursued my research on Kiev, it quickly became apparent that the most informative source materials, at least for the years after 1870, were the massive newspaper collections available in Russia and Ukraine" (xv). Newspapers are uniquely significant to our understanding of how the Ukrainian revolution unfolded.[2]

This chapter focuses on three specific newspapers: *Kievlianin, Iuzhnaia kopeika* (later *Iuzhnaia gazeta*), and *Nova Rada. Kievlianin* was a Russian-language newspaper published in Kyiv between 1864 and 1919. It started as a moderately liberal newspaper and then evolved into a conservative monarchist publication with imperial-chauvinistic leanings (Kal'nitskii). During the late years of the Russian Empire, *Kievlianin* was one of the biggest and most influential newspapers, on par with the most important newspapers of St. Petersburg/Petrograd and Moscow. It was published even on Sundays and could afford its own correspondents throughout the empire (Volobuieva et al 29). During the February Revolution, it espoused anti-Bolshevik and anti-Ukrainian views.[3] *Iuzhnaia kopeika* (*Iuzhnaia gazeta*) was an important daily, as it was the most "democratic" (in demographic terms) newspaper, liberal in its leanings while catering to a broad spectrum of urban readers (unlike the intelligentsia-oriented *Kievlianin* or *Kievskaia mysl'*). It also commonly included literary pieces that reflected upon urban life and culture:

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2. The term "Ukrainian Revolution" generally refers to a series of events in Ukraine during the period of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent Ukrainian War of Independence (1917–1921). Historians (such as Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky, Roman Szporluk, John S. Reshetar, Jr., Iaroslav Hrytsak and many others) often use this term to emphasize the distinct national aspirations and efforts of Ukrainians to establish an independent state separate from Russia.

3. The print run for *Kievlianin* in 1917 is not readily available. Various sources provide contradictory figures: for example, Mykhailo Kal'nyts'kyi cites figures in the range of 2,000 to 5,000 copies in the 1890s and 20,000 copies in the 1900s–1910s (https://kp.ua/kiev/463794-svoboda-slova-sto-let-tomu-nazad). At the same time, another source provides a different number of up to 70,000 copies in 1919 (https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Киевлянин_(газета). Regardless of the newspaper's circulation, there seems to be a consensus that *Kievlianin* was one of the best and most influential newspapers in the entire Russian Empire and is considered an important source of historical information about the life of Kyiv at that time (http://irbis-nbuv.gov.ua/dlib/ item/0000931).

poems, feuilletons, serialized novels, urban anecdotes, and reports. In 1916, the newspaper boasted daily print runs of up to 65,000 copies (Kal'nyst'kyi). *Nova Rada* was a daily newspaper published in Kyiv from March 1917 to January 1919 as the continuation of *Rada* (Kyiv). Published initially by the Society of Friends of Ukrainian Science, Literature, and Art, it later became the organ of the Ukrainian Party of Socialists-Federalists. The circulation of *Nova Rada* in May 1917 was 11,000 copies, growing in June to approximately 20,000 copies, with prospects for continued growth (Horbatiuk 152). The selected newspapers provide the most representative coverage of events in Kyiv and the political environment as it relates to their target audiences, boast large circulations, and, in the case of *Nova Rada*, engage with the Ukrainian government and nascent institutions.

This chapter also relies on Miroslav Hroch's chronological stages in the creation of a nation. Hroch's theory explains how modern nations emerge from social and cultural movements within ethnic groups, developing in stages from initial intellectual activism (phase A) to broader mobilization (phase B) and, finally, mass support and full nationhood (phase C). According to Hroch, the path to a modern nation becomes irreversible only when the national agitation of phase B (which presupposes an initial activist phase) succeeds and gains the support of the decisive part of the nonruling ethnic group (36). Hroch continues:

> [O]nce national identity was embraced by the masses, it turned into a "material force": National political programs were usually not formed or made distinctive anywhere until phase C—when a mass national movement occurred. We can talk of ultimate success, and thus of the national movement coming to an end, only once a national community had developed a complete social structure and the movement attained political autonomy or independence. In the case of state-nations, the equivalent of phase C was full national mass mobilization." (36)

It will be demonstrated here that the developments in the social, political, and cultural life of Kyiv in 1917 were the culmination of the nation-building efforts of Ukrainians and those supporting their cause throughout the previous decades. As the historian Iaroslava Vermenych accurately assessed, "having lived through the phase of public cultural activism with its inherent Ukrainophilism, the nationally conscious element of the political elite of Ukraine at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had already grown to declare its own Ukrainian identity as a dominant political position" (288). In other words, one can say that the process of Ukrainian nation-building entered phase C in 1917.

Before addressing the relevant events in Kyiv, it is essential to establish a broader context for the revolutionary landscape of 1917, a year ripe for revolutions. According to Andreas Kappeler, already in the nineteenth century, multi-ethnic empires in Europe were shaken by national movements, causing their gradual transformation. With respect to the foundations of the Russian Empire, "the dynastic idea of empire, the tsarist autocracy, and the estate-based order—began to be undermined by the modern national principle of the community of political will and the ethnic cultural community which transcended estate boundaries, and by the notion of the sovereignty of the people" (213). The Ukrainian nation followed the paradigm characteristic of that historic period. As a result of the shift in traditional relationships between empires and their ethnic constituents, "the modern nation became the primary object of identity and loyalty, the principle that gave order to the modern world. It required political participation, self-determination and autonomy, had as its distant goal the nation state that as a rule was ethnically homogeneous, and thus threatened to blow apart the supranational dynastic empires" (Kappeler 213).

Although in the late nineteenth century, the Russian Empire was predominantly agrarian with a rural population, the growing influence of large cities became evident by the early twentieth century. According to Aleksei Miller, after the revolution of 1905, many of these cities transformed into centers of political life in which rather large political organizations operated and fierce election campaigns for the State Duma and city dumas unfolded (*Goroda imperii* 5). By 1917, an important milestone had been reached: the ethnic identity of imperial cities had substantially developed, which contradicted the previous imperial status quo. As Miller point out, "many cities become focal points of these conflicts—Lviv and Kyiv, Vilnius and Grodno, Riga and Tallinn. In 1917, the reformatting of the administrative space of the outskirts of the empire began: the former provinces were changing their outlines in accordance with ethnicity" (*Goroda imperii* 12). The February revolution of 1917 provided a strong impetus for ethnic centers in the former empire to develop separately.

Large urban centers were known for their multiethnic composition, but the ethnic majority in those cities did not always correspond to that of the surrounding areas. As Karsten Brüggemann pointed out:

Multiethnicity was the norm in many urban centers in Eastern Europe. . . . More Estonians than Germans lived in Tallinn, and in 1871 their share was over fifty percent. In turn, in Riga, even in 1913, Latvians accounted for only about forty percent of the population, although they were the largest ethnic group since the

1890s. By 1913, a predominant Estonian majority had formed in Tallinn, which accounted for more than seventy percent of the population. Here the number of Germans was relatively stable, but by 1913 their share fell to ten percent. (100–39, 101, 103–04)

The situation was characteristic not only of European parts of the Russian Empire but Eurasian as well. Vladimer Vardosanidze describes the situation in the capital of Georgia as follows: "There was a constant growth in the population of Georgia in general and the urban population specifically. Thus, in 1886 Tiflis had 78,455 inhabitants. According to the first general census of the Russian Empire in 1897, the population of Tiflis already reached 159,590 people" (410–73, 412). He adds that, by 1914, the city's population had grown to 344,600 with the following distribution by nationality: 19.0% Georgians ; 35.3% Armenians; 24.5% Russians; and 21.2% other nationalities.

These examples of urban centers of the former Russian Empire help to contextualize Kyiv's place and the path it took during the revolution. Although, in many respects, Kyiv resembled its counterparts, being a fast-growing and ethnically diverse city, the zeal of the city's political players in developing and advancing national policy immediately following the February revolution of 1917 could hardly be matched. In 1917, Kyiv became a place of unprecedented political volatility, social mobilization, and cultural ferment.

To understand the nature of Ukrainization, its origin, and its urgency in 1917, it is necessary to refer to events in the realms of Ukrainian culture and language use dating back to at least the second half of the eighteenth century. According to Myroslav Shkandrij, during this period, Russian was mandated as the governmental language. The educated were expected to adopt it, while the Ukrainian upper class was gradually assimilated into Russian state and culture. He continued that "as the power of the Empire waxed and the prestige of the language spoken in its capital grew, the position of Kiev waned and the use of Ukrainian diminished" (3). The Ukrainian language had never been in an advantageous position in the Russian Empire, especially when compared to the freedoms that the language enjoyed under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, two documents, namely the Valuev Circular (1863) and the Ems Ukase (1876) were particularly harmful to the Ukrainian language. The purpose of these secret policies enforced by the czarist government was to reinforce the imperial policy, begun in the early eighteenth century, to limit the use of the Ukrainian language.

George Shevelov provides a summary of the outcome of this policy. The Ukrainian language was excluded from the higher spheres of public life, scholarship, and science, and was entirely absent from education on all levels. This situation led to a drop in the prestige of the Ukrainian language. As a result, Ukrainian acquired the reputation of being the language of uneducated peasants. Very few Ukrainian texts prepared for publication succeeded in passing censorship, and they were exclusively belles-lettres or publications for the uneducated (Shevelov 77). Myroslav Shkandrij also points out that the use of Ukrainian developed rapidly only in two areas: belles-lettres and popular educational literature, with belles-lettres literature still lacking certain genres, such as novels. Educational literature included grammar texts, dictionaries, and elementary readers (6).

It is difficult to disagree with George Shevelov's assertion that the issue of the Ukrainian language was not merely a linguistic matter but also, and often primarily, a political, sociological, and cultural one (71). For instance, Irena Makaryk's depiction of the state of Ukrainian theater in the late Russian Empire exemplifies the restrictive environment in which the Ukrainian language and culture existed. In 1881, the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian government made some concessions, such as permitting the creation of a traveling Ukrainian theater troupe. However, the troupe was prohibited from performing in various politically sensitive regions of Ukraine, (including Kyiv, Volhynia, Podilia, Poltava, and Chernihiv) (Makaryk 27). The governor of Kyiv observed that "in Petersburg this [theatre] is art, but in Kyiv it is politics" (Ryl's'kyi 10). Other limitations imposed on the troupe included prohibiting satire, history, plays featuring middle-class life, romantic verse plays, and language limitations, and requiring middle- and upper-class characters to speak Russian. To further aggravate the situation, Ukrainian plays were allowed only if a Russian play was staged first on the same night and consisted of the same number of acts (Makaryk 10). The artificial restrictions on the Ukrainian language had one primary goal: to diminish its significance by gradually eroding its presence in all areas of life. The imperial authorities' behavior was predictable, as "the growth of Ukrainian cultural discourse and the development of literary Ukrainian was considered a threat to the mainstream course of Russian national development" (Koznarsky 7–37).

During the 1905–1907 revolution, Emperor Nicholas II's manifesto of 1905 provided some democratic freedoms within the Russian Empire, such as freedom of speech, which facilitated the establishment of the Ukrainian press in Ukraine. However, this prospect was short-lived. For example, Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin

(1862–1911) issued a circular to the governors of the South of Russia (1910) declaring the Ukrainian people "alien" (*inorodtsy*). He also launched a campaign to close Ukrainian cultural organizations and publications and reinforced the Russification of the educational system and state institutions.

With the collapse of the czarist regime in February 1917, a new political reality created historic opportunities for Ukrainians to develop their language and cultural policy. As the Ukrainian linguist Vitalii Rusanivs'kyi described, "The Ukrainian literary language has never developed with such an intensity as it did during the struggle of the Ukrainian people for its own statehood" (255). Iurii Shevchuk emphasized that the logic of Russification was based on the understanding that language was always the main manifestation of the national identity of each nation (6). Valentyna Shandra also pointed out that the defense of the language by Ukrainian intellectuals and the struggle against it by the authorities of the Russian Empire "unequivocally confirm its decisive role in the construction of national identity" (VII–XXXVIII, XXXVI). Finally, the revolution was, to a great extent, about identity and thus about language and culture. As historian Halyna Basara-Tylishchak noted, "No previous historical period required the average citizen to so consistently choose and prove one's identity as in 1917. . . . [T]he very awakening of the national consciousness of Ukrainians became the defining feature and basis for the development of the national movement in the spring of 1917" (62). As the Provisional Government was formed in Petrograd to fill the power vacuum, members of political and social organizations in Kyiv assembled to form Ukrainian central legislative and executive bodies, marking the first step in distancing Ukraine from Russian authorities and carving a separate national path. Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Koval'chuk remarked, "Numerous Ukrainian communities and organizations emerged in many regions. Resolutions about the restoration of Ukraine's ancient rights and freedoms were adopted at gatherings and rallies. Ukrainian soldiers in the Russian army began to organize themselves into separate national units" (28). By late March 1917, representatives of leading Ukrainian parties and public organizations established the Central Rada in Kyiv, which became the backbone of the emerging Ukrainian government.

The Ukrainization of schools was one of the main points of focus supported by the Ukrainian government. Even though this had been an important issue in Ukrainian periodicals prior to 1917, this time it became a state policy. As historian Oleksandra Kudlai reports, "Ukrainization of school education, publication of new textbooks, training of teachers and assistance in organizing them as a profession,

promoting the work of cultural societies, were the most important objectives of the General Secretariat of Education" (87).

Newspapers serve as a valuable source of information in understanding how the process of the Ukrainization of schools was to be implemented. In the *Nova Rada* article, "Report on Educational Matters," we read how Secretary General of Public Education Ivan Steshenko prepared a comprehensive review of the Secretariat's work and focused, among other things, on the obstacles posed by the Kyiv school district and the Petrograd government to the activities of the Secretariat on the Ukrainization of schools. To overcome these obstacles, the Secretariat circumvented the municipal and central governments by creating a separate Ukrainian school system. As a result, over twenty Ukrainian high schools were established, a people's university was opened, and the Academy of Arts and the Pedagogical Academy were scheduled to be opened in the near future (*Nova Rada*,[4] No. 176 2). By establishing educational institutions from scratch, the Ukrainian authorities ensured that they would be Ukrainian in both language and content, despite some resistance from members of the bureaucracy who had been elected prior to the revolution and still held power.

Ukrainization of schools generated much optimism among Ukrainians in Kyiv. However, as expected, most readers of *Kievlianin* were not supportive of this strategy. The newspaper primarily published articles opposing the new language policy: "Ukrainian Schools. At a general meeting of parents' committees and pedagogical councils of Kyiv dedicated to the question of Ukrainization of the secondary schools, voices were heard expressing distrust in the claims of some Ukrainians that the Ukrainization of schools would be carried out gradually, without violating the interests of those who consider themselves Russians" (*Kievlianin*,[5] No. 104 2). Reading *Kievlianin* alone, a reader might conclude that Kyiv rejected Ukrainization altogether, as the newspaper did not publish a single positive article on the issue: "The protest against forced Ukrainization. A group of local Little Russian intellectuals protested against the forced Ukrainization of schools in Little Russia to representatives of the Provisional Government" (*Iuzhnaia kopeika,*[6] No. 2292 4). However, the Ukrainian government, represented by the Ukrainian Central Rada and its executive body, the General Secretariat in Kyiv in 1917, was quite active in promoting the Ukrainian language in educational institutions,

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4. Hereinafter *NR*.
5. Hereinafter *K*.
6. Hereinafter *IUK*.

and the Provisional Government in Petrograd did not seem to object: "Ukrainian Studies at the University. In the note from the Ministry of People's Education that was approved by the Provisional Government, the question of introducing chairs of Ukrainian studies in universities was raised: there should be separate chairs in Ukrainian language, literature, and history of Ukraine in the Department of History and Philology; a Chair in the History of Western-Russian Law[7] in the Law department" (*K*, No. 135 2).

The policy of Ukrainization also resulted in a surge of Ukrainian-related activities at different educational institutions in Kyiv, ranging from kindergartens to institutions of higher education. For example, the Council of Students-Ukrainians of Kyiv-Mohyla Theological Academy sincerely congratulated the Free Ukrainian People's Republic with wishes for strength to unite the whole Ukrainian nation into one large, powerful family, and to lead it to a prosperous and social future: "We are students-Ukrainians, we are going to work tirelessly, shoulder to shoulder with the people to educate our unenlightened, unfortunate brothers" (*NR*, No. 191 2). Among secondary schools, an organization named "Oseredok" was established, uniting 30 secondary school organizations in Kyiv. The objectives of Oseredok were: (1) To assist the already existing Kyiv organizations; (2) To establish Ukrainian communities in those Kyiv schools where they do not exist; and (3) To unite all Ukrainian secondary school organizations. For this purpose, Oseredok would convene an all-Ukrainian conference of high school students at such time that it would be deemed necessary and possible (*NR*, No. 191 2).

The process of Ukrainization stimulated the demand for Ukrainian-language professionals in a wide range of fields. For example, the need for theater directors soared due to the emergence of an extensive network of *Prosvitas*[8] that often included theater productions as part of their activities. As a result, courses for theater directors were established. According to a *Nova Rada* article, the theatrical department of the Education Secretariat, having organized an all-Ukrainian questionnaire on theatrical matters, discovered that educational institutions and societies were eager to stage theatrical performances but lacked experienced

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7. The Chair in Western-Russian Law focused on the history of the state and law of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Ukraine and the Slavs in general, based on a wide range of documentary sources.

8. *Prosvita* societies (Enlightenment societies) were Ukrainian community organizations that operated in Ukraine from the late 1860s until the 1940s. Following the start of the 1917 revolution, *Prosvitas* emerged spontaneously in towns and villages across Ukraine, with the revitalized Kyiv *Prosvita* taking the lead in this movement. Initially focused on general education and composed mainly of the intelligentsia, these organizations gradually became mass movements, expanding into various activities and playing a crucial role in fostering Ukrainian national consciousness. See more here *Prosvita* https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CP%5CR%5CProsvita.htm.

directors. *Prosvitas* often asked the theater department to send them a director. Therefore, the department was going to set up courses that would include general educational lectures (history of European theater, history of Ukrainian theater, analysis of ancient drama, Shakespearean drama, and contemporary drama, cultural history, psychology, aesthetics) and special lectures (stage construction, decorative art, stage effects, directing technique, play production theory, makeup theory, melodrama theory). The theater department requested the Secretariat of Education provide financial support in the amount of 6,000 to 7,000 *karbovanets'* for the courses in the first year (*NR*, No. 188 2).

