

## Reflections on Honours Theses

### **“A Basket, A Box, and a Set of Regalia”**

*Cindy Bergeron*

I was late to the game when I chose to complete a History Honours Thesis at Dal. I returned to university after a 30-year hiatus during which I was married, had four children, divorced, moved across the country and back and encountered numerous employment experiences. I was diagnosed with cancer in 2018 and again in 2020 and I am in year two of the five-year monitoring phase before I will be considered cancer free. And then; Covid hit. The world changed and we were forced to stay home to stay safe. While I took stock of my life, I came to the realization that I did not want to return to the life I had. Over the years I contemplated returning to school to finish my degree but there was always reasons why I could not. On a whim, I applied to Dalhousie University and was accepted.

My age afforded me a kind of freedom to express myself and be unafraid to ask questions. I did that a lot. I worried I would be that annoying old student who did not know anything about anything. I still feel that way sometimes but as I gain confidence in my abilities and scholastic achievements, I am slowly overcoming any residual anxieties. I, like many others, suffer from mental and some physical disabilities. This was compounded because I am a single mother of two school aged children needing to be ‘home-schooled’ due to Covid restrictions. Now, with the easing of constraints, I can concentrate on my own education because my children are back in their classes, with their friends and not suffering from social interaction withdrawal.

At the beginning of the 2021/2022 academic year, I knew I wanted to be in the Honours program with History as my focus. I thought I had everything in place until the administrative assistant of the History Department told me I needed to be enrolled in the Varieties of History class, when I say I was late to the game, I mean I missed the first 2 weeks of class. Technically this was the first fourth year class I had taken since 1992 and I did not know what to expect. I had only been physically on campus for two weeks and still trying to find my way. Dr. Chris Bell was very understanding, and the other students were open and

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welcoming to the ‘very mature, white haired, walked with a cane, student’ who just dropped into their class.

The format of the course encourages discussion and the exploration of histories from the unique perspectives of the professors who met with us each week. I learned from each reading and presentation; some more than others. There were classes that were enlightening and learning about subaltern history or transnational history were highlights for me. There is no question, each professor’s area of knowledge was something from which to glean epistemology and historiography. This class has taught me the “how” of researching history through extent documents, primary and secondary sources as well as how to interpret them and successfully argue my point.

My Honours Thesis is based on the study of material culture and the historiography of objects. There is much to learn about a culture from the things people make and it is my chosen field of historical study. I chose to explore the impact of separation of Indigenous objects from the culture that created them and how the distancing of cultural objects leads a loss of identity and a loss of agency. The ownership of the object, by others than the maker or their community, underscores the destructive effects of colonialism on the Indigenous societies in North America.

I chose three objects to examine as each was representative of a distinct interplay of cultures: the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia, the Acadians, and the Black Loyalists. These objects are:

- A porcupine quilled box found in the 17<sup>th</sup> century inventory of well-off Acadian women.
- A market basket discovered amongst a collection of baskets in a small Acadian Museum in Chezzetcook, Nova Scotia. This basket was attributed to a descendent of the Black Loyalists but incorporating Mi’kmaq design elements.
- A complete set of 1850’s Chief’s regalia from the Mi’kmaq housed in the Museum of Australia in Melbourne.

I have discovered the appropriation of Indigenous artifacts and design elements began soon after first contact when the Europeans began arriving to fish off the eastern coast of Canada. The desire for the Europeans to acquire wealth through fishing and then fur trade made contact and associations with the Mi’kmaq essential to conduct the business of resource

mining. As such, the Indigenous of Atlantic Canada became an obstacle to overcome and in a truly short time were relegated to third world conditions within their own country.

My thesis, *A Basket, A Box and A Set of Regalia*, explores Indigenous and Indigenous inspired objects across three centuries in Nova Scotia. I began with the quilled box from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I came across it in my research of Acadian women from authors, Anne-Marie Lane Jonah, and Elizabeth Tate. In their article, they were arguing Acadians were distinct from the French metropole in the 1700s prior to the expulsion. The inventory of Jeanne Thibodeau included only one Indigenous object and the primary source document identified the quilled box found among the contents of her bureau. This made me ask questions of ownership, agency, and culture.