Establishing the Ukrainian National Theater was the subject of intense internal debate. However, the fact that the discussion revolved around details like which personalities deserved or did not deserve to head the new theater, as opposed to debating the practicality of the mere existence of a Ukrainian theater, represented a positive shift. *Iuzhnaia kopeika* wrote that the painful issue of the future of the theater in the Trinity People's Home[9] had surfaced again. In 1917, when the ten-year lease of the Trinity People's Home expired, the question of who should take charge of this venue was at stake. Because Mykola Sadovs'kyi—a talented director who had made this venue successful during his ten-year tenancy—had a reputation for being difficult, many ill-wishers in theatrical circles were determined to prevent Sadovs'kyi from renewing the lease (Veselovs'ka 22–23). Several organizations declared that the Trinity Home, an important cultural location of the time, should be made available for the Ukrainian Theater. One could not object to this provision, the newspaper noted, because Ukraine had the right to its own national theater. However, the paper suggested that the supporters of the national theater were embarking on a grave mistake by linking the Ukrainian national theater with the name of the "notorious" Mykola Sadovs'kyi. The paper claimed that Sadovs'kyi expelled "everything bright" from his theater and "muted all the good old traditions of the long-suffering Ukrainian theater."[10] Finally, they recalled the escape of the best actors from his troupe "who did not consider it possible to be silent witnesses to the admonishment of Ukrainian art and the sacrificing of the national idea to the most frank, the most unbridled bargaining." The knowledgeable elements of

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9. The Trinity People's Home in Kyiv (*Troits'kyi narodnyi dim*, the current address is 53 Velyka Vasyl'kivska st) was a vital center for Ukrainian culture and politics in 1917, serving as a hub for the national movement and a venue for discussions about autonomy and self-determination during a transformative period in Ukrainian history.

10. Sadovs'kyi's theater, featuring realist everyday plots, was sometimes associated with populism and clichés at the time.

Ukrainian society, as the article stated, rejected the "services" of Mykola Sadovs'kyi in the "Ukrainian Central Rada" and defeated him in the election to the theater commission of the "Ukrainian National Theater." Therefore, the newspaper found it lacking common sense to leave a free national theater in the hands of Sadovs'kyi. In its opinion, being a discredited theatrical figure, his appointment would mean, at the least, a lack of respect for the idea and mission of the Ukrainian national theater. The paper suggested that everything would be resolved in the natural course of events: if the city council recognized the benefit of taking the theater from the current entrepreneurs, then it could decide who was best to rent the theater for a new lease term. "Only this calm sequence of events is the key to the success of the National Theater of Ukraine" (*IUK*, No. 2323 2).

The fact that the revolution made it possible for theater directors to compete in a free environment, experimenting in various theatrical styles and genres, is important. Stepan Chornii, a researcher of Ukrainian theater, mentioned that it seemed that the accomplishments of Les Kurbas were unprecedented in the history of theater: in a relatively short period (1917–1933), he was able to complete a grandiose transformation of Ukrainian theatrical culture. Due to his exceptional skills, his brilliant university education in Lviv and Vienna, and his excellent knowledge of foreign languages, which enabled him to thoroughly study the achievements of Western European theater and world literature, Les Kurbas managed to "Europeanize" the Ukrainian theater and guide its expansive development and new artistic pursuits (Chornii 346).

Though Ukrainization of the educational sphere was at the center of the Ukrainization efforts, the process encompassed practically all other important domains. For example, the Ukrainian government sought ways to bring Ukrainian soldiers back home to serve the needs of the new state rather than the interests of the former empire and its successor—the Provisional Government in Petrograd. One of the steps in Ukrainizing the military was described in the article, "On the Ukrainization of the Army." Notably, the article favored rejecting a regular army and replacing it with a people's militia. The rationale was that the militia would guard the interests of the peasantry and the workers. Of note, the Central Rada was, in its essence, a socialist institution, and its rhetoric and intended future policies corresponded to the socialist platform. According to the Rada, the regular army in the past was "a blind instrument of the ruling classes in their chauvinistic-imperialist struggles" (*NR*, No. 177 2). However, considering the fact that regular armies still existed and could not be immediately replaced, the All-Ukrainian Military Congress

deemed it necessary to reform it on a national-territorial basis. It therefore sought the immediate withdrawal of Ukrainians from the front and the rear positions and garrisons within Ukraine before placing them under Ukrainian command to serve the new state's interests, initiating the replacement of the old imperial military structure. Similar to the situation with the Ukrainization of schools, the Provisional Government created obstacles for the Ukrainization of the army. For this reason, the Congress sought to have authority over the matter fully transferred to the secretary-general of Military Affairs and for the Central Rada to appoint commissioners in all Ukrainian divisions and armies. The Congress requested the immediate establishment of Ukrainian regiments and brigades to ensure that Ukrainization would be implemented regularly and continuously and that Ukrainian soldiers would be transferred to their units not only in groups but individually as well (*NR*, No. 177 2). The Central Rada had a clear vision of the kind of military that would meet the needs of the new state, and in planning and realizing its decisions, it disregarded the opinion of the Provisional Government in Petrograd, proving that it had enough support within Ukraine to ignore objections from the outside.

With all the skepticism that *Kievlianin* demonstrated regarding the tangible power and support of the Ukrainian government among the population, many of its articles expressed alarm that the Central Rada and its officials were pursuing a confident policy aimed at consolidating its position in negotiations with the Provisional Government, particularly regarding the Ukrainian army. In one of its articles, *Kievlianin* reported on the All-Ukrainian Military Congress that was held on October 21. According to the article, greetings from Chairman of the Central Rada Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi and Chairman of the General Secretariat Volodymyr Vynnychenko deserved special attention. Particularly characteristic, in the newspaper's opinion, were passages from Vynnychenko's speech in which he said that "the Secretaries-General were not officials of the Provisional Government and that they were accountable only to the Central Rada; that the trip of the Secretaries-General to Petrograd would take place, but that they would not go there to report but rather to consult with the government on various urgent matters." Vynnychenko also said that the General Secretariat considered the topical issue of joining those provinces of Ukraine, which had not yet extended the power of the General Secretariat to the five autonomous provinces (*K*, No. 247 3). In this instance, the article confirms that the Central Rada in Kyiv maintained a confident position, which enabled it to deal with the Provisional Government in Petrograd on its own terms.

Decisive steps for the Ukrainization of the Black Sea Fleet were also planned. In the article, "On the Ukrainization of the Black Sea Fleet," it is revealed that the Black Sea Fleet, situated in the territorial waters of Ukraine, consisted of 80 percent Ukrainians. For these reasons, the Congress decreed that the Maritime General Council should immediately begin to Ukrainize the Black Sea Fleet by transferring all Ukrainians in the Baltic Fleet to the Black Sea Fleet prior to the launch of the winter campaign, during which operational activities of the fleet cease, and replenishing the fleet only with Ukrainians going forward (*NR*, No. 177 2). Later, another article reveals that the Central Rada could rely on support from the Black Sea Fleet. The article, "Ukrainian Sailors to Support the Government," notes that a crew of 750 Black Sea Fleet sailors arrived in Kyiv. The sailors arrived in full combat arms to protect and support the Central Rada. According to the article, at noon on November 10, 500 sailors with an orchestra and banners approached the General Secretariat building at 38 Khreshchatyk Street to greet the secretaries-general. Almost the entire General Secretariat came out to greet the sailors (*IUK*, No. 2453 7). The support for Ukrainization was coming from different segments of the population. This was especially important since the South of Ukraine was more heavily Russified compared to other regions. According to the historian Valerii Soldatenko, the structure of the renewed Ukraine was supposed to include only the northern mainland districts of the Tavria province, where the overwhelming majority of residents were Ukrainians. As for the peninsula, Crimea was considered by the Central Rada and the General Secretariat to be a self-determining national-state unit, similar to other national-state formations of that time (Soldatenko 19). *Kievlianin* was irritated by Ukrainian activity in Crimea, reporting that on October 20, "the Black Sea Fleet lowered the flag of the Russian state and raised the Ukrainian flag. Ukrainian newspapers, in view of all this, were getting bolder not by the day, but by the hour" (*K*, No. 244 2).

In addition to the military, Ukrainization also concerned law-enforcement agencies, as reported in the article, "Ukrainization of the Militia," confirming that a meeting of representatives of Kyiv's militiamen was held on November 10 (*IUK*, No. 2453 7). The meeting addressed the issue of the Ukrainization of the police in Kyiv. Several decisions were forwarded to the General Secretariat for Internal Affairs. The most important of them were as follows: (1) supporting the Central Rada and its General Secretariat as the highest authority in Ukraine; (2) establishing councils within each militia district to include three militiamen in every district; (3) electing a council from all Ukrainians, militiamen, and militia officers in Kyiv;

(4) requesting that the General Secretariat, in cooperation with the City Duma, immediately replenish the militia with soldiers from any of the Ukrainian army units in Kyiv; (5) requesting that "militiamen" be renamed "Cossacks," changing old epaulettes to Ukrainian ones, and cockades on caps with Ukrainian emblems; (6) requesting that the General Secretariat influence the City Duma to ensure that mainly Ukrainians or people sympathizing with the Ukrainian movement are admitted to the militia; and (7) requesting that the General Secretariat take measures to implement the decisions of the Professional Union of the Kyiv Police as soon as possible (*IUK*, No. 2453 7).

Ukrainization also concerned such crucial components of the state infrastructure as railways. As head of the General Secretariat, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, telegraphed a dispatch letter to all heads of railways of Ukraine, army committees, councils of workers and soldiers' deputies, and the chiefs of supplies for the Southwestern and Romanian fronts. The telegram confirmed that the Central Rada transferred all power in Ukraine to the General Secretariat, which was supplemented by the commissioners-general of military and railway affairs, who had already begun to work on corresponding cases, making their directives compulsory for all citizens of the land. The Conference of the Representatives of the Main Committees of the Railways of Ukraine issued the following resolution: "Bearing in mind that Ukraine is a single economic entity with special interests and that managing Ukraine's railways from one center is detrimental to the railway industry, hampering its natural development and work, the Conference finds it necessary to immediately create the General Secretariat of Ukraine's Railways" (*NR*, No. 177 3). The new government found that managing Ukrainian railways from Petrograd did not make sense anymore and, without any deliberations, declared them Ukrainian with all respective consequences in terms of decision-making and coordination. The same information was delivered by *Iuzhnaia kopeika*, however, from a slightly different angle. According to an article, "Ukrainization of the Southwest Roads," the following telegram was sent in Ukrainian via the wires of the South-West Roads and Railways of Russia: "Effective November 1, by the will of the Revolutionary Democracy, the authority in Ukraine was transferred to the Ukrainian Central Rada and the General Secretariat. Having entered a new era of political life, we call on all workers of the railway, regardless of nationality, to manifest fraternity and work for the benefit of the Native Land. Bureau of Railways of Ukraine" (*IUK*, No. 2447 4).

The process of the Ukrainization of state institutions also included the court, post office, and telegraph. The article, "Ukrainization of the Court," reported that

on October 30, Commissioner-General of Judicial Affairs Mykhailo Tkachenko issued the following official notice: "The Central Ukrainian Rada, which controls power in Ukraine, decided to supplement its executive body—the General Secretariat—with the Commissioners General for Military, Judicial and Food Affairs, Post Office and Telegraph, and on October 31 extended the power of the General Secretariat to the provinces of Kharkiv, Kherson, and Tavria, as well as to the provinces of Kyiv, Volyn, Podillia, Poltava, and Chernihiv" (*IUK*, No. 2447 4). After receiving official approval on November 1, Tkachenko informed all state institutions, governmental bodies, public and local self-government bodies, and all citizens that were to work with him. Entire sectors of state management and public administration, as well as territorial units, were added to the jurisdiction of the new government simply by exercising political will, while the Petrograd authorities were helpless to circumvent these measures.

On a smaller scale but of significant importance were initiatives to Ukrainize the domain of symbols and naming, visibly establishing and defining the extent of jurisdiction of the Ukrainian government. Certainly, the Coat of Arms was one of the first attributes of the state on the list. Hence, a meeting of the Ukrainian Coat of Arms Commission was held on November 2 at the "Rodyna" Club. The commission was convened by the Secretariat of Education with representatives of non-governmental organizations, artists, and heraldists (*NR*, No. 176 3). Another important attribute of the state—the Constitution—was under consideration these days as well. A meeting of the Constitution Commission of the Ukrainian People's Republic was held on November 29. National autonomy was the main issue on the agenda (*NR*, No. 197 3). The same applied to official documents. For example, an article reports on the decision to issue Ukrainian passports: at the same meeting, the General Secretariat decided, in principle, to issue special Ukrainian passports on behalf of the Ukrainian People's Republic to citizens of Ukraine who needed to travel abroad (*NR*, No. 197 2).

There was a wave of renaming all institutions to include "Ukrainian" in their name. One example of this was in the article "Directive for the Military School" (*NR*, No. 191 2), according to which Secretary-General of Military Affairs Symon Petliura ordered on November 7 changing the name of the First Kyiv Military School (Kostiantynivs'ka) to "First Ukrainian Military School" (*NR*, No. 191 2).

Ukrainization was not just about changing names or complex educational curricula or publishing new textbooks. The process also involved replacing old symbols and creating new ones, including Ukrainian uniforms. For example, the

Ukrainian Tailor Society in Kyiv accepted orders for sewing Ukrainian national clothing (Cossack, Haidamak, and others) for Ukrainian regiments, theaters, *Prosvita* society, and individual Cossacks and citizens. One could request to alter Russian overcoats into Cossack *zhupans*. The workshop was managed by the tailor Kolesnyk from Sadovs'kyi's troupe in Kyiv (*NR*, No. 191 4).

The face of the city was constantly changing during these months: it was a time for toppling old monuments and erecting new ones. For example, "Removing the Monument to Stolypin" describes the work that began on March 15 to remove Pyotr Stolypin's monument, which had been completed only the day prior (*IUK*, No. 2264 2).[11] As Fabian Baumann put it, "the city's revolutionary and Ukrainian forces embarked on the symbolic appropriation of Kiev's imperially marked urban space" (163). Newspapers reported a violent demolition initiated by the crowd that had come out to celebrate the first month of liberty. With Stolypin's monument gone, there were discussions about building a monument to Taras Shevchenko (*IUK*, No. 2405 5).[12]

Although the revolutionary events had begun in Petrograd, the developments in the southwestern region of the former empire were no less dramatic or significant, as the national resurgence in Kyiv reached an exceptional scale and intensity. When discussing the achievements of Ukrainization in Kyiv during this period, it is crucial to emphasize that the new Ukrainian government implemented this policy in a city where Ukrainians were not even the majority, and where the Russian language had dominated for nearly a century. Additionally, this policy faced resistance from many of the city's influential circles. The historian Ihor Hyrych, highlighting the contrast between the city and surrounding countryside in approaching the notion of Ukraine, writes, "The main problem of Kyiv in the days of the Ukrainian revolution was its approach to the idea of Ukrainian otherness, which was contrary to that of most villages. City residents were hostile to this and, in fact, fought with Ukrainian villages for several years, which at the end of the revolution were spontaneously nationalized" (*Ukrains'kyi Kyiv* 33).[13]

Yet, the policy was successful in many ways, thanks to the efforts of activists and enthusiasts who did not necessarily represent the typical Kyiv resident. Perhaps

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11. The monument was unveiled in 1913 on the Duma Square (now Independence Square), central and prominent location in Kyiv, two years after Stolypin's assassination in 1911.

12. These remained just talks and the current monument to Shevchenko was erected by the Soviets as late as 1939, though the monument to Nicholas I, Shevchenko's predecessor on that site, was demolished by the Bolsheviks right away in 1920.

13. In this context, Hyrych means Kyiv's attitudes and reactions as an urban entity.

it was inevitable, considering the significance of Kyiv to the average Ukrainian. As Hyrych metaphorically emphasized, "Kyiv for every Ukrainian, and even for every Orthodox Slav, is the personification of everything primordial, essential, ideal…. Like Rome for European civilization and Italians, Jerusalem for Middle Eastern Muslims, Jews and Christians, Constantinople for Greeks and other ethnic groups in Eastern Europe and West Asia" (*Kyiv v ukrains'kii istorii* 48).

While Kyiv remained dominated by the Russian demographic majority, as well as Russian administrative, political, and cultural elites, mechanisms such as democratic elections and legislative assemblies allowed for the emergence of new legislative bodies (e.g., the Central Rada and the Mala Rada) and executive institutions (such as the General Secretariat). Newspapers reveal how Ukrainian authorities gained power through negotiations with the central government in Petrograd and mobilized the intelligentsia, military elites, and peasantry. Simultaneously, a significant portion of the city's population resisted these changes, attempting to discredit the new Ukrainian government and protect the old status quo. Newspapers increasingly referred to the Central Rada as an important player, as the power dynamics between Kyiv and Petrograd rapidly shifted. The Rada skillfully exploited the weakness of the Provisional Government in Petrograd to its advantage. Although the new Ukrainian government irritated the elites in Petrograd, the Central Rada in Kyiv successfully ignored the indignant reactions from the former imperial capital.

While the events of 1917 were significant from many perspectives, from the viewpoint of Ukrainian nation-building, it would not be an exaggeration to state that it was a historical breakthrough. Volodymyr Vynnychenko later wrote in his memoirs: "Truly, at that time, we were gods who endeavored to create an entirely new world from nothing" (797). Historian Ivan Lysiak-Rudnits'kyi considers what Ukrainians accomplished to have been miraculous: "One can talk about 1917 as a year of the 'Ukrainian miracle'. The national awakening of the Ukrainian masses was decisive" (12). According to historian Alexei Miller, for the greater parts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a competition between two national projects, and "the All-Russian nation project, the alternative to the Ukrainian nation-building project, failed" (*Ukrainian Question* 251). Despite the efforts by the Russian imperial government to suppress the Ukrainian national project and the relative weakness of its proponents, one can say that, in the period between the revolutions of 1917, the Ukrainian national project ultimately prevailed.

A crucial role was played by representatives of Ukrainian cultural circles who promoted the essential elements of any national movement: they standardized the national language, developed its vocabulary, and shaped an integral concept of national history (Miller, *Ukrainian Question* 252). The revolution was also crucial to fostering Ukrainian identity: the Ukrainian revolution of 1917–1921 was, as Halyna Basara-Tylishchak wrote, "a turning point in the formation of Ukrainian national identity. The processes of socialization and politicization of the ethnic identity of Ukrainians in the revolutionary vortex accelerated quickly and testified to the shaping of national identity, which in late 1917 rapidly moved in the direction of political nationalism" (61).

Certainly, in contrast to the stagnation of previous decades, cultural developments in 1917 were achieving more in a matter of months than had been accomplished in the entire preceding century. As Lysiak-Rudnits'kyi put it, "Right before our eyes, over the course of months, or two to three years at most, there was a dizzyingly accelerated process of national crystallization, which would normally span decades" (qtd. in Reient, 4). Kappeler pointed out that some "had expected that the national question in the Russian Empire would automatically be solved with the end of tsarist rule. However, the opposite was the case. The February revolution unleashed the national movements to an extent that no one had foreseen" (355). Moreover, the movement was one of dynamic forces: "The Ukrainian movement expanded with remarkable speed and now also embarked on the mass movement phase in Russia itself. In view of the fact that the Ukrainians were very numerous, and that the area in which they lived was of great strategic and economic significance, the Ukrainian question advanced to become a central problem for the Provisional Government, and later for the Bolsheviks" (Kappeler 356).

As this chapter's title suggests, we are talking about the de-Russification *attempts*, which in our case highlights both the action taken and the lack of success in achieving the intended result. While the policy of Ukrainization was notably successful within the specific context of 1917, looking beyond that period, it is evident that its desired outcome was not fully realized, as efforts to sustain a Ukrainian national state ended with Ukraine's incorporation into the Bolshevik socialist state, with Moscow as its center. In 1919, the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was moved to Kharkiv, where it remained until 1934.

A significant demographic and cultural shift occurred in Kyiv during the mid-1920s to early 1930s. The subsequent policy of *korenizatsia* in Ukraine included

Ukrainization, intended to co-opt the Ukrainian socialist movement and broader segments of the population into the emerging Soviet regime. However, this policy was brutally suppressed in the 1930s, with its most prominent participants falling victim to the purges of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1878–1953). Although Ukrainian cultural initiatives and national aspirations remained dormant for decades, they did not disappear. They resurfaced during the period of de-Stalinization of the mid-1950s through mid-1960s and came to the forefront with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, paving the way for contemporary Ukraine. In this sense, it is hard to disagree with Ivan Lysiak-Rudnits'kyi who stated that "it would be a mistake to speak of the defeat of the Ukrainian revolution. It did not achieve its ultimate goal, but it internally transformed the society of Ukraine and created Ukraine as a modern political nation. Since then, all further Ukrainian life has developed on this foundation" (50). In his turn, Serhy Yekelchyk argues that "the present-day Ukrainian multinational state owes its existence to the Ukrainian national project—an endeavor to build a modern Ukrainian nation and provide it with a national homeland" (19). Today, as Ukraine confronts new challenges, the legacy of that cultural revival continues to inspire and guide the nation into the twenty-first century.

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Language in the Crossfire

THE DYNAMIC SHIFTS IN UKRAINIAN COMMUNICATION AND WORD-FORMATION DURING 2022–2024

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In his 2022 work, Oleksandr Mykhed, a famous Ukrainian writer who is now enlisted in the Armed forces of Ukraine, pointed out that the key concept he has been thinking about since Russia's full-scale invasion started in 2022 is the "language of war." He poses questions such as: "What are we doing to our language? What can our language do to us?" (see "The more of us they kill"). Another notable Ukrainian writer, Serhiy Zhadan, on the occasion of being awarded the 2022 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, emphasized in his speech,

> War unequivocally changes language, its architecture, the scope of its use . . . the inability to utilize the usual mechanisms—more precisely, being unable to use previous, peacetime, pre-war constructions to convey the state you're in, articulate your fury, your pain, your hope, is particularly painful and unbearable. Especially if you're used to trusting language, used to relying on its capabilities, which seem inexhaustible to you. Turns out, though, that language's capabilities are limited—limited by these new circumstances, this new landscape, a landscape that's inscribed in the realm of death, the realm of disaster.

However, this limitation can also pave the way for innovations in a language; when words are lacking, they can be invented. However, the impact of the war on the linguistic system extends beyond word formation. Significant changes may be

observed at both the macrolevel, being the domain of language policy and certain sociolinguistic developments, and the microlevel, being the language system itself.

The topic of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 and its impact on communication and the language system has attracted the attention of more than just writers; scholars and journalists are also paying close attention to this issue. There have already been a number of conferences on this topic, such as the international conference held on October 10–11, 2023, in Kyiv entitled "The Ukrainian ethnolinguistic continuum in the context of the Russia's war against Ukraine," organized by the Institute of the Ukrainian Language of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. At this conference, the prominent Ukrainian sociolinguist Larysa Masenko delivered a keynote address titled "Transformation of language and cultural space of Ukraine as an outcome of Russia's armed aggression." Another such conference took place at Cherkasy National University in May 2023, and the war also became the topic of a panel at the conference on Language, Culture, and Military at West Point on September 29–30, 2023.

There are several linguistic changes that have been noted in recent scholarly publications, such as by Grytsenko and co-authors Kysliuk and Melnyk, all of whom conducted research involving language innovations during wartime. Yavorska investigates the impact of the war on people's cognitive activity as well as novel linguistic nominalizations in the Ukrainian language.

Other scholars, such as Bilaniuk, explore memes as a symbol of creativity and resilience of the Ukrainian nation in times of war, while others, such as Siuta, examine the opposition between the own versus the foreign in language and society in texts from the Russo-Ukrainian war period. In addition, there are even some non-scholarly investigations into the "language of war" that could also prove quite valuable as resources for future academic analyses. For example, since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, there have been several attempts, like those by Buket and Levkova, to compile short online dictionaries of new war-related words. Ostap Slyvynsky has compiled a dictionary of war, where he recorded stories of the war in alphabetical order, capturing the painful experiences of Ukrainian citizens. His narratives revolve around common words that have acquired new meanings as a result of the full-scale invasion. Additionally, Oleksandr Mykhed has also published a book, *The Language of War* (2024), about the realities he and many others faced.

Building off this previous work, this chapter examines the tendencies, processes, and changes to the language system in Ukraine, as well as a marked

language shift driven primarily by effects brought on by the full-scale invasion. Additionally, we explore questions such as: How does language ideology drive language changes during war? How does war affect language, language dynamics, and language activity? What dynamic processes are observed in vocabulary and word formation under the influence of war?

In the methodology section, we describe the functional potential of innovations approach to analyzing these lexical innovations and their connection to language ideology. Then we analyze the changes in the linguistic practices of Ukrainian society due to the war. The following section about linguistic metamorphoses analyzes the linguistic changes in the language practices of Ukrainians, such as the creation of new words and expressions, word play, code switching, semantic ambiguity, violation of language norms, the usage of profanity, etc. Then we concentrate on the names of military armaments and military terms and explore how these terms are being used in Ukrainian society. Additionally, we investigate neologisms that have emerged in the Ukrainian language during the war. Finally, we provide concluding remarks about functional potential of the neologisms related to the war and the language ideology they reflect as well as some suggestions for future scholarship.

Methodological Frameworks

In this chapter, recent changes to the Ukrainian language and its usage will be analyzed within both the Language Ideology framework (Gal; Azhniuk) and the Functional Potential of innovations approach (Karpilovs'ka et al., *Aktyvni resursy*). Language ideologies are, as Gal notes, "everyday presumptions about language variation, speech forms, and associated social values that speakers bring to any linguistic interaction." This interpretation connects ideas about language with social values and their significance for a society. Analyzing ideologies of language in war time, Bilaniuk describes two tendencies in language ideologies and practices as a binary opposition, which may be summed up thusly: *language does not matter* versus *language matters*. At the same time, she points out that "neutrality in language choice is elusive, all the more so in a society at war with a neighbor using language as partial justification for that war. . . . [W]hen push comes to shove, *language always matters*" ("Ideologies of Language in Wartime" 157). This chapter argues that, from a language ideology perspective, patterns of language use and changes to the language system since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of

Ukraine can be described within the framework of the ideology *language matters*. This ideology has been undergoing a re-conceptualization during wartime, which is reflected in the increasing variety of methods for conceptualizing language, such as verbalization of trauma, a tool for conveying certain information in the most effective and efficient way, or as a savior and a weapon (Kozlovs'ky; Kysliuk; Melnyk; Shumytska et al.).

The functional potential of innovations approach has been developed by the group of linguists at the Institute of the Ukrainian Language of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, where a co-author of this chapter works. These linguists have been studying changes in the system and structure of the Ukrainian language within independent Ukraine for more than twenty years and have been analyzing new nominalizations and affixes which demonstrate an active ability to form lexical and semantic paradigms, word nests, and synonymic and antonymic relations (Karpilovs'ka et al, *Vplyv suspil'nykh*). They develop a three-dimensional model which helps to analyze language innovations and their functional potential in the language. In this approach, the "functional potential" is understood as the ability of a novel word to forge connections with other words. This three-dimensional model has three interrelated components: syntagmatic relations (new word collocations, phrases, linguistic valency); paradigmatic relations (synonyms, antonyms, hypernymy and hyponymy relationship); and derivational relations (ability to form new words with the help of affixes).

This comprehensive study of the linguistic processes in the Ukrainian language that have unfolded over the past two decades allows us to see the systemic changes in language activity that have emerged under the influence of the Russian war against Ukraine.

The study of processes in the language related to the war shows that modern neologisms cannot be understood outside of the social and cultural context. In analyzing these linguistic processes, we need to consider a fourth type of relationship: the socio-cultural one. All of the new words that have emerged during the war show a close connection with Ukrainian culture, traditions, and linguistic ideologies. The analysis of new words has shown that it is not enough to take into account only the linguistic potential and that both the social and the cultural context are imperative to include. This holds for the analysis of linguistic archetypes, linguistic symbols, humor, satire, and folk laughing culture. In a 2022 article for the *Radio Svoboda* website, Shumytska et al. note that the humor of the Ukrainian people has become a kind of "semantic air defense" that helps to

fight against Russian propaganda and keep the spirit alive. The analysis of wartime innovations has shown that they are a manifestation of linguistic ideology and that the functional potential of new words critically rests on cultural and societal processes, since all of these innovations are a linguistic reaction to a social demand.

Language Shift in Wartime

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has significantly changed the ideological dimension and sociolinguistic practices of Ukrainian society, at both the official and everyday levels. In December 2022, the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiative Foundation published the results of a survey demonstrating that the percentage of citizens who speak Ukrainian at home in everyday life increased over the course of a year by 7%: from 64% in 2021 to 71% in 2022. In addition, the level of Russian language use has decreased by 10% over the same period. Ukrainian has proven itself to be a language of resistance, according to Volodymyr Kulyk. Also, as Bilaniuk points out, "Ukrainian citizens were inexorably shrugging off their inferiority complex and uplifting the Ukrainian language and culture, both legally and in practice, even while many remained bilingual with Russian" ("Memes as Antibodies" 143).

In a 2023 analysis, Ivanna Tsar points out that for contemporary Ukrainian youth, language does not serve merely as a means of communication but has also become a sociocultural value. Tsar assumes that, for the most part, the decision of young people to switch to Ukrainian is politically motivated, with the primary catalyst having been the events of 2013–2014, namely the Revolution of Dignity,[1] the annexation of Crimea, and Russia's war in the Donbas (104). On the one hand, such a transition is not only a kind of resistance to Russian aggression but also shows a desire to dissociate from Russia and to change the future political vector of Ukraine. On the other hand, this shift is driven by an awareness of Ukrainian national dignity, the gradual destruction of Ukrainians' inferiority complex, and an understanding of the importance of language for national security.

Kulyk points out in his recent study that the main reason for the current linguistic shift towards Ukrainian is the war against Russia, particularly as Russia is actively and openly trying to deprive Ukraine of its identity. The research is

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1. "The Revolution of Dignity consisted of mass protests by the citizens of Ukraine from November 2013 to February 2014, driven by the struggle for human dignity and the pursuit of a European path for the country's development" (authors' trans.; *Slovnyk ukraïns'koï movy* [*Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language*] 320).

based on survey data as well as of the statements of respondents in focus groups and online questionnaires. The respondents stated that Russian aggression has influenced their linguistic behavior and language use more than the state's support for the Ukrainian language.

Some important yet under-researched topics that remain are the attitudes towards the Ukrainian and Russian languages within the military, as well as patterns of language usage there. Since the Russian invasion began, particular attention has been paid to publications, social media posts, and interviews with Ukrainian defenders in order to determine their tendencies in language attitude and usage. This issue will, no doubt, require further quantitative research, yet preliminary observations have helped to identify the prevailing tendency amongst soldiers; they choose to switch to Ukrainian and speak it whenever possible. In terms of language ideology, the manifestation of language as a weapon is observed here.

Yehor Vradiy, an officer in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, compares usage of the Russian language to bad habits. He describes the situation in his native city, Dnipro, where Ukrainian has gradually replaced Russian in the public sphere. He also talks about his Russian-speaking friend who himself compares the usage of Russian to the habit of smoking and believes that, just as smokers quickly found themselves in a kind of isolation after the ban on smoking in public places, the Russian language in Ukraine will soon turn into a similar "bad habit" (Vradiy).

War and Micro-Level Language Transformations

The renowned Ukrainian researcher Maksym Hon, who is currently serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, has emphasized that, for Ukrainians, war is no longer solely a social and political phenomenon; it has transformed into a concise and merciless reality that determines the lives of many people. The modern Ukrainian communication space actively responds to events of the war that resonate within the country, including daily news, sensational reports, and changes to the lives of average citizens. War affects all levels of the language system, although the most commonly mentioned impact is on the lexical and morphological levels. This includes the borrowing and creation of new words and their derivatives as well as the emergence of new meanings to already known words (neosemantization) due to sociodynamics or language play. These innovative phenomena are often linked to deep layers of national culture and history, the use of which proves to be important for building a spirit of resistance. At the micro-level, we can observe

various linguistic changes and processes in the language practices of Ukrainians, such as the adoption of new words, increased code switching, or violation of language norms.

Creation of Neologisms

With regard to the creation of new terms, Ukrainians utilize profound national images, archetypes, humor, and the traditions of a mirthful culture. These elements serve as a means to overcome the trauma of war and as a powerful weapon, particularly in the context of the information war. The neologisms are derived through the use of both native Ukrainian (sometimes Russian) and borrowed foreign elements. In most cases these are expressive nouns, such as the portmanteaus *putler*[2] ("Putin + Hitler"), *rashysm* ("Russian + Fascism"), *alkopikhota* ("alcohol + infantry"), *krysiiany* ("rats + Russians") and *propahandony* ("Russian propagandists/propaganda + a slang word for condoms"), as well as some direct borrowings from English due to their presence in pop-culture, such as the Tolkienian Mordor and *orky* ("orcs"). These are clearly names for enemies, and they showcase the primary sources for neologisms, either being borrowed directly, or created through analogy or portmanteau, which is the combination of the sounds and meanings of two or more words. In these cases, the use of rude and disrespectful language is very common. Such pragmatically colored naming conventions of enemies are an expression of linguistic resistance and they exist in opposition to neologisms with more Ukrainian roots, such as coinages related to everyday life, culture, or history. One such example is *Kholodomor*, which was created by analogy to the word *Holodomor*, an artificial famine of 1932–1933. The word *Kholodomor* is a portmanteau of two lexemes, *kholod* ("cold") and *moryty* ("to exhaust, torment, exterminate"), and refers to the situation in the winter of 2023 when Ukrainian citizens suffered intense cold due to the constant Russian attacks on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure.

The war has facilitated the emergence of new metaphors and idiomatic expressions. For instance, *Holodni ihry* ("The Hunger Games") is a borrowing from Western popular culture, using the name of a series of novels by Suzanne Collins, an American author. In Ukraine it symbolized Russia's blockade of Ukrainian seaports, which threatened to starve millions of people. Another intriguing example is *vse bude palianytsia,* a humorous twist on the phrase *Vse bude Ukraina!* ("There

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2. We will use the simplified LC transliteration system.

will always be Ukraine!" or "Everything will be Ukraine") (Bilaniuk, "Memes as Antibodies"). *Palianytsia* is a Ukrainian word for a round loaf of bread. It serves as a shibboleth in addition to being a popular meme in Ukraine.

Code Switching

Negative attitudes toward the enemy are reflected in mocking code-switching, where Ukrainian speakers insert Russian words and use Russian pronunciation to express their disrespect and contempt towards a certain phenomenon. *Pabedabesiye,* which refers to hysteria around or obsession with victory, is a combination of the two Russian words *pobeda* ("victory") and *bes* ("demon") with the addition of a nominalizing suffix *–iy(e)*. In Ukraine, it is used as a pejorative term to describe Russia's obsession with celebrations of Victory Day and the policy of the current Russian leadership regarding the memory of World War II (1939–45), according to Khotyn ("Russkiĭ mir"). In Ukrainian, the usage of this word is viewed as a mockery of the cult of the "great victory." The word *nepabedimyĭ* ("undefeated") is usually used sarcastically and refers to Russian army failures. The phrase *za parebrikom* (*parebrik* = "curb/edge") can be translated directly as "beyond the curb" or "across the curb." Though it typically refers to something located or happening on the other side of a curb or sidewalk, within Ukraine it means "in Russia" and is understood as something inherently Russian. *Asvabaditeli* ("liberators") is a reference to the Soviet Army during World War II, but in Ukraine it is now used as a synonym for *invaders*. At the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022, when advancing Russian soldiers were ransacking and thieving the property of Ukrainians, the populace took to saying that the *asvabaditeli* were "liberating" them from their property and lives.

These terms, *asvabaditeli, nepabedimy,* and *za parebrikom,* follow the Russian pronunciation utilizing *akanie,* which is the pronunciation of *o* as *a* in unstressed positions. This is done to create a mocking effect and to amplify the levels of contempt shown for the enemies. Additional phrases used ironically to mock the current war are *dedy voievali* ("grandfathers fought [in the war]"), a slogan in active use in Russian propaganda, and *mozhem pavtarit* ("we can repeat"), which invokes the threat of war while harkening back to the victory cult. In a special issue of the journal *Holocaust Studies*, Nadiia Honcharenko points out that Russia has been unable to shed the mythology surrounding World War II, still referring to this war as *Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina*, which translates into English as "The

Great Patriotic War." Ukraine has done much work to deconstruct this mythology, but Russia has only redoubled its commitment to further developing this Soviet narrative. According to Honcharenko, "Scientifically grounded and correct chronology of the war, detailed images of events on the territory of Ukraine, including tragic events, related to retreats, defeats, leadership's mistakes during the first year after the German invasion of the USSR, and the life of the population in the occupied territories—all are the constituent elements that form the 'Ukrainian dimension of the Second World War'" (49).

Semantic Ambiguity

Since the start of the full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian language has seen much wordplay at the phrasal level, building off native knowledge of both morphology and semantics, in an attempt to create new denigrating terms for the invaders. An example of this is evident in the creation of new quips via the moving of a morpheme boundary. This comic-relief method of lexical creation through lexical-morphological transformation is reflected in the following examples: Ramzan Kadyrov and *ramzanka dyrov*, where Ramzan Kadyrov is the name of the Chechen leader, and *ramzanka dyrov* can be loosely translated as "Little Ramzan the Hole." Another example is how the word *kadyrovtsi,* the name of Kadyrov's elite Chechen military forces, was broken into two words through the insertion of a morpheme boundary, with the new collocation being *kadyr ovtsi,* the latter word meaning "sheep" in Russian.

Shibboleths

Shibboleths are words whose pronunciation can be used to determine the nationality/native-tongue of an individual. For example, the words *palianytsia* ("a round loaf of bread"*, zaliznytsia* ("railway")*, polunytsia* ("strawberry") have been actively applied as shibboleths during the invasion to identify Russian speakers and invaders whose native language is not Ukrainian, since Russian speakers typically cannot pronounce the soft *ts* together with the hard *n* (Bilaniuk, "Memes" 150–51). So, at the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, these words were used to identify Russian soldiers and saboteurs. After the invasion began, the Center for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine advised citizens engaged in identifying sabotage and

reconnaissance groups in the country to employ a "shibboleth" as a means of recognizing whether the language spoken by a person is their native language or not, according to the artist Oksana Vorontsova. Among other words which can be used as a shibboleth, the center provides the following lexemes: *nisenitnytsia* ("nonsense"), *molodytsia* ("a young married woman")*, veselka* ("rainbow"). In March 2022, on Facebook and Instagram, users shared rhyming-phrase shibboleths, such as *Kropyvnytski palianytsi zi smakom polunytsi prodaiutsia u kramnytsi bilia Ukrzaliznytsi* ("strawberry-flavored round breads from the city of Kropyvnytsky are sold in a shop near the Ukrainian Railways").[3]

Violation of Language Norms

With the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the shock of Ukrainian society was verbalized through violations of language norms, such as writing the words *rosiia* ("russia") and *rosiĭska federatsiia* ("russian federation") with a lowercase letter, or using Latin *zz* instead of Cyrillic letters, such as in руzzня (from *rusnia*, "the Russians," with negative connotation). The usage of obscene language was very common as well. Perhaps the most famous meme from the war refers to an event where Ukrainian soldiers sent the following message to a Russian battleship employing a commonly used colloquialism: "Russian battleship, go f--k yourself" ("Russkiĭ voiennyĭ korabl, idi na khuĭ"). This meme became very popular in the first days of the war and could be encountered in many regions of the country. For instance, it can be seen in the picture of a supermarket in western Ukraine, taken in May 2022 (Figure 5.2.1). The war stirred profound emotions and trauma, and this particular phrase about the Russian battleship became a component of the emerging national mythos. However, the situation regarding obscene language has been changing lately. In fact, there are opponents in Ukraine who think that the obscene language is of Russian origin and was imposed on Ukrainian, thus leading to a downtick in the usage of profanity (Khotyn, "Chy matiukaiutsia solovï?").