During my research of material culture of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia, Dalhousie Libraries online database pointed me to an article in the Chronicle Herald of Halifax about the repatriation request for the return of the Mi'kmaq Chief regalia located in the storeroom of the Museum of Australia. I was fascinated by the distance of these beautifully decorated pieces of regalia from Mi'kmaqi and this afforded the opportunity to explore colonialism and museum culture regarding Indigenous heritage.

The last item, although it is my first chapter, is the Mi'kmaq inspired basket. I was visiting an Acadian Museum on the eastern shore and spoke with the curator who informed me that a local member of the community had recently donated a collection of baskets. I was examining the museum tags on each of the items and found the only one that was coloured with synthetic dyes. It stood out against the more naturally coloured objects displayed. The museum tag described it as inspired by the Mi'kmaq method of basket making and this was the determining factor for me including within my thesis.

I am a descendent of colonizers. I was always cognizant of the realization that my research, my intentions and understanding of the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada could not ever be more than that of an outsider. My thesis advisor, Dr. Lisa Binkley was always open to discussing my fears of overstepping or misrepresenting myself or my research. With her guidance I was able to achieve a balance that, I feel, has been respectful of the Mi'kmaq people and their culture and heritage. The relationship I developed with her has been the reason I have applied for the Master's Program at Dalhousie. She and I will be working together over the next two years as I continue with my academic pursuits.

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I am a mature student and still struggled with deadlines. If I could offer this advice, which I am sure everyone who has ever taken this class can attest, set realistic, timely goals. These are important because it will allow you to discover the nuances of the sources you choose to review. Another piece of advice, begin your research as soon as you decide on your topic. This will alleviate much stress and anxiety. It will be difficult to juggle the demands of a full course load as well as your thesis. Remember, this is not supposed to be stressful. You chose to complete an Honours to achieve a goal and with the support of your advisor and your participation in classes like Varieties of History and those like it, you will be successful. I wish you all the best.

## **“Beyond the Pitch: Toward Using Football to Inflate Ghana’s Social, Cultural, and Political History, 1930s-1960s”**

*Ronald Blanchard*

I have known I wanted to study history since high school. History is interesting because it helps explain the present. When I began at Dalhousie in 2018, I knew that I would major in history, but my understanding of history as a discipline and as a concept more broadly began to shift. As I studied diverse regions and time periods, I found myself more and more intrigued with the utility of history to not only illuminate the present, but to allow scholars to explore how the any given area or subject, such as gender or politics, functioned at different times. I took courses on history about many regions and topics such as European history, global history, and African history. I eventually stuck with African history because I thought it to be an interesting challenge for historian due to the Eurocentricity of the origins of the discipline of modern history. That is why, when I learned of the Honours program in my second year, I decided I wanted to enter it. I wanted to explore something that historians usually do not. I enjoyed the Honours seminar because it showcased the varieties of history in the department. Each week a new professor would join our class to discuss a field of history they use in their research. This helped broaden my understanding of the discipline in ways that other classes did not. The seminar also encouraged a sense of comradery among Honours students. Completing the Honours thesis allowed me to utilise all the skills and knowledge I have acquired throughout my time at Dal.

In my third year, the professor that inspired me to explore global and African history, Philip Zachernuk, agreed to be my supervisor. I immediately began brainstorming themes that would allow me to tell less explored themes in African history that were not about the regular stories of colonial Africa such as colonial imposition and resistance and postcolonial Africa as failed and developing states. To do so, I engaged Chimamanda Adichie’s call for more stories of Africans. Adichie’s agenda aligned with some historical frameworks in encountered previously: Dennis Laumann’s “third way” of studying African history that recognises the significant changes caused by Europeans in Africa but foregrounds the agency and diversity of African realities by exploring how Africans were the primary motors of change. Stephanie Newell calls these African stories that are set within the colonial period “paracolonial” because they run alongside the dominant narratives.

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I took Newell's concept and mixed it with Laumann's and Adichie's to explore the colonial and postcolonial period in Africa in ways that showcase African dynamism and inventiveness. I settled on football as the main theme for my thesis because of Bea Vidac's call for Africanists to study sports to better understand the main historical narratives and to find new ones. As the most popular sport in Africa and the world, football has tremendous potential to reveal to connections between politics, gender, and coloniality thereby enriching our understanding of those themes. It also has the power to uncover new African histories that showcase the diversity of African experiences during these periods. I structured my thesis around three body chapters, each with a distinct study of Ghanaian football (soccer). The goal was to demonstrate how football can reveal entanglements between different historical themes such as politics, authority, identity among others and allow historians to tell new stories of Africans.