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3. Translated by the authors.

FIGURE 5.2.1   A sign displayed at a Ukrainian supermarket featured a popular meme that used an obscenity while referring to a Russian battleship. (Courtesy of the authors.)

Distorted Meaning

Distorted meaning sometimes appeared in texts generated by bots due to the automatic machine translation from Russian to Ukrainian, among which the most popular and well known is *bavovna*. While this word traditionally meant "cotton," it has since acquired the new meaning of "explosion on Russian-occupied or Russian territory," a prime example of a neosemanticism. This new meaning appeared as a result of imperfect translation from Russian into Ukrainian, as Russian propaganda called such explosions *khlopók* ("bang"). Note that the stress falls on the second syllable in this word. However, as translation tools are blind to stress paradigms unless the input text is annotated for it, it mistook the word *khlopók* ("bang") with posterior stress for *khlópok* with anterior stress, which actually means "cotton."[4] Such automated translations are used in disinformation campaigns against Ukraine, allegedly written by Ukrainians. In these cases, Russians likely use automatic translators, and, without knowing the Ukrainian language, they do not notice these mistakes.

In Telegram, a social media app, Boryslav Bereza, a former member of the Ukrainian parliament, provided an example of a supposedly Ukrainian message in which a supposed Ukrainian battalion commander first gives the order to move

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4. For more information about *bavovna* or other memes see Bilaniuk ("Memes as Antibodies").

to positions, and then subsequently gives an order to those soldiers who would defy the first order to step out of the lineup. It then goes on to say that 90% of Ukrainian soldiers stepped forward refusing to fight. This is immediately registered as a Russian fake in Ukraine due solely to the poor translation. The Russian phrase *vyĭti iz stroia* was translated into Ukrainian as *vyĭty z ladu*; however, the chosen Ukrainian phrase was erroneous for the context. In Ukrainian, *vyĭty z ladu* means "out of order" as in "nonfunctioning," which registered as senseless to its intended Ukrainian audience. Likely, this was a case of the Russians utilizing automatic online translation tools to generate messages in Ukrainian, a language of which they lacked adequate command as is clearly evidenced by this failed attempt at producing a fake.

Weapon Terminology and Its Usage in Ukrainian Society

The emergence of military-related innovations—neosemanticisms, new words, borrowings—has led to the formation of new paradigmatic relations and lexical sets. The intensification of their use can be described as a centripetal process which is driving words that previously functioned only on the periphery of the language system, such as military vocabulary, towards its center. Also, the penetration of such words into folklore indicates their deep ingraining into the popular consciousness. This can be clearly seen in military terminology, in particular, the names of defenders and weapons.

Many words related to the war, especially the name of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and Territorial Defense, have become much more frequently used not just in news reports and social media, but also in songs, memes, and poetry. An example is a Christmas carol, "Tam vo Bakhmuti" ("There in Bakhmut"), which became very popular during the 2023–2024 Christmas season. The village of Mshanets, in the Lviv region, set a Ukrainian record for the largest mass performance of "There in Bakhmut" and raised UAH 4.7 million for drones for the 80th Air Assault Brigade ("Na L'vivshchyni"). This Christmas carol is particularly noteworthy as it mentions military units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Territorial Defense (TD):

Our family—all Ukraine	Наша родина—Вся Україна,
Both the Armed Forces, and TD,	І Збройні сили, І ТРО,
Under God's banner	Під Божим стягом
We march to victory!	Йдем до звитяги!

| Christ is born! | Христос Родився! |
| Let us praise him! | Славімо Його![5] |

Ukrainian society has paid close attention to the slew of modern weapons that have been supplied to the country. However, it is not only the military that references these weapons with hopes that they will be effective against the enemy, but also the civilian population at large. This is evidenced by the widespread adoption into the lexicon of terms such as *Javelin*, *Stinger*, *HIMARS*, and *Bayraktar*, which have become very frequently encountered words in everyday Ukrainian life. The M777 British howitzer even garnered the nickname "three axes" among Ukrainian troops, due to the visual nature of the weapon resembling axes. Such weapons symbolize not only international assistance, but also Ukrainian resilience, thus sometimes leading to a sort of romanticization of these armaments within the society and subsequently driving the significantly increased utterance rate of their terminology.

During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, an Internet meme about the patron saint of Ukrainians, St. Javelina, emerged and even became enough of a phenomenon to have a dedicated article on Wikipedia. On May 24, 2022, a mural of St. Javelina, based on an illustration by artist Chris Shaw, was painted on the wall of a house at 13 Aviakonstruktora Antonova Street in Kyiv. In this mural the Virgin Mary is holding a portable anti-tank missile system, FGM-148 "Javelin," which Ukrainians have used to great effect to destroy Russian occupiers.

The popularity of the Javelin is also reflected in popular culture. It is visible in paintings and murals, such as one depicting Taras Shevchenko with a Javelin in Ivano-Frankivsk (see Figure 5.2.2), or mentioned in songs, such as "Ukrainska liut'" ("Ukrainian Fury") by Khrystyna Soloviy:

And our defenders
The finest boys
Heroes themselves fight on our side in service of Ukraine
Along with Javelins and Bayraktars
For Ukraine to beat the Roosnias
We'll use the Javelins and Bayraktars
And Ukraine will beat the Roosnias!

В ТерОбороні найкращі хлопці,
Самі герої воюють у наших ЗСУ!

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5. Translated by the authors.

І джавеліни, і байрактари
За Україну б'ють русню!
І джавеліни, і байрактари
За Україну б'ють русню! (Valentino 43)

FIGURE 5.2.2   Mural in Ivano-Frankivsk of Taras Shevchenko with the Javelin beside graffiti reading, "Fight and you will win. God is helping you!" ("Boritesia—poborete. Vam Boh pomahaie!"; authors' trans.). (Courtesy of the authors.)

Another effective weapon that helped Ukrainians to hold on during the first months of the war was the Turkish-made Bayraktar drone. In the summer of 2022, a song came out on YouTube entitled, "Bayraktar." The song was written by Taras Borovok, a lieutenant colonel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, according to Ratsybars'ka. He is also the author of the song "HIMARS" about the U.S. rocket system. In July 2022, the Ministry of Justice informed the public that the names of these weapons, which had proven themselves invaluable in the harsh

realities of the battlefield, had even begun to see use as names for newly born children. Thus, according to ArmiiaInform, the online media of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, created in 2018, among the female names registered were Adelina-Javelina and Javelina, and among the male names, Arthur-Bayraktar and Jan-Javelin. People have also taken to naming their pets Bayraktar.

While Bayraktar drones naturally received attention due to their technological capabilities, they have also become the focus of numerous memes. These memes sometimes depict the drone in kitschy images, as in the meme with pest control products designed for protecting gardens and orchards. In response to the inappropriate usage of certain words and images related to the war, the term *bayraktarchyna*[6] has emerged. This term, which became widespread in 2022, drew the attention of the Ukrainian linguists who wrote *Systema ta struktura ukrains'koï movy u funktsional'no-styl'ovomu vymiri* (*The System and Structure of the Ukrainian Language in a Functional-Stylistic Dimension*). In this monograph, they analyze a 2023 article by journalist Tetiana Shtyfurko titled "Bayraktarshchyna as a wartime ulcer," underscoring that in the wake of patriotism and the unification of people around the support of the Armed Forces and opposition to Russian aggression, a wave of commercial speculation on this topic has emerged. The word *bayraktarshchyna* is used to describe parasitizing not on history, but on events unfolding in Ukraine now, even while the Russians are still actively inflicting pain on many people. This example demonstrates the interrelation of word-formation activity with the expansion of the syntagmatic relations of the lexeme *bayraktar*'s function. This has led to a change from the word possessing a positive connotation to a negative one. Shtyfurko also provides examples of the trademarks for kombucha ("Heroic Bucha Kombucha with citrus flavor"); radish seeds ("Azovstal"); zucchini ("Ghost of Kyiv"); and sausage ("Ukrainian Armed Forces"). Thus, excessive popularity has given rise to kitsch, cheerleading patriotism, and parasitism on war symbols, which has garnered disapproval from the populace. If this is viewed as crossing a line with regard to honoring the memory of our fallen heroes, which is of course a sensitive topic for a large part of society, it would likely be met with condemnation.

High word-formation potential, i.e., the emergence of both separate derivatives and new word-formation nests, is demonstrated by the large variety of morphological derivations using names of weapons as their nominal roots, such as *himarsyty* ("to HIMARS sth"), *stingeryty* ("to Stinger sth"), *javelinyty* ("to Javelin

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6. For new Ukrainian words derived from the names of weapons, we use the transcription of the original names of these weapons.

sth"),[7] all of which refer to striking the enemy using the stated equipment. These words are not static in this verb form, but rather show incredible flexibility in creative derivation from the nominals stems. This can be seen in the following derivational string for HIMARS in Ukrainian: *himars* → *himarsuvaty* ("to HIMARS sth") → *himarsuvannia* ("HIMARSing"), as well as in the derivation of diminutives, such as *himarseniatko* ("little HIMARS"). Such word formations using Javelin and Bayraktar as derivational roots are also very productive: *javelin* → *javelina* (the feminine noun) or *javelin* → *javelinyty* → *zajavelinyty* ("to Javelin sth"); *bayraktar* → *bayraktaryty* → *zabayraktaryty* ("to Bayraktar sth"). The popularity of these terms among citizens can also reflected in the usage of the word "HIMARS" in a meme that parodies a line from a Ukrainian folk song: "It's a moonlit, starry, clear night, and you can see the HIMARS is working" ("Nich iaka misiachna zoriana iasnaia, vydno pratsiuie HIMARS "; authors' trans.; Ukrainian Military Corner).

Another example is the neosemanticism *bavovna* ("cotton"), which forms a word nest that contains verbal derivatives *bavovnyty* ("to make an explosion") → *bavovnytysia* ("explode"); *zabavovnyty* ("to destroy by explosions") → *zabavovnytysia* ("explode"); *zabavovnenyi* ("filled with explosions [about Crimea]"). The development of the new mythological component of the meaning has created derivatives graded by the power of the explosion: *bavovna* → *bavovk* ("cotton wolf") and *bavovniatko*, the latter of which is formed using a diminutive suffix reserved for babies. These words have also taken on a peculiar meaning, that of a mythical creature that burns Russian military installations.[8]

Another interesting example of language change is the emergence of neosemanticisms. Notable examples of these neosemanticisms include the words *bavovna (*"cotton"), *moped* ("moped"), *nul* ("zero"), and *prylit* ("arrival"). *Moped is traditionally a motorbike, but this word recently acquired a new meaning:* "An Iranian Shahed attack drone that makes a sound similar to a motorcycle." Another example is the word *nul'*, which now means "the front line," i.e., zero kilometers from the front. *Prylit*, which would traditionally be translated as "arrival," is now understood as "the targeting of missiles at a civilian or military object" (Kysliuk and Melnyk 13–14).

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7. It should be mentioned that all of these verbs are of imperfective aspect, yet they do possess a natural perfective partner verb, those being *vidhimarsyty, zastingeryty, zajavelinyty,* respectively.

8. See, for instance, this post on X at https://x.com/DefenceU/status/1563547416648855552?lang=en.

Conclusion

In our research on language change during the Russo-Ukrainian War, we unified sociolinguistic and functional linguistic approaches and illustrated the crucial influence of sociodynamics on language transformation. The emergence of new words related to the military has led to the formation of new synonymous clusters, antonymic pairs, word derivatives, and collocations, which in turn have seen their range of appropriate application shift from the periphery to the active lexical core of the modern language. When analyzing the study of wartime language innovations, linguistic analysis alone is not sufficient; these innovations should be considered in the broader context of Ukrainian culture, sociodynamic changes, and language ideology. Previously, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, under the political guise of "brother cultures" and "one people," had sought to erode the unique cultural and historical identity of Ukrainians. Since the outbreak of the current war, uniquely Ukrainian language features have become starkly relevant in preserving the language and adequately identifying its speakers, with examples of this being shibboleths or sarcastic remarks made using the intrinsically Russian *akanie*. The unification of these approaches has shown that the culture of humor and language play, the sarcastic denigration of the enemy, and the deliberate breaking of established language norms all work to preserve the patriotism and the warrior spirit of Ukrainians. In our analysis of the functional potential of various neologisms, we have seen how these new words have all become an established part of the modern Ukrainian language and are easily observable in use in many spheres of life, such as literature, music, commercial advertisements, journalism, street art, etc. The linguistic activities of the Ukrainian community during the war align with language ideology, i.e., that language matters when linguistic innovations work to support and strengthen the Ukrainian spirit. Study of the modern experience of Ukrainians in wartime provides invaluable material for new research on the impact of war on the language activity. Future research could focus on deepening understanding of topics such as the relationship of language activity during wartime to language ideologies and sociodynamics, with particular attention being paid to the language situation among the armed forces. Ultimately, this could guide future interdisciplinary and comparative research looking at the impact of war on language systems in various countries that have been recently embroiled in armed conflicts.

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Russian Propaganda about the Conflict in Ukraine

A COGNITIVE SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

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The Russian news media is a crucial vehicle for disseminating the Kremlin's narratives designed to foster popular support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which began in 2014. Current media-based propaganda efforts build on Soviet propaganda techniques, flooding media outlets with what has been described as a "firehose of falsehood" blanketing print, television, and digital media with carefully crafted messages (Paul and Matthews). The extensive literature on post-Soviet propaganda authored chiefly by journalists like Aliukov et al. (2022), Berdy (2022), Pomerantsev (2015), and Triudoliubov (2022), as well as political scientists, such as Lasswell (1951), Oates (2016), Shakrai (2015), McGlynn (*Memory Makers* and "Russia's War," 2023), and Pupcenoks and Klein (2022), features analyses of broader themes. To date, very few linguistic analyses of Russian propaganda efforts have been conducted, apart from Bondarenko (2020) and Fortuin (2022). This qualitative study seeks to fill this gap by applying cognitive linguistic analysis to discourse about the war in Ukraine in Russian central newspapers. I use the word "central" to refer to nationally syndicated newspapers circulated both in paper and digital formats. One might question whether print media is worthy of study given that globally consumption of news has shifted to digital media, often delivered by social media. While television and social media sources play a critical role in propagating the Kremlin's message, print media also has an important role to play. Government-sponsored trolls, much like the MCs of popular prime-time television shows devoted to discussion of current events, are quite creative in spinning the messages emanating from the

Kremlin. While the messages resonate with Kremlin's policies, the words used to spin events are much more heterogeneous and varied than those employed by print media outlets. National newspapers are the primary and most direct media outlet for Kremlin messaging. New laws and policies introduced by the Kremlin are typically presented and discussed in central newspapers at length and are often quoted verbatim. Because central newspapers are the official conduit for publicizing national policies and because articles in state-run print media often parrot the Kremlin line (often verbatim), they particularly merit careful scrutiny.

Linguistic analysis, and cognitive linguistic analysis in particular, has much to offer analysts across disciplines seeking to decipher the Kremlin's strategies and motivations. While political science offers insights into the broader narratives in Russian propaganda, a cognitive linguistic approach focuses on how meaning is produced and how it interacts with and invokes existent cultural and social narratives. Cognitive semantics, as part of the broader cognitive linguistic framework, examines how conceptual content is organized in language and how linguistic lexicosemantic resources shape perception of events. This study applies the tools of cognitive semantic analysis to examine messaging about the conflict in Ukraine in central newspapers of Russia and to understand how lexical choices shape local and international perceptions of events. This qualitative analysis focuses on key semantic frames used to present events of the conflict in Ukraine, showing how these frames are constructed and manipulated for propaganda purposes.

Russian Mass Media: The Context

The Kremlin's campaign to assert control over media began in the early 2000s when the oversight of the popular television station NTV was transferred to GAZPROM, a state-controlled company. In 2006 GAZPROM purchased *Komskomol'skaia Pravda*, a central newspaper with the highest circulation nationally. By 2013, government oversight of media had expanded to cover all but a few independent new stations. The transfer of television and print media to state-run companies mirrored centralization of political power at the federal level. In 2013, then Deputy Minister of Communications Aleksei Volin characterized the state of the press and the role of Russian journalists in an address to journalism students at Moscow State University in this way: "We absolutely must teach students that they are going to work for The Man, and The Man will tell them what to write, what

not to write, and how to write about various topics, and The Man has a right to do this because he pays their wages." (Kara-Murza)

In the final months leading up to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, state control was extended to all media outlets, and the few remaining independent mass media sources were closed. As state control of media was expanded and tightened, any remaining freedom of speech in Russia was curtailed. Beginning in July 2012, a series of laws have been enacted that effectively criminalize public discourse in Russia:

- July 28, 2012: Law criminalizing "defamation"
- July 20, 2012: All NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) that partner with or receive support from non-Russian organizations or individuals are labelled "Foreign Agents"
- December 28, 2013: Internet Blacklist law banning "extremist speech"
- May 5, 2014: Law banning the "rehabilitation of Nazism"
- October 29, 2015: Law criminalizing "defamation of religious beliefs"
- November 25, 2017: Bill stipulating that the label of "Foreign Agents" can be applied to media outlets
- March 18, 2019: Laws forbidding the dissemination of "fake" news
- December 2, 2019: Bill expanding the label of "foreign agents" to individuals
- March 4, 2022: Law prohibiting distribution of "fake" information about the Russian Army: prison sentences up to 15 years for using the words "war" and "invasion"
- March 25, 2022: Expansion of March 4th law to include punishments for discrediting state organs
- July 1, 2022: Bill banning comparisons between the actions of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany during World War II (1939–1945)
- August 20, 2022: "Public defamation of a public official"

As seen above, the campaign against free speech intensified immediately after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 with the passage of a bill on March 4 criminalizing distribution of "fake" information about the Russian army. This was followed on March 25 with a bill expanding the March 4 law, including punishments for "discrediting" state organs. Many of these newer laws regulating public discourse impose long prison sentences for offenders.