The first explored football in colonial British West Africa as a paracolonial history. Football was introduced to the region in the late nineteenth century by European traders and early colonists who played it in port cities like Accra and Lagos. Mission schools also incorporated it into curricula to promote Christian masculinity, subjection to authority, and cooperation. However, Africans all of socio-economic strata engaged with the sport in various ways: they played, celebrated, watched, and organized football for themselves and their communities. Football paradoxically became entangled with anti-colonial movements, especially after post-World War II. The popularity of the game also allowed ordinary Africans to become national figures and gain social honour in ways previously unavailable. Beyond that, football reflected and shaped the changing gender and social relations in rapidly urbanizing societies. As new urban spaces were being negotiated, football teams became central to cultural (re)production for shifting ethnic and political identities. Individuals engaged with soccer to further their education, both in Africa and Europe. People like Arthur Wharton were able to pursue their goals through soccer, which illustrates the diversity of African football experiences.

The second body chapter narrowed to examine Kwame Nkrumah's use of soccer to further the anti-colonial movement in Gold Coast (now Ghana) and how his relationship with football changed overtime due to the achievement of independence. A primary focus of this chapter was the internal politics of Nkrumah's ideology Nkrumahism that sought to create a sense of "Ghanaianess" rather than individual ethnic identities. Football was a significant

tool Nkrumah tried to use to this national identity. He strongly supported the development of the game and heavily involved the state in doing so. He created a new national league and created a Central Organization for Sports to govern sports. Football was integrated into his extremely popular youth programs and school curricula to teach children socialist values of Nkrumahism. He also created a club called the Real Republicans (based on the Real Madrid) to ensure the national team – the Black Stars – could compete globally. The deep entanglement of football with Nkrumahism was challenged by groups like the Asante who used the sport to display regional pride. Nkrumah wanted to capitalize of the popularity of football, but the same popularity meant that it had multifarious meanings that could challenge Nkrumahism.

I then looked at soccer as an embodiment of Nkrumah's pan-Africanist quest to promote unity among African nations and to assert the African personality in the postcolonial world. It also connected Nkrumahist notions of youth and football, but previous chapters, it connected them through the African personality across the continent and in the wider international community. Central to pan-African unity was the national soccer team – the Black Stars – as they represented the liberation of Africa. Intra-African tournaments were explicitly meant to promote cultural exchange between African nations and lead to the political unification of Africa. Nkrumah also tried to Africanize soccer and overcome the domination of Ghanaian football's coaching and refereeing by Europeans by training players to become coaches and referees in Ghana. This was essential to displaying soccer as part of the African personality. However, the fact that the global governance of the game – through FIFA – was still controlled primarily by European nations challenged this presentation of football. Soccer illuminates the tension between Africa's status in the 1960s as a formerly colonized continent and an increasingly independent one. The colonial perception that Africans are not modern contrasts the Nkrumahist assertion of modernity. Examining football through the lens of the African personality and postcoloniality enriches Ghanaian history by revealing the interconnections between Nkrumahism, youth, and sports.

Overall, I am incredibly proud of my completed thesis. I recommend writing a thesis to anyone who is considering it. It allowed me to thoroughly research something I was genuinely very interest in. I also benefitted greatly from input from my supervisor. My supervisor and I met weekly in the fall semester while I was formulating my thoughts and beginning research, which helped to guide me as I went. Speaking of research, the among of research I did for my thesis was unlike anything I have ever done. The primary research was

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especially challenging yet fun. I used a variety of primary sources, but I relied heavily on newspapers for coverage and timelines of games. This was difficult because the availability of Ghanaian newspapers from the 1950s and 1960s is limited. I found some online, but I had to get most of them delivered to the library. Examining the newspapers was fun because I got to look at what Ghanaians were reading about daily. The actual writing of the thesis taught me a lot about planning ideas and writing distinct chapters that still work to advance a single argument. My completed thesis is 107 pages in total, which only slightly exceeded the 60-70 page range Dr Bell suggested. My first draft was certainly not great, but with feedback and revision, I was able to craft something I think is worth being read. The Honours thesis is a significant and at times daunting research project that challenged me from conception to completion, but I am glad I went through it.

## **“The Political Divide in the United States: The Creation of the United States Government Viewed Through the Correspondence of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson”**

*Lucy Carolan*

Writing this thesis was probably one of the most challenging, draining and emotionally difficult assignments I have completed in my undergrad. It has also, however, been one of the most rewarding. I knew in second year that I was going to need to complete an Honours in order to keep my options open in the future; I had no idea what I wanted to do after undergrad but knew there was a good chance that I would have to complete a postgraduate program to get the jobs I hoped for. The choices I had made in my schooling up until then meant that I had the option of writing my thesis in one of my two majors. After some consideration, I decided that Dalhousie’s History Department’s Honours program could provide the resources I would need to write my thesis on my chosen topic.

One of the most difficult parts of this process is deciding exactly what you want to discuss in your thesis, and then figuring out what your argument – or thesis – is going to be. I am in a double major with History and Early Modern Studies, so I am most comfortable researching and writing about events from the Renaissance and Early Modern Period, especially those related to the topics of art, politics and society. For my thesis, I landed on discussing the era of the American Revolution– partly because I had taken an American History course in high school and found it fascinating, and partly because I had taken an American Revolution course in my third year with Dr. Justin Roberts. Dr. Roberts led our class through an exploration of the American Revolution through a series of primary source materials from the time – luckily, many of the primary source correspondences, original documents and transcripts can all be accessed online. Knowing this, and having enjoyed the course and the professor’s teaching style, I decided to write my thesis about this era and asked Dr. Roberts to be my advisor.

There had always been a few aspects of American governance that confused me: the way that Americans believe so passionately in a constitution that was created centuries before and the ways in which it dictates their everyday outlook on life – like their staunch attachment to fundamental right to bear arms. Furthermore, I learned that John Adams and Thomas Jefferson coincidentally died on the same day, exactly 50 years after the Declaration of

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Independence; this made them even more interesting subjects to study. I also enjoyed the way *Hamilton: The Musical* reflected on the Founding Fathers and their roles in the creation of the United States as a country – even though it is somewhat historically inaccurate. I began writing under the impression that I was just discussing the creation of the United States government through the lens of the correspondence between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson – two Founding Fathers who were politically opposed, but lifelong friends.

It wasn't until I had finished writing my entire first chapter that I realized that I actually wanted to argue that there is a misconception that the United States is at its most divided presently – especially given the last two presidential elections – when in reality, and as my thesis argues, the United States has in fact never been united. Even during the fight to gain independence from Britain, the colonists were divided, from the foot soldiers up to the highest level of elites who governed the colonies. It should be possible for political parties to have different ideologies, but to have the same overarching goals for the country (like prosperity, democracy, the rule of law, civil society etc.), however in the late eighteenth century, members of the ruling class did not agree even on the overarching goals for the country. I continued with this theory and used primary documents like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights along with the personal and political views of two Founding Fathers on opposing ends of the political spectrum to construct my argument.

It is easy to reflect on the thesis writing process and to focus only on the negative aspects rather than on the positive ones. Some challenges I found with this process was in holding myself accountable. There were several times over the course of my writing where I had other assignments due and since the thesis had no hard due dates (except the ones that I had set for myself), it was easy for me to push it aside so I could meet the deadlines in my other courses. And on that topic, if you have the possibility of taking only four courses in the second semester instead of five, I would very much recommend doing that! Furthermore, several of my classmates took classes with their advisors this year and saw them on a regular basis; that meant their advisors were holding them accountable as well. It was more difficult for me to hold myself accountable when I could “hide” from my advisor since I did not see him every week in class.

This entire process however made me learn a lot about myself, my writing and my time-management skills (or lack thereof!). I found it was very easy to feel discouraged by the editing and feedback process of each chapter; I would spend weeks writing a chapter then get

told there was still lots of room for improvement – lots of tears were shed over the past months! However, through the editing of my thesis, I learned the most about my writing and discovered ways to improve the way I write. I am not usually one to reread my papers several times, so I found this part of editing to be very helpful.

While the whole thesis process is daunting, scary and incredibly stressful, knowing there were other people in the same boat made it more bearable. My peers in my Honours seminar class saved my sanity on more than one occasion; I have grown very close to several of them, and they were there every step of the way to offer their continuous support. I would not have been able to complete my thesis without the help of my friends, my family, and my advisor. Ultimately, I would say the thesis was all about the journey and not just the final destination.