Russian Mass Media: Recent Changes in Language

Beginning in 2021, Russian journalists and longtime political observers of Russia began writing about observed patterns of lexical change Russian in state-controlled media. That same year, Maksim Trudoliubov, in a 2021 article that appeared in the online media outlet Meduza ("Ne anneksiia, a prisoedinenie"), reported about a trend in Russian mass media to systematically replace commonly accepted and widely used terms with alternative labels that seemed to better suit the political messages emanating from Kremlin. For example, instead of "annexation" (*aneksia*) in reference to Russian seizure and occupation of Crimea, state-media used the word "unification" (*prisoedinenie*). As Trudoliubov noted, journalists who criticize government policies have been labeled as "extremists," and the "war in Ukraine" prior to 2022 was referred to in the press as the "civil war in Ukraine." Beginning on February 24, 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine was labelled a "special operation" (*spetsoperatsiia*), often reduced to the abbreviation *SVO*. In commentary written in 2022, Trudoliubov remarked that the state has taken on the role of "editor in chief" enforcing a kind of "political correctness" to ensure that the messaging in Russian media suits Kremlin goals ("Vtorzhenie v Ukrainu"). Also in 2022, Michelle Berdy, in her column in the *Moscow Times*, and *Meduza* journalists contributing to the *Signal* newsletter similarly reported other patterns of lexical substitution in Russian mass media in the wake of the Russian invasion ("Novoiaz.Voina"). The word "occupation" (*okkupatsiia*) is routinely replaced by "liberation" (*osvobozhdenie*), "retreat" (*otstuplenie*) has become a "good will gesture*"* (*zhest dobroi voli*), and "explosions" (*vzryv*) are reported as "bangs*"* (*klopki*). On the surface these lexical replacements seem to be a systematic effort to replace lexicon that refers directly to the military incursion into Ukraine with more neutral wording that deflects attention away from the consequences of military engagement. Many of these word choices replace military terminology with euphemisms to draw attention away from the negative consequences of the war. Their systematic use is a critical component of a sophisticated strategy to influence and to craft narratives in such a way to shape perceptions of media consumers in Russia. Applying the framework of cognitive semantics to these patterns of word use allows us to see how language in the Russian press is manipulated to shape perception and construct what Trudoliubov calls an "alternative political reality" ("Vtorzhenie v Ukrainu").

A Cognitive Approach to Semantic Analysis

Cognitive linguistics (CL) is a "flexible framework" used to examine language as part of human cognition, where cognition "refers to the crucial role of intermediate informational structures in our encounters with the world" (Geeraerts and Cuyckens 4–5). Human interaction and perception, according to the CL framework, are "mediated through informational structures in the mind" (5). Linguistic structures in CL are viewed as reflections of conceptual organization in the mind. Cognitive semantics, a subdiscipline of CL, characterizes meaning as part of conceptual structures embedded in the mind. Cognitive semantics looks at the ways conceptual content is organized in language, examining the role of categorization, metaphor, polysemy, and semantic frames in the process of the construction of meaning in language. This study applies the concept of semantic frames to the analysis of Russian propaganda about the conflict in Ukraine in order to understand the larger cognitive effects of language manipulation in propaganda.

One of the basic assumptions underlying frame semantics is that in the mind of a reader or listener words have associations that are not present in any given text (Chilton, "Political Terminology" 231–33). Words invoke semantic frames and sets of thematic roles such as agent, patient, instrument. For example, the verb "to sell" typically has a semantic frame that includes an agent, the seller, a buyer, something, a good or a service, that is being bought or sold, and what is exchanged for the good or service. These frames function at the level of cognition. Words evoke particular frames or schemas and these frames reflect human cognition in that they reflect human experience. The same event can be represented in different ways by using words that evoke different semantic frames. In this way use of alternative frames can be used to affect perception.[1]

When applied to Russian reporting about the conflict in Ukraine, frame semantics shows us how lexical substitutions function at a cognitive level to shape popular perceptions. For example, using the word "war" (*voina*) to describe the invasion and conflict in Ukraine evokes a semantic frame of a hostile encounter with an aggressor and a defender over a disputed issue or for a specific purpose that involves some kind of destruction including violence, bodily harm, mayhem,

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1. Since Fillmore introduced the notion of frame semantics in 1982, the concept has been developed and written about extensively within linguistics (see, for example, Fillmore, Fillmore and Atkins, Fillmore and Baker, and Fried and Nikiforidou) and has been applied to several other academic disciplines, including translation theory (as in Boas, L'Homme et al.) and computer science (Jha and Mahmoud).

and death.[2] Replacing the word "war" with the collocation "military operation" (*voennaia operatsiia*) invokes a semantic frame consisting of a military force that conducts activities in an area to achieve particular goals that may or may not be military in nature. Use of "military operation" (*voennaia operatsiia*) summons an entirely different semantic frame than the word "war," one that excludes any kind of negative consequences such as violence, destruction, and death. Referring to the war as an "operation" (*operatsiia*) also invokes another semantic frame that of a medical operation. This semantic frame is based on a conceptual metaphor, applying the notion of health and disease to Ukraine. In this schema, Ukraine is the afflicted "patient" and Russia is the "healer," ridding the patient of what ails it. The role of the Russian army is transformed from that of engaging in military activities resulting in destruction and death to that of doctors or surgeons who are healing a diseased or ill body by ridding it or curing it of disease. Cognitive semantics shows us how lexical selection or substitution can be used as a powerful tool for propagandists. By changing the wording used to describe events, propagandists can manipulate and shape public perception of those events.

A text or discourse has been described as consisting of tiers semantic, referential, and conceptual (Jackendoff 394). Werth proposed the notion of an overarching tier of discourse, connecting the concepts and references within a text into a "global conceptual structure" (323). The frames used within a discourse govern lexical choices and text structure. At a higher level, at the level of the discourse as a whole, recurrent frames can evoke culturally-grounded myths, discourses or "grand ideas," shared by individuals within a particular culture (Chilton, "Manipulation" 20). Wertsch describes shared cultural discourses as "national memories" (4–5). Astrid Erll situates "cultural memory," within a framework of the "sociocultural environment" (15). So that collective memory, "shared versions of the past," are formed "through the interaction, communication, media and institutions within small social groups as well as large cultural communities" (15). Propagandists can use lexical tools to invoke and manipulate national memories. They carefully craft their narratives by using words and frames to evoke larger national narratives and myths that are based on shared sociocultural experience. This qualitative analysis of reporting about the conflict in Ukraine in central Russian newspapers highlights the key words and semantic frames used to

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2. I used the frames supplied by FrameNet, a digital catalog of semantic frames for English lexicon, as a starting point. I subsequently interviewed Russian-native informants to corroborate the composition of semantic frames for selected key words.

mitigate the potential negative effect of news about the war and to shape public perception of events. This analysis also examines how these key words are employed to evoke broader sociocultural narratives about war and about the Great Patriotic War—Russia's name for the Second World War—in particular.

Digital Databases: Methodology

The digital database used for this study, Eastview's Universal Database of Russian Central Newspapers, contains forty active Russian language central newspapers and magazines that cover all aspects of news. The publications include official publications (*Rossiiskie vesti*), popular newspapers (*Argumenti i fakty, Moskovskii komsomolets, Komsomolskaia pravda*), business news (*Kommersant, Vedomosti*), and trade publications such as *Gudok* and *Uchitel'skaia gazeta*. The database is fully searchable but has some limitations. The search engine can execute key word searches, including stem searches, finding words with like stems. The search engine uses standard logic operator notation allowing searches for more than one key word at a time. The database cannot, however, execute collocation searches. Despite these limitations, this database is well suited to qualitative analysis because searches produce large chunks of text providing the researcher with access to larger context in which key words occur. This analysis proceeded by executing searches on specific key words that are frequently used in Russian mass media to discuss the Russian invasion of Ukraine: "genocide" (*genotsid)*, "Nazi" (*nacist*), "Fascist" (*fashist*), and "Banderite" (*Banderovets*). Searches were carried out for these key words used in sentences with "Ukraine" (*Ukraina*) and/or "Ukrainian" (*Ukrainets*). Examples of these key word occurrences were collected and analyzed for recurrent patterns of use.

Key Words and Semantic Frames
Used in Russian State-Run Media

The word "genocide" (*genotsid*) is a key term used in narratives about Ukraine in state-controlled Russian media. In his February 24 speech addressing the nation on the eve of the invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that one of the main reasons for the invasion was the "genocide" that Ukraine was perpetrating against the population of Donbas.[3]

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3. All English translations in the text are by the author.

It was absolutely necessary to stop this nightmare immediately—the **genocide** against millions of people who rely solely on Russia, on you and me. These efforts, feelings, the pain of these people was the main motivation for our decision to recognize the People's Republic of Donbass. . . . Its goal [the invasion] is to defend people, who for eight years have undergone abuse, **genocide** carried out by the regime in Kiev.

Необходимо было немедленно прекратить этот кошмар, **геноцид** в отношении проживающих там миллионов людей, которые надеются только на Россию, на нас с вами. Эти устремления, чувства, боль людей были для нас главным мотивом решения о признании народных республик Донбасса. . . . Ее цель—защита людей, которые на протяжении восьми лет подвергаются издевательствам, **геноциду** со стороны киевского режима. ("Putin Ob'iavil," emphasis mine)

The lexical choices in this passage are familiar to Russian consumers of mainstream media. The word "genocide" (*genotsid*) has been consistently used to describe the situation in Ukraine since the Russian invasion in 2014. The first uses of the word genocide in reference to Ukraine predate the 2014 invasion by almost a decade. The term genocide was initially used in Russian state-run media in discussions of legislation proposed in the Ukrainian parliament requiring all civil servants to pass proficiency tests in the Ukrainian language. During the decade preceding the 2014 invasion of Donbas, Russian state-run media frequently used the term "genocide" in reference to a series of Ukrainian bills regulating the use of language. A 2005 passage from an article appearing in the newspaper *Trud* provides a typical example of the lexical choices made in Russian media discussions of Ukrainian language laws, prior to 2014: "nationalists are prohibiting [the use of] Russian language, Russian culture, yes and even the Russian people/nation itself, which is being subjected to, I would say emphatically, a spiritual and cultural **genocide**" ("националисты запрещают русский язык, русскую культуру, да и сам русский народ, который подвергается, я бы сказал резко, духовному и культурному **геноциду**"; Anokhin, emphasis mine).

Use of the word genocide peaked after the Maidan demonstration with the appearance of Russian troops in Donbas in 2014. At that point state-run media in Russia pivoted from using genocide to refer to Ukrainian efforts to legislate language use, to using the term to claim that Ukrainian troops were carrying out systematic mass murder of Russian-speakers in Ukraine. During the "Open

Line" program that took place in April 2014, a yearly event where Putin answers questions posed by viewers on national television, Putin added the epithet "real" (*nastoiashchii*) to "genocide" in describing the situation in Ukraine, saying that "a **real genocide** has been unleashed, and Ukraine itself is creeping towards a civil war" (emphasis mine) ("против юго-востока Украины развязан **настоящий геноцид**, а сама Украина сползает к гражданской войне"; qtd. in Kolesnikov, emphasis mine).

The phrase "real genocide" (*nastoiashchii genotsid*) was subsequently picked up in mass media and became a popular collocation used routinely by commentators and reporters to describe the conflict in eastern Ukraine. In that same year, the Russian newspaper *Slovo* printed a letter addressed to Putin from S. A. Shatokhin referring to the conflict in Ukraine as genocide: "There is a **real genocide** going on against our people perpetrated by the Nazi junta, which came to power by means of an armed coup and has set up a bloody campaign of violence and dictatorship" ("Идёт **настоящий геноцид** нашего народа со стороны нацистской хунты, пришедший к власти путём вооруженного военного переворота и установившей кровавый режим насилия и диктатуры"; emphasis mine).

References to "genocide" in Ukraine surged again in Russian media in 2022 with the Russian invasion of Ukraine (see Figure 5.3.1). On February 24, a regional politician parroted Putin's speech by using the term in reference to the invasion to present a rationale for the war: "We cannot look indifferently at the abuse and **genocide** which the marionette regime in Kiev has carried out for many years against the residents of the DNR and LNR" ("И, конечно, мы не можем равнодушно смотреть на издевательства и многолетний **геноцид** жителей ДНР и ЛНР со стороны марионеточного киевского режима!"; qtd. in "Glava Dagestana," emphasis mine).

FREQUENCY OF WORDS ГЕНОЦИД* (GENOCIDE), УКРАИНА* (UKRAINE) BY YEAR

The asterisks shown here in Геноцид* and Украин* represent a convention used in Corpus Linguistics to indicate that the frequency data and the searches that produced it refer to all forms of the words in question, not just the dictionary form: in other words, all case forms, including word forms with the same root. This is called a "wildcard search." See also Fig. 5.3.2.

FIGURE 5.3.1   Uses of the word "genocide" in reference to Ukraine in Russian central newspapers, 2000–2022.

Semantic Frames of Genocide

The term "genocide" was introduced by Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959), a Polish-born lawyer who emigrated to the United States in 1941, in order to provide a legal definition that would categorize the Holocaust—the mass killings of Jews by Nazi Germany before and during World War II—as a crime. In 1948, the United Nations Convention on the subject of genocide defined it as a "crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, in whole or in part" (UN Convention on Genocide). The semantic frame of "genocide" consists of mass or indiscriminate killing by perpetrators carrying out homicide and of victims who are typically singled out because of their national, ethnic, racial, or religious background. Use of this term to describe the situation in eastern Ukraine implies that Russians in eastern Ukraine are not just being persecuted but that they are being killed and targeted by virtue of their linguistic and ethnic affiliation. Use of the term *genotsid* in Russian newspapers in reference to Ukraine, as examples below demonstrate, identifies Ukrainians as the perpetrators and semantically links them to Nazis who carried out the Holocaust. Using the term "genocide" to refer to events in eastern Ukraine is metonymic, as it places these events within the larger semantic frame of the "Great Patriotic War" and links events in Ukraine to the Holocaust. Placed within this frame, the Russian people

living in eastern Ukraine—and, by extension, all Russian-speakers—are labeled as the victims of Nazi aggression. Russian troops, the contemporary replacement of the Soviet Red Army, are described as defenders of the homeland who are liberating Russian territory. The connection of what is labeled as the present-day "genocide" in Ukraine to the Holocaust and to the Great Patriotic War is in some cases made explicit in state-run Russian media. In the newspaper *Tribuna* in 2014, one writer noted that "the ethnic cleansing carried out by the junta in southeast Ukraine is a direct continuation of the policy of **genocide** carried out during the years of the Great Patriotic [War]" ("этнические чистки хунты на юго-востоке Украины –прямое продолжение политики **геноцида** в годы Великой Отечественной"; Vozniuk, emphasis mine).

Successive regimes in Russia have used narratives about the Great Patriotic War to craft a national cultural discourse of Russian resistance, resilience, and victory against great odds. During the postwar years, the Soviet regime cast the narrative of the Great Patriotic War to glorify Soviet achievements and to unify the nation. As Edele observes, the Soviet narrative identifies the beginning of the war as June 22, 1941, with the German invasion of the USSR. In this narrative, the war was defensive, waged to repel foreign fascist aggressors who attacked the peaceful population of the USSR. The Soviet Great Patriotic War narrative casts the Red Army and the Russian people as the force of good, "rising up against fascist enslavement" to liberate Europe from the yoke of fascism, as noted by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1941. The Soviet apparatus propagated this cultural narrative to unify the nation and to foster a sense of pride in the postwar USSR. War monuments, many grandiose in scale, were erected in most major cities after World War II to commemorate and sustain the Great Patriotic narrative in collective consciousness. Under Putin the Great Patriotic War narrative became a "cornerstone of a positive narrative about the nation" (Edele 93). As many scholars of Russian history, politics, and culture have observed, the Putin regime has gone to great lengths to repurpose and mobilize the Great Patriotic War myth and its constituent semantic frames to justify and garner support for its political aims and to forge national identity (see works by Domańska and Wood). In recent years these efforts have included reinvigorating and expanding national Victory Day celebrations. As part of this effort, new branding strategies were developed for the Great Patriotic War, adapting the St. George's Ribbon, first introduced by Empress Catherine the Great (1762–1796) for service and valor, as the national symbol of the USSR's victory (Schechter). Banned by the Ukrainian parliament as a symbol

of national aggression in 2017, the ribbon has been used extensively by the Russian authorities in public spaces, on billboards, and in rallies, in support of the war effort in Ukraine. On December 29, 2017, the Russian parliament made desecration of the ribbon a criminal offense. The important role of official narratives about the Great Patriotic War in identity formation and in nation building in contemporary Russia was underscored by what became known as the "memory law" passed in May 2014, which, as previously mentioned, criminalized public distribution of "lies" about the activities of the Soviet Union in World War II.

The official narrative of the Great Patriotic War provides a "template" for state-run media reporting about the war in Ukraine.[4] Using the word "genocide" to describe the events in Ukraine and to provide a rationale for the invasion, Russian propaganda evokes a central cultural narrative about the Great Patriotic War that is shared by most Russians: that Russia is fighting a defensive war against foreign invaders who are threatening to destroy Russia. Cognitive semantic analysis provides a framework for understanding how lexical choices in state-run print media are used to invoke and reinforce the official Great Patriotic War narrative and shape public perception.

Many of the key elements of the Great Patriotic War semantic frame are used to label the events and actors in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Labels such as "fascist" (*fashist*) and "Nazi" (*Natsist*) have a metonymic function, connecting narratives about Ukraine today with the national discourse about the Great Patriotic War. Each of these labels have particular trajectories reviewed below. The term "fascist" is widely used in Russian news narratives about Ukraine but its use has shifted over time. This term first appeared in Ukrainian politics in 2005 following the presidential election runoff in Ukraine. The pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich labeled supporters of his opponent Viktor Yushchenko as "fascists" because they sought to develop closer ties between Ukraine and NATO. The semantic frame of the word "fascist" evokes the Great Patriotic War, a connection which is made explicit in the quotation from *Sovietskaia Rossiia* below*, with its labeling of Ukrainians as "Banderites." Stepan Bandera (1909–1959), a far-right Ukrainian nationalist who was active in German-occupied Ukraine during World War II, is a polarizing figure for Russians and Ukrainians. After President Yuschchenko awarded Bandera the title of "Hero of Ukraine," Yanukovich revoked the title in 2011:

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4. See Wertsch (9–11) for a discussion of templates used in national memory discourse.

The spinelessness of the Ukrainian authorities has led to the fact that the **Banderites,** with the help of foreign spies, have almost seized power and are once again beginning to form a **fascist** dictatorship. It seems that life will be impossible without battles with **fascists** and catching spies.