## **“Operation Barclay: Deceptive Diversions or Celebrated Success?”**

*Megan Grey*

When I entered Dalhousie University four years ago, I was not certain what I was specifically interested in and definitely not sure what my major would be. I had an interest in History as I had spent my early years travelling, reading historical fiction, and watching television, documentaries, and films about historical events. I always found contextualizing history through mass media such as these helpful to my overall understanding of events in history. Overall, it was not surprising that I was drawn to enrolling in a full year of first year history.

As I took the two introductory history courses, I increasingly became more fascinated with the material. Although each of the two courses was taught quite differently, I found that seeing these two different approaches to the material helped me to see the possibilities in studying history. After my first year, I was able to take a variety of history courses that helped me to discover my true interests. I believe that Dalhousie offers an amazing selection of courses from costume history to food history, from pirates to witchcraft, from colonial Africa to colonial America and so many more. All of these courses were taught by knowledgeable and motivated professors. I found the faculty members in the history department easy to engage and more than willing to answer questions and partake fully in further discussions. Although not convinced at the start of my history major, I strongly support the required categories of history that forced me to take courses like Ancient Greece and the Atlantic World to fulfill my degree requirements. I would have truly regretted not learning that the Parthenon lacks structurally straight lines or that witches were not actually burnt but hanged in Salem.

However, it was the courses I took on the Second World War and Winston Churchill from Professor Christopher Bell that resonated with me and honed my interests towards British Intelligence. Dr. Bell and these courses allowed me to explore the British intelligence systems. To pursue this topic more intensely and prepare myself for further study in history, I decided to apply for the honour's history program. To be honest, at the time, I was not completely sure what I was signing myself up for as I had no idea what writing an Honours thesis entailed or what a “Varieties in History” course would cover.

I decided to do my Honours thesis on British strategic intelligence strategies during the Second World War under the supervision of Professor Bell. After many readings and

exploration of potential intelligence topics, I chose to focus my topic on a specific intelligence operation codenamed “Operation Barclay,” which includes the much more recognized “Operation Mincemeat.” My thesis examined both British and German sources relating to Operation Barclay, in an attempt to determine if the intricate planning and ‘all-inclusive’ nature of Barclay with its barrage of (mis)information coming from multiple sources, impacted the mindset of German High Command, contributed to the eventual success of the Allied invasion of Sicily, and led to the inclusion of integrated intelligence plans in future Second World War operations. This topic is significant because it focuses on a multi-layered deception plan where the actual impact is still debated by scholars to this day. Although I may not have understood what it meant to write an Honours thesis when I started in September, with the help of my supervisor Dr. Bell, I quickly realized it meant reading a small library full of books and articles on a single topic. I am sure I often tried my supervisor’s patience over and over with my lack of basic understanding of military history. But, as we emerge from the other side, I can now confidently tell you that a brigade is part of a division, and that Ultra is more than a changing password. When I reflect on what I knew when I first considered this topic to my current understanding, not only of Operation Barclay, but also of Intelligence systems and processes, the Second World War and research techniques, I am simply amazed. Although I do credit myself with the sheer will it took to carry those ten books home to Edmonton for winter break, I am mainly grateful to my supervisor for providing the guidance and hands-on supervision required to get me to my thesis submission.

Finally, I think one of the most rewarding experiences of my degree was the opportunity to participate in “Varieties of History.” The course exposed me further to a wide range of methodological and historiographical issues such as: oral history, counterfactual history, and material history. The Honours course would also not have been the same without the enthusiasm and support of my peers. During this course, we were able to go through the peer review process with our thesis’ that helped each of us to learn both how to give constructive criticism and how to receive it. All of us consistently participated in class discussions which further engaged our learning. It was interesting to learn about everyone’s specific focuses in the realm of history through their chosen thesis topics. It was also from this course, that I really saw the possibilities in history as a career choice. It was this course that introduced me to Public History, and it is where I realized how important it was to educate the public properly about our shared history.

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Prior to my university education, I would watch historical shows and films and believe that what I was watching was historically accurate. Now, I watch these adaptations of history and can understand which information is exaggerated for entertainment or is completely inaccurate. But as entertainment is a significant means by which the public comes to understand and appreciate history, I think it is so important to explore ways to ensure historical accuracy or at least use common mediums (e.g., social media, movies, documentaries, exhibitions) as tools to educate people on the discrepancies. It is in advocating for historical accuracy and understanding that I plan to focus my future studies.