Бесхребетность власти на Украине привела к тому, что **бандеровцы** при помощи иностранных шпионов почти захватили власть и заново начали обустраивать **фашистскую** диктатуру. Оказалось, что без драки с **фашистами** и ловли шпионов жить нельзя. (Baev, emphasis mine)

The labels "fascist," and "Banderovite" for Ukrainians, which make sporadic appearances in Russian press in 2005, rise sharply in 2014. By 2022 these terms are routinely used as a replacement for the more neutral label "Ukrainians" (see Figure 5.3.2). The following passages from state-run newspapers, place references to Ukrainians as "fascists" directly within the frame of the "Great Patriotic War." In the following excerpt from *Vechernaia Moskva*, Zakhar claims that Ukrainian fascists have "returned" to Ukraine: "Today **fascists** have once again returned to Ukraine. And they are carrying out the same atrocities as [they did] in the '40s of the last century. The Goebbelsian lies are a trademark of the self-proclaimed rulers of Ukraine" ("Сегодня **фашисты** снова вернулись на Украину. И они творят те же зверства, что и в 40-х годах прошлого века. Геббельсовской ложью отличаются самозваные правители Украины"; emphasis mine).
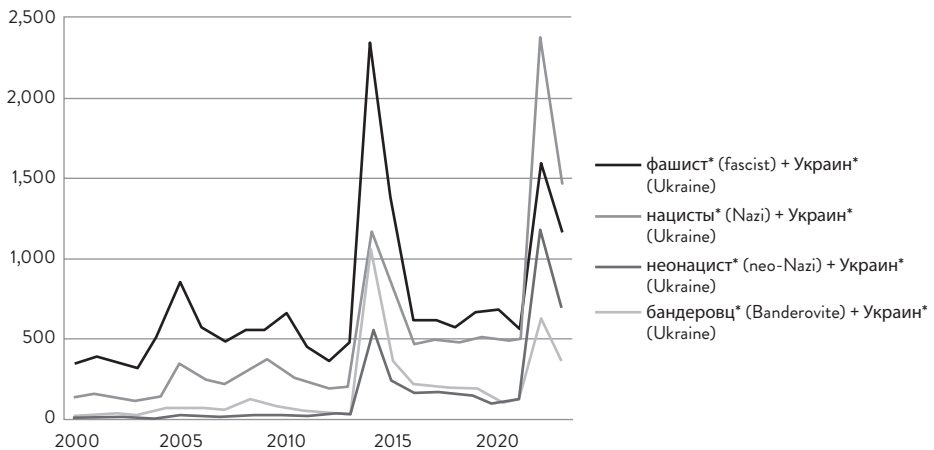
FIGURE 5.3.2   Uses of the words "fascist," "Nazi," "neo-Nazi," and "banderite" in reference to Ukraine in Russian central newspapers, 2000–2022.

Similarly, in this passage from *Argumenty i fakty*, Solov'iev makes a direct connection between the current war and the Great Patriotic War, claiming that the present-day Ukrainian "fascists" are fighting against Russians who are "antifascist": "It is clear that all the atrocities which we are witnessing in Nezalezhnaia go directly back to the Great Patriotic War, to the era of "Ukrainian heroes" Bandera and Shukhevich. In Novorossii antifascists are waging a war with **fascists**. The **fascists** are afraid of the truth" ("Очевидно, что все зверства, которые мы сегодня наблюдаем в Незалежной, - это прямой отсыл к Великой Отечественной войне, к временам 'героев Украины' - Бандеры и Шухевича. В Новороссии антифашисты воюют с **фашистами**. **Фашисты** боятся правды"; Solov'iev; emphasis mine). A pejorative neologism *ukrofashisty*, used as a label for Ukrainians made its appearance in Russian state media in 2014. This compound term was formed by combining the label "fascist" with the term *ukrop*, to produce *ukrofashisty*, meaning "dill weed fascists": "We never lie! Not only because we are Russian orthodox people and lying is repugnant to use, but also because we have no reason to lie: ***ukrofascists*** provide so many reasons to criticize them that we don't have to make up anything new" ("Мы никогда не врём! Не только потому, что мы православные люди и нам противно врать, но еще и потому, что нам нет причины врать: **укрофашисты** дают столько поводов для критики в свой адрес, что нам новые изобретать не нужно"; Glushik, emphasis mine).

Early uses of the term "Nazi" (*natsist*) for Ukrainians in state-run media were sporadic, used primarily for political campaigning. In 2004, the weekly business journal *Ekspert* repeated the epithet "Nazi" in its reporting on Yanukovich's upcoming presidential campaign: "Viktor Ianukovich will construct his campaign to mobilize the electorate in the eastern Ukrainian region with slogans about a fight with the '**Nazi**'" ("Виктор Янукович будет строить свою кампанию на мобилизации электората в восточноукраинском регионе под лозунгами борьбы с '**нацистом**'"; Vuiko, emphasis mine).

The term "Nazi" is also used to refer to those in Ukraine with pro-western political views, but not as a label applied to all Ukrainians, as in the following 2015 passage from Aleksandr Nagornyi in the Russian weekly newspaper *Zavtra*:

> Moscow has missed a unique opportunity when in February of last year Kiev was delegitimized by the coup, and all that was then needed was to take Yanukovich in hand and to lead him to the grandstands to talk about Ukraine without **Nazis** and "pro-westernites" and about an "eastern" project, a union with Russia.

Москва упустила уникальную ситуацию, когда в феврале прошлого года Киев делегитимизировал себя переворотом, и надо тогда было брать Януковича под руки, вести на трибуну в Харькове или Донецке и говорить о новой Украине—о Украине без **нацистов** и "западников", о "восточном" проекте, союзе с Россией. (qtd. in Belozerskii, emphasis mine)

Since 2022, the terms "Nazi" (*natsist*), "Banderite" (*banderovets*), and "facist" (*fashist*) have become normalized to the extent that they often replace the neutral label "Ukrainian" in Russian state-controlled mass-media. Often, Ukrainian soldiers are simply referred to as "Nazis" and "Neo-Nazis," as in these 2023 passages from *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* and *Krasnaia Zvezda*, respectively:

"Today, a night after the tragedy with the destruction of a hospital in Gaza, **Nazis** from the AFU [Armed Forces of Ukraine] carried out simultaneous targeted strikes against the central regional hospital of Aleshek" ("Сегодня, в ночь после трагедии с уничтожением больницы в Газе, **нацисты** из ВСУ нанесли одновременные прицельные удары по центральной районной больнице Алешек." (Gavrilov, emphasis mine)

"Thanks to the decisive actions of Sergeant of the Guards Evgenii Talmachov, and to the professionalism and the consistency of his unit, the advancement of Russian troops deep into the defenses of Ukrainian **Neo-Nazis** was carried out" ("Благодаря решительным действиям гвардии сержанта Евгения Талмачёва, профессионализму и слаженности его расчёта было обеспечено продвижение российских войск вглубь обороны украинских **неонацистов**." (Khairemdinov, emphasis mine)

The key term "denazification," (*denatsifikatsiia*), central to state-run media rhetoric about the invasion also evokes the Great Patriotic War frame. Putin used the term to define the aims of Russia's military aggression. The term was first used at the postwar conference of the Allied Powers at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945. At that conference, the four "Ds" "demilitarization," "denazification," "decentralization," and "democratization" were used to characterize the policies to be implemented by the allies in postwar Germany. The term is central to Russian propaganda efforts and is supported, as we have seen, by a nexus of pejorative labels all linked to the Great Patriotic War, casting Ukrainians as Nazi fascists and Russians as defenders against Nazi aggression.

Another central lexicosemantic group in Russia's official narrative about the war are words related to "defense" *(zashchita)*. The role of Russian troops as "defenders" is expressed by a set of words derived from *zashchita*: *zashchitnik* ("defender") and the verbs *zashchishchat'(sia)/zashchitit'(sia)*, ("to defend [oneself]"). These words are often used in reference to the role of Russian troops in the invasion of Ukraine. These lexical choices resonate with official narratives of the Great Patriotic War, which since the postwar Soviet era have consistently referred to the conflict as one that was defensive, with Soviet troops defending the USSR from Nazi aggression. Russian newspaper columns like this 2022 piece from *Pravda* exemplify how the goal of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is identified as defensive: and intended to protect Russians from NATO aggression:

> We state that the achievement of the goals in the fight against NATO's aggression, the **defense** of the Russian population, the renaissance of the Russian state restored to its historical borders, are an objective vital necessity which is being carried out in the interests of our people.

> Мы заявляем, что достижение целей в борьбе с натовской агрессией, **защита** русского населения, возрождение российского государства в исторических границах - объективная жизненная необходимость, совершаемая в интересах наших народов. (Simonenko, emphasis mine)

Another column similarly describes Russia as defending the Donbas region of Ukraine from the same type of NATO assault: "Under a real threat of destruction and in response to requests by DNR and LNR **to defend** the people of Donbas, Russia carried out a preventative strike with the goal of guaranteeing national security from the aggressive politics of NATO" ("В условиях реальной угрозы уничтожения, по просьбе ДНР и ЛНР **защитить** народ Донбасса, Россия нанесла привентивный удар в том числе и с целью необходимости обеспечения национальной безопасности от агрессивной политики НАТО"; Simonenko, emphasis mine).

While state-run media portrays Russia's role in the Ukrainian invasion as "defensive," key words used to describe actual Russian military aggression evoke semantic frames that are devoid of the negative consequences of military conflict. Like the term "special operation" *(spetsial'naia operatsiia)*, words related to cleansing, *chistka* or *zachistka*, are used to describe military action without referring to the

death and destruction caused by the invasion. The semantic frame of the word "cleanse" consists of an impure, tainted or dirty entity that is undergoing "cleansing." In the passage from *Krasnaia Zvezda* below, the goal of the invasion is identified as "defensive" in nature with the aim of "cleansing" Ukraine of Nazis. The lexical choice of "cleanse" identifies Ukrainians as the agents of befoulment or soiling. Not only are Russian aggressors identified as "defenders," a theme which was examined above, but the "cleansing" process has been located within the semantic frame of the Great Patriotic War by the use of the label "Nazi" for Ukrainians:

> The understanding of the goals of Russia's actions remains: in the first place, the defense of our country, disarmament of Ukraine and preventing the placement of NATO military bases [in Ukraine]. Besides that, the goals of the special operation include the defense of the population of Donbass and **cleansing** Ukraine of Nazis.

> Сохраняется и понимание целей действий России: на первых местах— защита нашей страны, разоружение Украины, а также недопущение размещения военных баз НАТО на её территории. Кроме того, в качестве задач спецоперации называется защита населения Донбасса и **зачистка** Украины от нацистов. (Semionov, emphasis mine)

Thus, the word *zachistka* has come to be used as a euphemism for military action. Describing armed conflict as a process of "cleansing" strips the description of semantic references typically associated with military engagements related to loss of life, casualties, and destruction of property and replaces it with a more positive semantic frame of purifying or removing dirty or corrupted entities, as in the following passage that appeared in *Kommersant*:

> Subunits of the Lugansk Peoples' Republic police, supported by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, having **cleansed** the settlement of Popasnaia from nationalists, broke through the defenses of the enemy and exited onto the administrative border of the Lugansk People's Republic.

> Подразделения Народной милиции Луганской народной республики при поддержке вооруженных сил Российской Федерации, завершив **зачистку** от националистов населенного пункта Попасная, прорвали глубоко эшелонированную оборону противника и вышли на административную границу Луганской народной республики. (Belen'kaia, emphasis mine)

Conclusion

Cognitive semantics used as a frame for examining Russian narratives about Ukraine in state-run media provides important clues about how Russian propaganda works and why it is so effective. Analyzing patterns of lexical substitution in Russian discourse through the lens of frame semantics, we come to understand how lexical choices can shape perception. Replacing "war" with "special operation" or "eradication" with "cleansing" invokes semantic frames devoid of the harm and destruction that are part of the semantic frame of war. These word choices also invoke the frame of health, cleansing the body and ridding it of disease. These lexical choices not only mitigate the negative effects of war; they replace them with a frame that casts the military action as positive and necessary for restoring the "health" of the nation. This analysis has also shown how the national Great Patriotic War narrative about Russia's involvement in the Second World War provides a lexicosemantic toolkit for journalists working for state-run media. Labeling Ukrainians as "fascists," "Banderites," and Nazis, situates discussions of the war in Ukraine within the larger Great Patriotic War national narrative. This narrative casts Russian aggression as a defensive endeavor to repel fascists and Nazis waging a genocidal war against the Russian forces of good. Uses of these labels invoke semantic frames that influence perceptions of the reality on the ground.

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The U.S. Army as "Kingly Army"?

A SOCIAL SEMIOTICS STUDY ON *WANGSHI* IN CHINESE INTERNET DISCOURSE

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In January 2023, during the Chinese Lunar New Year festivities, a post appeared on the Reddit/China irl, a Chinese group with approximately 226,000 members on social media titled "I Am a Little Confused about This Game Ad" ("Zhe youxi guanggao wo yishi youdian gaobudongle"; Google Translate trans.; Heibaicha).[1] It was linked to a promotional video of *Conflicts of Nations: World War 3*, a game developed by Bytro, a German gaming company. In the video, a seemingly ethnic Chinese woman expressed in Mandarin that she played the game during the New Year, chose China, attacked Taiwan, but was counter-attacked. As she contemplated seeking reinforcements from North Korea, she found out that North Korea was also invaded. "How did they (Taiwan) get so many cannons and tanks so quickly?" ("Tamen shi zenme zhemekuai gaodao zhemeduo huopao gen tanke de?"; my trans.; Heibaicha) she said. At this point, the American flag appeared on the screen, and she remarked, "Oh . . . now it all makes sense" ("Ou . . . xianzai dou shuodetongle"; my trans.; Heibaicha). Below the post, a netizen "crz unv" replied with a quote of two lines of poetry: "The remnants' tears have dried up amidst the barbarian dust; looking south to *Wangshi* for yet another year" ("Yimin leijin huchenli, nanwang wangshi you yinian"; Google Translate trans.; Heibaicha).

According to the Chinese version of Wikipedia, *Wangshi* ("kingly army") can refer to the Republic of China Army, the U.S. Army, or the People's

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Liberation Army. In discussions related to Ukraine, it can denote the Russian Armed Forces. Scholars who are familiar with geopolitics and international affairs would immediately recognize the paradox of the term. First, as a symbol used for reference, *Wangshi* may be used to refer to either side of the opposing forces. Second, in the context of the so-called "traditional territories" and the imagination of the great Han or Slavic nation, there may be similarities between the Taiwan/China relationship and the Ukraine/Russia relationship, but the inclusion of the U.S. military in this framework is not straightforward. For the U.S. military to become the referent, there must evidently be other preset frameworks of thought.

The central inquiry of this study revolves around the significance attributed to the term *Wangshi* when Chinese netizens utilize it to refer to the U.S. military. At present, there is a lack of scholarly research in both Chinese and English academic literature specifically investigating the Internet usage of the term *Wangshi* or similar phenomena. The term *Wangshi* originates from a rich historical allusion, as evidenced by the poetry cited above, which serves as an example of contemporary cultural references within political discourse. Scholars have previously explored the utilization of cultural allusions in contemporary political rhetoric, such as the analysis conducted on how British politicians from various parties reinterpreted and employed the same proverb both positively and negatively in the context of the process of Great Britain leaving the European Union, known as Brexit (Musolff 142), offering valuable insights applicable to this study. In the Chinese context, Sullivan and Zhao had discussed how Chinese rappers invoked concepts rooted in classical culture, such as *Xiake* ("knight-errant") and a lawless physical or ideational realm outside mainstream society called *Jianghu*, to assert a distinctly Chinese identity in response to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) emphasis on "positive energy" (275). Similarly, Fitzgerald and Wu examined how netizens used the widely recognized fairy tale character Pinocchio to represent "liars" and evade censorship while criticizing the government following the Tianjin explosions in 2015 (373). However, perhaps the most influential sources of inspiration for this research stem from the concept of "New Sinology" advocated by sinologist Geremie R. Barmé, which employs sinological knowledge as the basis for contemporary discourse analysis (Barmé). Additionally, Perry Link's insightful work *An Anatomy of Chinese: Rhythm, Metaphor, Politics* (2013), particularly the section on "privilege in dyads" (174–83), has provided invaluable insights. Link's book also inspired the application of cognitive linguistic ideas on metaphors and metonymies to analyze the thought patterns of users invoking the *Wangshi* allusion. By integrating these

theoretical frameworks, this study aims to unravel the nuanced layers of meaning embedded within the contemporary usage of *Wangshi* on the Chinese Internet.

In examining texts, images, and audiovisual materials collected from Chinese-language Internet sources, such as Wikipedia, news articles, comments, Q&A platforms, and social media, it becomes natural to employ concepts of social semiotics. This approach allows for an exploration of how different groups or individuals within varied contexts and media channels receive and reshape the semantic nuances of the term *Wangshi* through its usage, discussion, commentary, and ridicule, revealing the interactive nature and underlying consensus within this communicative or deliberative process. It is important to note, however, that while adopting concepts from social semiotics, my focus lies predominantly on qualitative case study. I refrain from quantifying the volume of discourse surrounding the various connotations of *Wangshi* or categorizing it as an Internet meme. This choice stems from the nature of the study's focus and the corpus of collected data, where *Wangshi* functions as a long-tail symbol transitioning from reality to the online realm, constantly referenced but lacking the rapid proliferation and impact characteristic of Internet memes (Davison 122). Furthermore, although the initial use of classical references like *Wangshi* may have served to evade censorship, analysis of the collected data reveals continued usage of the term both outside (e.g., Reddit and Facebook) and within the Great Firewall (e.g., Baidu, Sohu, Zhihu, and Weibo), thus bypassing discussion on the influence of censorship systems on the discourse involving the U.S. military being referred to as *Wangshi*.

One aspect that requires clarification is the scope of the term "Chinese Internet" as used in this chapter. There are two main types of Chinese script commonly used on the Internet: Traditional Chinese Characters and Simplified Chinese Characters. In this essay, the term "Chinese Internet" refers to online content published in both Traditional and Simplified Characters. Regarding social media platforms, within the firewall, simplified characters are predominantly used, whereas outside the firewall, a mixture of both simplified and traditional characters is observed. For instance, on Reddit, there are multiple Chinese subreddits, with the majority utilizing Simplified Characters or a combination of Traditional and Simplified Characters. Concerning contributors, individuals from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and some overseas Chinese communities typically employ Traditional Characters, while those from mainland China, Singapore, Malaysia, and most other overseas Chinese communities use Simplified Characters. However, there are exceptions; some Chinese individuals deliberately opt for Traditional Characters

based on cultural identity, political stance, convenience in communication, or fashion trends, while some from Hong Kong and Taiwan intentionally use Simplified Characters. From the perspective of social semiotics, it is a significant topic to explore why contributors on social media platforms referencing the *Wangshi* allusion consciously deviate from their educational backgrounds to adopt either simplified or traditional characters that they are not accustomed to. This topic holds substantial meaning for investigation, albeit its complexity necessitates dedicated scholarly attention. Due to space constraints, this discussion will not delve into related considerations here.