## **“Hitler’s Art Project: How the Nazis Failed to Translate National Socialism into Art”**

*Claire Mercer*

After my first year of undergrad, I knew that I wanted to take an academic path that would challenge and strengthen my skills. Thankfully, the History Department’s Honours program presented that challenge, and having now completed it, the extra hours of hard work and pressure were well worth it.

One of the advantages I had before starting the program, was that I had begun developing professorial relationships early on in my degree – it is never too early to make those important connections. Once I had asked my supervisor, Dr. Chris Bell to oversee my project, we chose a topic in early fall of fourth year. Picking your Honours topic is one of the most enjoyable stages of the thesis writing process. Because of my long-time interest in Second World War history, I knew that a topic within this subject would be a good fit. Obviously, there are a million things you could write on during this period, but through consultation with my supervisor, I quickly decided to focus on addressing the relationship of art with National Socialism during the Third Reich.

Prior to developing the larger research question of my thesis, I needed to identify the art that I wished to consider. This was challenging because there are many dimensions and areas of art that the Nazis dealt with. Art, like paintings, sculptures, architecture and film were fundamental elements of German culture during the inter-war period. For the Nazis, all those mediums had propagandist purposes, but considering each one was well beyond the scope of my Honours. I also needed to think strategically about what medium would best support my argument once established. So, after carefully deliberating with my thoughts, I decided that paintings and sculptures were best suited for my research. Once this decision was finalized, the fall semester was spent reading in order to become more comfortable with the topic, which would be essential when the writing process began in second semester.

The research question that my thesis looked to answer was how, and to what extent, were ideological elements of National Socialism reflected through art of the Third Reich, specifically prior to 1939. One of the reasons that this is an important question to consider is because it generates discussion on whether Nazi propaganda was affective at assimilating

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Germans into their ideology and views. I hypothesized that the Nazi's would be ineffective at reflecting their racial ideology through artwork prior to 1939.

Before addressing the main themes of my paper, I needed to define 'art.' While the mediums I chose were paintings and sculptures, it was important to expand on what the *purpose* of art was, both in the context of the thesis and to the Nazi cultural institutions. This task was difficult because art is a very subjective term and experience. Nevertheless, it was necessary in developing a coherent argument, and set the stage for following chapters. The first chapter explored components of Nazi ideology, with a particular focus on Hitler's own contributions to its elements. Hitler had a passionate and lifelong relationship with art, and so he imbedded this passion into his worldview and racial beliefs. Hitler's racial ideology, his worldview and his passion for art informed the developed of all Nazi institutions but was most evident through those that oversaw cultural matters.

Control of these institutions was centralized among a few individuals like Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler and Albert Speer. They were major contributors to the artistic undertakings of the regime, and so my paper considered their personal artistic preferences in order to better understand why National Socialism wasn't being reflected in art. One telling theme that emerged in researching their preferences was that none of subleaders strictly opposed modernist art – this was contradictory, as Hitler had announced an anti-modernist policy after 1935. Because of the fundamental clash between the Nazi subleaders and the policies they claimed to support, there were issues of translating National Socialism into art. This failure in translation became most evident in the 1937 Degenerate Art exhibition and the Great German Art exhibition. The artwork displayed at these two exhibitions were explored in the final chapter of the thesis and were found to contradict most components of National Socialism including racial ideology, thereby supporting my original claim.

Having now written the 71-page document, I have reflected on the process and established what I would have done differently, and the areas which I found most challenging. During first semester, it was difficult to narrow down the scope of the thesis topic and stick to one research question. These tasks require a lot of discussion and consultation with your supervisor – it is also good to be humble during this period, you don't have all the answers yet! Doing a lot of research in this stage will help you and prepare you for writing in second semester.

Even though writing is very stressful, overall, I really enjoyed it because it was fulfilling to see the argument come together. My supervisor was extremely helpful in ensuring my argument was connecting. It is vital to have frequent communication with your supervisor during the writing process because their feedback is essential. You will learn how to accept constructive criticism on your writing, but the most important thing to take it is to apply it to your work. It was easy to become discouraged by the feedback, but it helps to sit on it for a few days, and then come back to make your changes. After completing each chapter, I was quick to send it to Dr. Bell so I could stay on top of my edits and not have to do them during crunch time. Staying on top of my edits allowed me to feel excited when submitting, rather than stressed. Different strategies work for different people, but I always had to remind myself that this was a learning process, and there was constantly support available if I looked for it.