Before analyzing contemporary uses of *Wangshi*, I will first delve into the historical origins by dissecting two passages from Wikipedia discussing the origins and various applications of it, delineating its semantic stratification. This will serve as the foundation for a discussion on the underlying thought patterns serving as the common basis for disparate references and further analysis of discourses referring to the U.S. military as *Wangshi*. Subsequently, I will analyze discussions on Web portals, content farms, and social media platforms where *Wangshi* signifies the U.S. military, delving into its deeper implications and user intentions. These analyses will encompass multimodal elements, including textual interpretations, satirical comics, videos, and textual commentaries. In conclusion, I argue that regardless of the reference, the *Wangshi* symbol operates on two fundamental presumptions: first, a latent concept of *tianxia* ("all under heaven") and its associated tendencies toward sanctification of a great power, and second, a basic framework of *junwang* versus *laobaixing* ("monarch versus subjects" and "rule versus submit"). The former conflicts with the notion of harmonious coexistence among multiple superpowers, while the latter reflects the limitations of thought patterns among users of the *Wangshi* symbol, suggesting that even in rather non-satirical references to the U.S. military, users may be merely self-deprecating cynics rather than active dissenters from or earnest supporters of democracy—what could be termed as "liberals" actively striving to effect change in the status quo. This distinction should not be overlooked by those concerned with the development of democracy in China or China's attitude toward great power competition.[2]

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2. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback. One reviewer pointed out that a thorough analysis of the term *Wangshi* requires revisiting the dichotomy of the concepts of *Wangdao* ("benevolent rule") and *Badao* ("hegemonic rule"). This is an insightful critique. Actually, this essay on *Wangshi* is derived from my ongoing research on the CCP's discourse of *Yang Qin* ("promoting the Qin Dynasty") and *Zun Kong* ("honoring Confucianism") and the appropriation of the symbols of *Wangdao* and *Badao*. I will address these ideas in separate articles.

The Symbolic Origin, Historical Shifts, and Internet Appropriation of *Wangshi*

The term *Wangshi* has two related entries in the Chinese version of Wikipedia. One is in the "Political Category–Taiwan" section under the entry "List of Internet Terms Used in Mainland China," where it is explained as

> *Wangshi*: The name of the Republic of China's national army or the US military, taken from Lu You's poem "Wangshi Bei Ding Zhongyuan Day" ("To My Son"), alluding to the Republic of China's past plan to recover the mainland. It is now also used to allude to the United States return to the Asia-Pacific to exert military pressure on China, with a sarcastic meaning, such as "Looking south to *Wangshi* for another year, how many companies are left in *Wangshi*?" (taken from Lu You's "Autumn Night is about to dawn and I go out of the gate to greet the coolness" and "The remnant's tears have dried up in the barbarian dust; looking south to *Wangshi* for yet another year"); sometimes it is not sarcastic, but used to imagine that the Republic of China's political system will lead the realization of China's unification. Sometimes it is also used to refer to the People's Liberation Army of China (to describe the use of force by mainland China to unify Taiwan). In the discussion of the Ukrainian protests, the term *Wangshi* was also used by pro-Russian netizens to refer to the Russian army.

> *Wangshi*: Zhonghuaminguo guojun huo Meijun de chenghu, quiz luyou shiju "Wangshi beiding zhongyuan ri" [*Shi'er*], yinhshe Zhonghuaminguo guoqu Guangfudalu jihua, xian ye yongyu yingshe Meiguo Chongfanyatai dui Zhongguo shi jia junshi yali Shijian, dai fengci yiwei, ru "nanwang Wangshi you yinian, Wangshi haisheng jige lian?" (Qüzi Luyou *Qiuye jiangxiao chu limen yingliang yougan,* "Yimin leijin Huchen li, Nanwang Wangshi youyinian"); youshi budaiyou fengci de secai, ershi yongyu shexiang yi Zhonghuaminguo zhengti wei zhudao shixian Zhongguo tongyi. Youshi ye bei yonglai zhi Zhongguo Renminjiefangjun (Xingrong Zhongguodalu wuli tongyi Taiwan), Zai yougun Wukelan shiwei de taolun zhong, "Wangshi" yici yebei qine wangyou yonglai zhicheng Eluosi jundui. (Google Translation trans.; "Zhongguo Dalu wanglu yongyu liebiao")

According to the Wikipedia entry on "List of Internet Terms Used in Mainland China," references to both the ROC army and the U.S. military are based on the poetry of Lu You (1125–1210): "The day the King's army vanquishes the north and reclaims the Central Plains" (allusion A) ("Wangshi beiding Zhongyuan ri"; Google Gemini trans.) and "The remnants' tears have dried

up amidst the barbarian dust; looking south to Wangshi for yet another year" (allusion B) ("Yimin leijin Huchen li, Nanwang Wangshi youyinian"; Google Gemini trans.).[3] The poet Lu You was active during the period of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279) in China, marked by the division of political power between the northern and southern regimes. Renowned for his poetry expressing a longing for a nation united under a legitimate ethnic Han Chinese dynasty, Lu You became revered as a patriotic poet by both the *Kuomingtang* (Nationalist Party), which relocated the ROC to Taiwan in 1949, and the CCP, which emerged victorious in the Civil War (1945–1949) and has governed mainland China since that time. The verses of allusions A and B are well-known on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Chinese Wikipedia explains that the use of this term is an allusion to the "ROC's past plan to recover the mainland" (allusion A) and is "also used to allude to the United States' return to the Asia-Pacific to exert military pressure on China" (allusion B), with a "sarcastic meaning." The key phrase in allusion A is "vanquishes the north and reclaims the Central Plains," where the Central Plains represent mainland China. Whether it was the ROC Army, namely Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomingtang Army at that time, coming from Taiwan, or the U.S. military coming from the Asia-Pacific region (especially the South China Sea), both would attack from the south to the north. The phrase "gaze south" in allusion B is also based on geographical location.

Regarding allusion A, there is an unconfirmed rumor that during the Cultural Revolution, the Kuomingtang military indeed formulated and executed a military action plan called the "King's Army Plan" (Lin, "Buneng Puguang"). If true, *Wangshi* would not only be a traditional allusion but also a "contemporary allusion." As for allusion B, "barbarian" refers to the alien races occupying the Central Plains, while "loyal subjects" are the Han Chinese residing in the occupied areas, both questioning the legitimacy of the ruling alien races from a Han-centric perspective. If these are also involved in the construction of meaning when using *Wangshi*, then when referring to the Kuomingtang Army, it reflects the speaker's self-identification as loyalists of the ROC, viewing the People's Republic of China (PRC) as *Hu*, a savage foreign regime (implying the founding of the CCP

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3. An anonymous reviewer pointed out that, in addition to the well-known poetry of Lu You, the term *Wangshi* frequently appears in popular literature and oral performances when depicting war scenes. The widespread use of this term has a notable influence that should not be underestimated. This observation is of great significance. In fact, in terms of tastes and cognitive patterns, contemporary netizens may be closer to the creators/audiences of traditional historical novels and storytelling performances than to premodern scholars/ intellectuals. I am grateful to this anonymous reviewer not only for highlighting this blind spot but also for inspiring directions for future research.

regime relied on the support of the Soviet Communist Party). However, when referring to the foreign U.S. military, it is incompatible. One explanation is that the U.S. military actually participated in the aforementioned rumored "King's Army Plan." For example, former National Taiwan University president Dr. Guan Zhongmin stated on his personal Facebook page that during his military service on Dongyin Island in the Matsu Islands in 1979, the joint defense treaty between the Kuomingtang regime and the U.S. military was terminated due to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the PRC. He claimed that he personally saw a destroyed file at the time, including a volume titled "King's Army Plan" (Kuan). However, considering the semantic characteristic of the word "king" being singular, it should not appear as the plural *Wangshi* encompassing both the Kuomingtang Army and the U.S. military, especially since the Obama administration announced the "Pivot to Asia" in 2011 (Lieberthal). Whether the Kuomingtang Army's "King's Army Plan" actually existed or was wishful thinking, it can be said that times have changed, and it is difficult to justify the use of allusion B. Even more difficult to justify, based on the explanation here, is the reference to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Russian Armed Forces as *Wangshi*, even if limited by the context of application. As long as Lu You's poetry is used as a reference, even excluding "remnants" and "barbarian dust," just "northward settled" and "looking south" would still cause semantic interference.

This prompts us to shift our focus to the second relevant entry on Chinese Wikipedia. Upon clicking the *Wangshi* entry in the aforementioned list, one encounters another page titled "*Wangshi*, disambiguation." Here, it states that the term *Wangshi* literally means "the king's army" or "the royal army" and provides more information:

> By extension, it has come to mean "a righteous army" or "a liberating army." The classical source for this term is the Mencius:[4] "The people, believing it would rescue them from the midst of fire and water, welcomed the royal army with baskets of food and jugs of drink." This same usage can be seen in the works of the Tang dynasty poet Du Fu, in his poem "The Officer at Xin'an": "Furthermore, the royal army is righteous, its care for the people abundantly clear. When you see them off, do not weep tears of blood; the commander is like a father or elder brother." It is also found in the Song dynasty poet Lu You's poem "To

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4. "Mencius" is the Latinized name for the second sage of Confucianism, Mengzi. As this is the conventional term in academia, it is used throughout this article. All quotations from the Mencius are taken from James Legge's translation, available on the website ctext.org, except where citations from Wikipedia were rendered by Google Translate.

My Son": "On the day the royal army pacifies the Central Plains to the north, do not forget to tell your father in the ancestral rites." In modern times, this term has been adopted by liberals in mainland China to refer to the Republic of China Armed Forces or the military of the United States. This usage may allude to the "Reclaim the Mainland" plan of the Republic of China government after its retreat to Taiwan, or to events such as the United States' re-engagement in the Asia-Pacific and the exertion of military pressure on China. Conversely, supporters of mainland China's ideology may use the term *Wangshi* in a reverse, sarcastic, or ironic manner.

Wangzhe de jundui, jin'er yinshen wei "zhengyi zhi shi"; "zhengjiu zhi shi"; dianchu Mengzi: "Min yiwei jiang zheng ji yu shuihuo zhi zhong ye, dansi hujiang yi ying wangshi." tongyang de yongfa jian Du Fu "Xin An Li": "Kuang nai wangshi shun, fuyang shen fenming. Songxing wu qi xue, puye ru fuxiong." yu Lu You "Shi Er": "Wangshi bei ding zhongyuan ri, Jiaji wu wang gao naiweng." Zheyi yongfa bei Zhongguo dalu de ziyoupai daicheng Zhonghua Minguo guojun huo Meilijian Hezhongguo jundui, zhi Zhonghua Minguo zhengfu chetui Taiwan bing qiandu Taibei hou de guangfu dalu jihua, huo Meiguo chongfan Yatai dui Zhongguo shijia junshi yali deng shijian. Huo bei Zhongguo dalu yishixingtai de zhichizhe fanxiang shiyong, daiyou fanfeng de secai. (Google Gemini trans.; "Wangshi.")

It turns out that references to the PLA and Russian military, although relatively recent in Chinese Internet parlance, do not derive from the poetry of Lu You, as claimed in the aforementioned "List of Internet Terms Used in Mainland China" entry. Rather, they directly adopt the original meaning of the term *Wangshi*, which, as explicitly stated in the entry for *Wangshi,* signifies "army of the king." In the current geopolitical context, both the People's Liberation Army vis-à-vis the Taiwanese military and the Russian military vis-à-vis the Ukrainian military, assert themselves as dominant forces, exhibiting distinct power differentials and asserting a sense of suzerainty. However, the origin of the term "army of the king" does not stem from Mencius (372–289 BCE) as stated in this entry of Chinese Wikipedia. In the "Odes of Zhou" in the *Book of Poetry* (eleventh–seventh century BCE), there is the line "Oh! powerful was the king's army; But he nursed it in obedience to circumstances while the time was yet dark") ("Yushuo Wangshi, Zushi Yanghui"; Legge trans.; Legge, "Zhou"), which uses the term *Wangshi* in its original sense. Initially, it was merely a proper noun, equivalent to the army of the king of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE) and did not yet possess the function of allusion. It was not until the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), when the Zhou dynasty declined and various warlords

proclaimed themselves kings, that *Wangshi* became a common term within each of the feudal states. In the dialogue between King Xuan of Qi (350–301 BCE) and Mencius, the term *Wangshi* acquired its meaning as the righteous army that saves suffering people. King Xuan of Qi, feeling that he had received the mandate of heaven after invading the state of Yan successfully, was advised by Mencius to consider the will of the people as the mandate of heaven. He talked about the example of King Wen of Zhou (1152–1056 BCE) whose army, *Wangshi*, was welcomed by the people of Shang (1600–1045 BCE), originally subjects of the enemy state, due to the tyranny of King Zhou (1105–1046 BCE). Mencius then said: "Now the Yan regime oppresses its people, prompting the king to march forth for a campaign. The people perceive this as an attempt to rescue themselves from dire circumstances akin to being amidst water and fire. They prepare meager provisions to welcome the king's army" ("Jin Yan nue qimin, Wang wang er zheng zhi, min yiwei jiang zhengji yu shuihuo zhizhong ye, dansi hujiang, yi ying Wangshi"; Legge trans.; Legge, "Liang Hui Wang II"). In Mencius's speech, the first *Wangshi* refers to the army of King Wen of Zhou, and the second *Wangshi* in its literal meaning is the army of King Xuan of Qi, but due to the context of the discussion, the actual connotation of the term *Wangshi* had already undergone a significant transformation. Here, the people are passive subjects, as they have been oppressed by tyranny and are not loyal to the local regime. Lacking agency, the helpless people can only hope for the arrival of the *Wangshi*, a righteous army from another country that may treat them kindly.

As the symbol *Wangshi* acquired its core allusive meaning, a usage that was already implicit in its original sense was reinforced: *Wangshi* still represents the army of the mandate of heaven, and the mandate of heaven is not permanent. King Wen of Zhou had the mandate of heaven, and so could the kings of Qi, Chu, Yan, Han, Zhao, and Wei—all competing during the Warring States period. After eventually annexing the six major states, did Qin also receive the mandate of heaven? From the core meaning of classical allusions, the Qin army was by no means what Confucianism would regard as a force embodying benevolence and righteousness; hence, it is not deserving of being considered the king's army. However, it is a fact that the King of Qin (259–210 BCE), who later ingeniously coined the term *huangdi* ("emperor") to highlight his unparalleled achievements, emerged as the ultimate victor in the strife of the Warring States period and thus held sway over all under heaven. The fissure between Confucian ideals and historical reality thus became an irreparable part of the *Wangshi* symbol. In terms of the use of allusion, the contradictory connotations give the symbol an inherent tension,

allowing for multiple interpretations. The Chinese Wikipedia entry for *Wangshi* correctly identifies the original meaning and the core allusive meaning of the term. However, citing Du Fu's "The Officer at Xin'an" as an example merely expresses the literal meaning of the text and overlooks the potential ironic implication of the term *Wangshi* when those few lines of poetry are placed within their broader context. "The Officer at Xin'an" is a renowned poem by Du Fu that reflects the suffering of the people during the turmoil of war. Prior to the lines cited, the poet depicts the emperor's forces suffering successive defeats at the hands of rebel soldiers, with imperial troops scattering and deserting, leading to the conscription of young and frail boys. The concluding passage cited, on its surface, consoles the families whose sons have been forcibly taken, urging them to trust in "the king's army." It also subtly satirizes the emperor's forces for failing to uphold their ideal of prioritizing the care and protection of the common people.

Another notable aspect of *Wangshi* is that it is a metaphorical symbol, whether as the "ultimate victorious army," the "army of the mandate of heaven," or the "army of righteousness." All are "profiles" that rely on the underlying notion that the possessor of the *Wangshi*, the *Wang* (king), will become the imagined supreme and sacred figure of *tianxia* (all under heaven). Regarding the profiles and their basis in metonymy, William Croft points out that "the base is that aspect of knowledge which is necessarily presupposed in conceptualizing the profile" (340). The existence of *Wangshi* presupposes the presence of both a king and an army, with the deployment of the *Wangshi* implying the involvement of at least two parties in the conflict arising from struggles for supremacy in *tianxia*, and the army of the king achieving comprehensive victory from a superior position of strength, ethics, and morality.

In contemporary Chinese discourse, the term *tianxia* holds a narrow connotation and a broad one. Narrowly construed, it is an old-fashioned way to say *guojia*, which means "country." This *tianxia* equates to the entirety of China, inclusive specifically of the imagined "traditional territory" of China, which includes Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. For instance, the Kuomingtang, which fled to Taiwan to reclaim the mainland, and the CCP, intent on annexing Taiwan, each regards its own force as the *Wangshi* qualified to unify China. Chinese netizens today also extend this analogy, imagining the Russian army as the *Wangshi* of Ukraine. This serves the narratives of both the Great Han and Great Slavic nationalist ideologies. Wars for suzerainty are glorified as nationalistic missions, and the conquerors are sanctified as unquestionable.

When the U.S. military is regarded as the *Wangshi*, the imagination of *tianxia* expands further to encompass the world. The key difference between imagining the U.S. military as the *Wangshi* and viewing it as the upholder of international order lies in the fact that the symbol of *Wangshi* bestows legitimacy and responsibility upon the imagined U.S. military to "console the people by punishing the tyrants" and to "rescue the people from fire and water," using Mencius's words, within the scope of the world (Legge, "Liang Hui Wang II"). In other words, it implies the right and duty to interfere in internal affairs, which run counter to contemporary notions of state sovereignty and international consensus. On the flip side, if the deployment of the U.S. military is contingent upon the national interests of the United States, it would demonstrate that the U.S. military is merely a disguised "king's army," characterized by both hegemonic tendencies and self-serving hypocrisy, thus failing to live up to the expectations of the world. Understanding these points is essential for comprehending the underlying envy behind the CCP's repeated criticisms of America's hegemonic hypocrisy, as well as its genuine fear of interference in domestic affairs by "foreign forces." It is also worth mentioning that emphasizing the "self-interest" of the U.S. military serves as a form of de-sacralization. This approach, while maintaining the signifier/signified relationship between *Wangshi* and the U.S. military, uses the traditional concept of *De Bu Pei Wei* ("virtue does not match the position assigned by heaven's mandate") to invert the positive symbolism of *Wangshi* into a form of mockery.

Through the above examination of the origins of the allusion to Wangshi, its uses prior to modern times as well as in the Internet era, and the implications associated with different modes of usage, we may outline the multiple semantic stratifications of the Wangshi symbol, as illustrated in Table 5.4.1. In pre-modern contexts, as far as historical allusion is concerned, the bedrock of these semantic layers is traceable to the Shang-Zhou Revolution (eleventh century), where the two closely intertwined concepts of "king" and "divine mandate" drawn from the *Book of Poetry* provide the foundation. Upon this foundation is a middle layer that originates in the writings of Mencius, characterized by the notions of "benevolence and righteousness." At this level also emerges the implication of a benevolent and righteous foreign force, meaning that even an external military, so long as it acts in accordance with benevolence and righteousness, could be regarded as possessing the divine mandate and thus be capable of replacing the incumbent ruler. The final, topmost layer stems from the twelfth century, when conquering dynasties and the Han Chinese regime coexisted in China. At this stage, Lu You's poetry

serves as the dominant allusive source, with legitimacy as the key concept: The Han Chinese were positioned as the rightful orthodoxy, and, in addition, given the relative geographic situation of the time, Lu You's verses endowed the expression with the connotation of the *Wangshi* from the south.

TABLE 5.4.1   Semantic Stratification of *Wangshi*

Stratifiction	Era	Source of Allusion	Implication
Surface Layer	Southern Song and Jurchen Jin War (1127–1234)	Lu You's Poems	Legitimacy Han Chinese from the South
Middle Layer	Warring States (475–221 BCE)	Mencius	Benevolence and Righteousness Foreign Force
Base Layer	Shang-Zhou Revolution (1087–1043 BCE)	*Book of Poetry*	Divine Mandate King

As for contemporary Internet discourse, where *Wangshi* has been employed to refer to the R.O.C. Nationalist Army, the People's Liberation Army, the U.S. Army, and the Russian Army, the major implications are summarized in Table 5.4.2.

TABLE 5.4.2   Symbol Reference and Associated Meanings of *Wangshi*

Wangshi	ROC (Kuomington) Army	People's Liberation Army	U.S. Army	Russian Army
Benevolent Righteousness	X		X	
Mandate Legitimacy	X	X	X	X
Superiority		X	X	X

In what follows, we will examine the discourse on the Internet in recent years regarding the U.S. military as the *Wangshi*.

CASE STUDIES

1. Becoming a Member of the *Wangshi*

On June 2, 2013, a post titled "The U.S. Military Recruits Chinese-Americans, Promising Rapid Naturalization as U.S. Citizens" was published on the defunct portal website *Wei Min Net* (literally meaning "the website for humble populace"). The news originated from the website *Forbes China*, but the *Wei Min Net* post added its own title, "Joining the *Wangshi*! Becoming a Member of the *Wangshi*" ("Jiaru Wangshi, Chengwei Wangshi de Yiyuan: Meijun Zheng Huayi Ruwu, Xunuo Kuaisu Chengwei Meiguo Gongmin"; my trans.; Wei Min Net editor), explicitly referring to the U.S. military as the *Wangshi*. This was likely click bait, intentionally sensational to attract traffic. Several comments below the post on *Wei Min Net* did not object to this designation, indicating that there was already a consensus on the Internet for referring to the U.S. military as *Wangshi*.

However, does the mere implication of *Wangshi* signify a powerful army, or is there another connotation? One comment regarding the requirement mentioned in the news for bilingual abilities in Chinese and English remarked: "Chinese and English? Are these people here to oppose our dynasty?" ("Zhongying shuangyu, zhebangren shi lai yu wochao weidi de?"; my trans.; Wei Min Net editor). Using the facetious expression "our dynasty" instead of "our country" while aligning with the symbol of *Wangshi* from ancient to contemporary times also makes the CCP regime analogous to a "dynasty." Being a dynasty does not exclude the possibility of external forces invading to attempt regime changes.

Another comment, capable of being interpreted both positively and negatively, said, "Joining the *Wangshi*, I am proud; I will lead the way for the *Wangshi*." ("Jiaru wangshi wo zihao, wowei wangshi daihao lu."; my trans.; Wei Min Net editor). By saying the person who joins the U.S. military will proudly "lead the way" for the U.S. military (in a military operation), this comment blatantly asserts that the recruit is prepared for an attack on China. Summoned by the symbol of *Wangshi*, the post and comments not only utilize classical codes but also apply pre-modern modes of thought, jointly constructing a fantasy world that completely ignores the Westphalian System, a principle of modern international law established in 1648 declaring that each state has exclusive sovereignty over its territory.

2. *Wangshi* and the "Local Collaborators"

In late 2014, approximately a year and a half after the post on "*Wei Min* Net," someone on the Chinese online content community and question-and-answer platform Zhihu ("Do you know?") posed the question: "Why do some people call the U.S. military *Wangshi*?" ("Weishenme Youderen Ba Meijun Chengwei Wangshi?"; my trans.). The responses to that question generated over nearly five years almost as much informative content as roughly two Wikipedia entries. In addition, as with the previous case study, among the replies were mentions of *Dailu dang*, literally "the party leading the way," suggesting their collaborating and pointing the way for the *Wangshi* when enemy troops arrive. One response even depicted the imagined interaction between the local collaborators and the U.S. military in a seventeen-panel comic strip divided into two parts. The first part depicts two people exercising until a U.S. tank painted with the words "Freedom" and "Democracy" arrives, at which point they rush forward, shouting "human rights endowed by nature" and volunteering to fight for "democracy and freedom." However, they are shot because they do not speak English. The second part shows more Chinese people rushing forward, shouting, "American dad, the hope of humanity!" and "Finally, this day has come!" When a U.S. officer asks for the location of the city government, the crowd eagerly leads the way, but when asked about the interior arrangements of the city hall, they are stumped. The Chinese people admit they do not know and have never been inside, resulting in the U.S. military cursing them for uselessness and opening fire (Zhihu). The well-equipped posture of the U.S. military and the foolish appearance of the Chinese people in the comic illustrate a dual mockery, satirizing both the local collaborators and the rude and arrogant behavior of the U.S. military, thereby undermining the idealized image of the U.S. military as the army of righteousness, similar to the usage in Du Fu's "The Officer at Xin'an."

Additionally, in the discussion thread stemming from this comic, someone raised a question: "Can *Laobaixing* ("general populace") in America enter the city hall? I don't quite understand the point here" ("Meiguo laobaixing neng jin shizhengfu ma? Wo butaidong zhege defang"; my trans.; Zhihu). Below, someone replied, "Actually, general populace in China can also [enter the city hall], but it's just very troublesome." ("Qishi Zhongguo laobaixing yekeyi, jiushi hui henmafan eryi"; my trans.; Zhihu). The term *Laobaixing,* literally meaning "old hundred surnames," originally referred to the non-ruling class in premodern times, those

who were without political power or rights, but simply governed civilians, subjects of a king. However, in the modern Chinese language and even in foreign language translations, it is often directly equated with "ordinary citizens," ignoring its opposition to "modern citizens" in terms of a lack of agency. Therefore, here the connotation that is lost in translation, as always, is that *Laobaixing* cannot even enter the city hall but can only wait for the rescue of the *Wangshi*. They welcome *Wangshi* with the hope for better treatment, but if the *Wangshi* does not meet expectations, they have nothing else to do but lament their misfortune.[5]

3. *Wangshi* and Anxiety over the Possibility of Peaceful Evolution

The juxtaposition of *Laobaixing* and the *Wangshi* is not uncommon. On January 19, 2017, the military journalist Wenhao Zheng published an entry on his *Sohu* blog "General Zheng's View of the World" ("Zhengtaiwei Guan Tianxia"; Google Translate trans.; Zheng, "Dansi") titled "Simple Meals and Wine in Earthenware Jars to Welcome the *Wangshi*: Watching Polish *Laobaixing* Wave the Stars and Stripes in Greeting to American Troops" ("Dansi Hujiang Yi Ying Wangshi: Kan Polan Laobaixing Dazhe Xingtiaoqi Huanying Meijun"; my trans.; Zheng, "Dansi"). At first glance, the title appears neutral. Yet apart from a brief opening remark on the Polish reception of U.S. forces, the article devotes itself to accusing the United States of having, since the 1950s, systematically promoted its superiority, manipulated public opinion, and infiltrated Polish society in order to subordinate Poland to American strategic interests. Zheng concludes that although Poland's post–Cold War economy grew with EU and U.S. support, it has been

> affected by Western neoliberal economics, resulting in a rapidly widening wealth gap and rising unemployment. A large number of Polish women have moved to Germany and the U.S. to work in the porn industry. . . . Poland's economic outlook is bleak. Any disturbance could threaten to undo its previous successes.

> youyu shoudao xifang xinziyouzhuyi de yingxiang, pinfu chaju xunsu lada, shiyelü zenggao, Daliang Polan nüxing jinru deguo, meiguo congshi seqinghangye. . . . Polan jingji qianjing bingbu meihao, yidan you fengchuicaodong jiu youkeneng qiangongjinqi. (Google Translate trans.; Zheng, "Dansi Hujiang")

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5. This case study could benefit from engaging with the scholarly discussion on *Dailudang*. Although I was unable to consult this literature, I am very grateful to the reviewer for the reminder.

The choice of *laobaixing* rather than a neutral term like "the people"—comparable to discussions on Zhihu questioning whether "American *laobaixing*" can enter local government offices—reveals the cognitive framework dominated by the dichotomies of rulers versus ruled and monarch versus subjects. In this sense, Zheng reproduces CCP discourse almost verbatim: flipping the coin's face to subvert the narrative that casts U.S. forces as the *Wangshi*. Indeed, Chinese online media regularly deploy this rhetorical strategy. For example, a 2018 Sina News headline read: "Hoping for the *Wangshi* to Deter Russia? Poland Requests a Permanent U.S. Military Presence" ("Pan 'Wangshi' Weizhe Eluosi? Polan Qingqiu Meijun Yongjiu Zhuzha Jingnei"; my trans.; Cankaoxiaoxi). In 2020, a military commentator on NetEase similarly stated: "Poland Welcomes the *Wangshi*, Requests Permanent U.S. Troop Presence, Spending 500 Million Annually, Bearing All Expenses for U.S. Military's Consumption" ("Polan Xiying Wangshi, Qing Meijun Changzhu, Meinian Haozi 5 yi, Quanbang Meijun Xiaofei Maidan"; my trans.; Hongshekuersike). During the Wagner mutiny in 2023, some self-media outlets even claimed, "Wagner Approaches Poland, and the Elite American Troops Flee" ("Wagena Bijin Polan, Meijun Jingrui Kailiu"; Google Translate trans.; Laolangrenshuo'an), implying U.S. forces were unworthy of being called *Wangshi*. Although later debunked (MyGoPen), the rumor nonetheless circulated widely.

Historically, Poland has long occupied a sensitive position in the Chinese political imagination. Since the late Qing, repeated partitions and national collapses amid great-power rivalries resonated with Chinese nationalist anxieties (Sun). From the 1980s onward, Poland also symbolized the CCP's deepest fear: "peaceful evolution" (Zheng, "Zhejiushi Heping"). Poland's close alignment with U.S. forces lends itself almost effortlessly to the trope of "Welcoming the *Wangshi*" (Zheng, "Dansi Hujiang"), thereby intensifying the CCP's ambivalent mix of envy and resentment toward the United States. Notably, Zheng republished the same essay twice under his WeChat public account "Zhengwen Military" on Kknews, once in the Global section with the same title as the *Sohu* article (Zheng, "Dansi Hujiang"), and once in the Information section under the title "This Is the Power of Peaceful Evolution: Polish People Waving the U.S. Flag to Welcome the Wangshi American Troops" ("Zhejiushi Heping Yanbian de Weili: Polan Minzhong Da Meiguo Guoqi Huanying Wangshi Meijun"; my trans.; Zheng, "Zhejiushi Heping"). Here the linkage between U.S. forces as *Wangshi* and the CCP's anxiety about "peaceful evolution" is made explicit.

Taken together, these efforts illustrate a recurring CCP propaganda method, which can be summarized as desacralization: stripping away any aura of legitimacy or sacredness from the United States and its allies. If this strategy proves effective in disillusioning intended audiences, it may ironically confirm that parallel narratives casting U.S. forces as *Wangshi* persist on Chinese social media precisely because they express, in the guise of ironic self-mockery, a residual and unrealistic hope.

Conclusion

The symbol *Wangshi* carries two fundamental presuppositions: first, the concept of "all under heaven" and its associated tendency toward sacralization, and second, the basic presumption of the monarch versus subjects and rule versus submit paradigm. The sacralization of the *Wangshi* symbol reflects the subconscious perception that the world is destined for a singular authority, disregarding on one hand the Westphalian System while harboring fear toward "foreign forces" on the other. Additionally, there is a consistent demand placed on the *Wangshi* using the most stringent standards of absolute selflessness. In the "monarch versus subjects" and "rule versus submit" paradigm, the agency of the people is severely suppressed, and their actions are not manifestations of active and voluntary will but rather passive and compliant, with only choices of conformity and bystanderism. In other words, Chinese netizens who regard the U.S. military as *Wangshi* would not be the real "liberals" as described by Wikipedia, but at most could be termed "dissenters." This is because being a "liberal" necessitates an essential commitment to the values of liberal democracy, wherein the crucial aspect is the replacement of the understanding of the relationship between the government and the people from "rule versus submit" to "authoritarian governance versus acceptance of governance." Similarly, the relationship between the military and the people would not be one of *Wangshi* and *Laobaixing*.

As mentioned in the Introduction, *Wangshi* is a long-tail symbol that constantly appears on the Chinese Internet. In 2014, following U.S. airstrikes in Iraq, a netizen remarked, "The *Wangshi* has finally intervened, and humanity has hope again" ("Wangshi zhongyu chushoule, renlei you youle xiwang"; my trans.; Kuangxiaowubainian). Regarding Russia's annexation of Crimea in the same year, someone asked, according to Hanxxx, "Something big is happening, the Russian army has invaded Ukraine, where is the *Wangshi*?" ("Dashi buhao, Ejun yijing ruqin Wukelan, Wangshi zaina?"; my trans.) These instances reflect the belief in

a unified world under one authority, expecting the *Wangshi* to responsibly handle international disputes. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the draconian lockdowns that began around the world in early 2020, calls for the *Wangshi* regarding domestic issues in China have also been seen on social media more often. In 2022, amid scandals involving several rural banks in Henan Province, someone with the Internet handle of 2005002000 reposted a comment under a video of Henan depositors protesting: "When will the *Wangshi* come ashore?"("Wangshi shemeshihou shangan?"; my trans.) and remarked: "The desperte Henan depositors have reached a point where they're even hoping for the *Wangshi* to come ashore." ("Juewangde Henan chuhu shenzhi dou xiang xiwang Wangshi shanganle!"; my trans.). On February 5, 2024, the collapse of the Chinese stock market led to a surge of stockholders flocking to the official Weibo account of the U.S. Embassy, leaving over a hundred thousand comments on a post about protecting giraffes (Yuan; Carter). Many of these comments are unrelated to giraffes, such as, "Thanks to the United States, humanity sees hope again" ("Ganxie you Meiguo rang renlei kandao xiwang" by Zhuxianboge; my trans);[6] "The United States is the sun of the world" ("Meiguo shi quanshijie de taiyang" by Gebilinjubiaoge; my trans.); "The United States, the beacon of human civilization, the world's policeman, the light of freedom" ("Meiguo renlei wenming de dengta, shijie jingcha, ziyouzhiguang" by Akakata; my trans.); "With you, civilization remains; here we are still living like hundreds of years ago"("Diqiu you nimen, wenming jiuzai, women hai huozai jibainianqian" by Lingyuzhankaizhijielaban; my trans.); and "Hello, Ambassador, please tell your people that we have always admired and respected your country from the bottom of our hearts, and we hope you can take us in" ("Dashi nihao, qing gaosu nide guorenmen, women yizhi cong xinlimian peifu he jingyang nimen guojia, xiwang nimen keyi shouliu women" by Xiangjiaojihuagongzuoshi; my trans.). A Weibo user in the United States who also reposted the embassy's posts commented: "I didn't expect our [referring to the U.S.] embassy in China to be both a physical and virtual wailing wall; some people cry inside, while others cry outside. There's a sense of awaiting the arrival of the *Wangshi*" ("Meixiangdao woguo dashiguan zai Zhongguo shi wuli he xuni de kuqiang, youderen paodao limian ku, youderen zai xiamian ku. Youyizhong dansihujiang, yiying Wangshi ganjue"; my trans; NYDongdongJay). Two days after the "giraffe incident," comments began

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6. Due to official censorship, the comments cited here have been almost entirely deleted from the Weibo social media account of the U.S. Embassy in China. I have archived screenshots of the original posts for documentation: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_-04ONFn13fGa9LovleoM2MhtkpGsp0K?usp=sharing.

to be censored, replaced by a large number of "long live Sino-U.S. friendship" comments. However, some people continued to post comments consisting only of two Chinese characters "*deng ren*" ("awaiting someone"; my trans.; U.S. Embassy in China). What does "awaiting someone" mean? If we were to condense into two Chinese characters the lines from Lu You's poem quoted at the beginning of this essay—"the remnants' tears have dried up amidst the barbarian dust; looking south to *Wangshi* for yet another year"—it would likely be "awaiting someone."

These recent examples illustrate that the enduring notion of the U.S. Army as a kingly army persists. Not only has it not been dispelled by the recent strong anti-U.S. propaganda from the CCP, but it is also continually invoked by a public disappointed with the current political and economic situations in China. As long as this notion cannot be eradicated, the United States will always be a thorn in the side of the CCP, regardless of what actions are taken.

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Alexander Nakhimovsky (1943–2024) was a true polymath. A graduate in mathematics from Leningrad University, he received a PhD from Cornell University in linguistics and computer science. As Associate Professor of Linguistics and Computer Science at Colgate University, he was the co-author of several books on Russian language and computer languages; his 2019 book, *The Language of Russian Peasants in the Twentieth Century: A Linguistic Analysis and Oral History*, reflected one of his abiding interests. A veteran of the Soviet Army, he was honored to speak at West Point and treasured his association with it.

Alice Nakhimovsky, Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies and Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies, was born in Brooklyn, NY, and went through its public schools before entering Cornell University, where she received her AB degree in 1971 and PhD in 1976. She has written a number of books and essays on Russian-Jewish literature (most significantly *Russian Jewish Literature and Identity*, 1992), collaborated on a set of Russian language textbooks, and, together with her husband Alexander, put together a book of photographs by the eminent Russian photojournalist Evgeny Khaldei (*Witness to History: The Photographs of Evgeny Khaldei*, 1997). At Colgate, Professor Nakhimovsky teaches a variety of literature courses in Jewish Studies, as well as Russian language and twentieth-century Russian literature.

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J. B. Potter specializes in how war, soldiers, and revolutions are portrayed and interpreted in history, literature, and film. After undergraduate studies in Virginia, he spent four years in Mainz, Germany. While abroad, he taught English through the Fulbright Program, worked as a political science translator, and earned a Master of Arts from Middlebury College and Johannes Gutenberg University. While completing the coursework for his PhD in German at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, he had articles published in *Military Review* and *Small Wars & Insurgencies*. His dissertation, entitled "H(a)unting Ghosts of the Yugoslav Wars," analyzes how Austrian author Peter Handke, winner of 2019 Nobel Prize in Literature, uses images of the enemy (*Feindbilder*) in his works. He teaches German and Western Culture at his alma mater, Hampden-Sydney College.

Elizabeth Robinson, co-editor of Part V, taught French in the Department of English and World Languages at West Point, where she was involved in teaching and mentoring cadets in French language and cultural studies, contributing to the Academy's mission of developing officers with strong cross-cultural communication skills. She earned her PhD in French Language and Literature at the University of Maryland, and her research has focused on French colonial history and literature, particularly the roles of women in early French North America. Known for her fervent love of Celine Dion's music, Liz is currently working on an article

regarding the cultural phenomenon of "Celinessance" (the renaissance of the singer's popularity and career, since the 2010s).

Roman Tashlitskyy is a metadata creation specialist at the University of Toronto Libraries. He received a PhD from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Toronto. His doctoral research focused on cultural life in Kyiv during the revolutions of 1917. He also holds a Master of Arts degree in Comparative Literature from San Francisco State University, where he did comparative research of Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare, and a Master of Information degree from the University of Toronto.

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It is with the utmost pride that we established the founding endowment for the West Point Press, the publishing arm of the United States Military Academy at West Point. The Press directly supports the intellectual development of the cadets, staff, and faculty at West Point through the high-quality work it publishes. It also embodies and advances the Academy's mission and core values by publishing practical knowledge for students, scholars, and leaders around the world.

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On the cover: *A Panorama of Military History*, by T. Loften Johnson, West Point Cadet Mess Hall.

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