One of the greatest supports during the year were my peers in the Honours class. We had great comradery and were always empathetic with one another. Not only were my peers helpful in reading over drafts, but they were emotionally supportive and, in the end, lifelong friends. We were all going through a challenging, yet fulfilling, experience together and it allowed us to connect on many levels. During weekly faculty presentations, everyone always had interesting contributions which generated thought provoking discussion. It is safe to say that the positive group dynamic of our Honours class truly made the experience an enjoyable one.

Overall, maintaining a positive attitude and good work ethic will ensure that the undergraduate Honours experience gives back to you as much as you put in. There are many hiccups on the way to the final product, but if you accept them as learning experiences then you are setting yourself up for success. My experience in the History Honours program was one I will never forget, and from it, I have become a stronger student, learned more about myself and my abilities to take into my future studies.

## **“The Role of the Military: The Dominance and Transition of the South Africa Defence Force in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century”**

*Alec Rembowski*

My collective experience at Dalhousie has taught me to appreciate historical facts and how this can be different from historical perspectives. When I began at Dalhousie, I intended to primarily pursue political science. However, as time progressed, I began to appreciate history and historical lessons to help guide current and future political decisions. This led to the path of an Honours thesis in history. The professors at Dalhousie have always allowed me to explore military history interests in my class assignments and essays. This has allowed me to further develop my interest in this field of history, enabling the pursue of these interests in the next chapter of my academic journey.

Studying apartheid South Africa and the military that upheld this political policy is not new to academics. When I began approaching constructing this Honours thesis, I sought to incorporate the agency of the ethnic and gender groups involved. This was inspired by Dennis Laumann’s *Colonial Africa 1884-1994*, who sought to analyse African colonial history in terms of great change where Africans both contributed and resisted colonial rule. I sought to analyse how and why the South African military adapted and changed in order to meet their individual, institutional, and societal interests throughout the second half of the apartheid era.

Early in the thesis I attempted to contextualize the roots of Afrikaner nationalism, demonstrating that the trauma experienced in their own struggle to achieve autonomy from British rule contributed to their fierce resistance to the black liberation struggle. Like any government bureaucracy South African government departments were in a constant state of advocating for increased funding and political influence. I chose to depict the rivalry between the South African police and South African military. Both organizations sought to serve the Afrikaner led white minority government and the white minority society. Their institutional mandates contributed to a rivalry where both organizations exploited their political leverage and gain influence. It was interesting to analyse how the South African military grew to a powerful institution involved in every aspect of the South African bureaucracy, then how it lost this power in the 1990s. The most interesting aspect of the South African military was why they did not sponsor a coup d’état, instead chose to participate in the negotiations that transferred power to the black majority leader, Nelson Mandela.

Looking back on this project I wish I would have used my time more efficiently to analyse a more diverse range of historical perspectives. I primarily relied on Hilton Hamann's *Days of the Generals*, which is collection of interviews with South African generals. After this book was written in 2001 several retired generals wrote their own memoirs conveying their views and decision-making process this included: General Magnus Malan, Georg Meiring, Jannie Geldenhuys. Analysing political memoirs from South African president F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela would have also been interesting and formed a base of counter narratives to contrast the opinions of the generals.

In addition to diversifying my range of historical perspectives I should have further narrowed down the topic. Analysing the South African military institution between the early 1970s and 1994 can be accomplished in a lengthy book publication. Due to my limited time and space I had to skim or leave out certain area of operations and institutional characteristics that would have enhanced the unique qualities and traits of the South African military. I could have narrowed my research to a more specific geographical location or timeframe to gain a better understanding of a more refined topic.

Through this program I learned to appreciate the meticulous effort and time that is required to conduct academic research. Searching for commonalities in resources from different historical perspectives can be challenging and require acute self-awareness from the researcher. Separating historical perspectives from historical facts was a challenge for myself. This was the first time I was exposed to this method of research in this magnitude.

I have also learned the value of different kinds of resources. When I began this project, I only anticipated using academic books and journals, supplemented with sources sharing certain historical perspectives. I was surprised to see how much I referenced newspapers and other alternative sources of research. Prior to this project I was under the impression that it was standard to avoid newspapers and non-academic sources. However, the value of some of these non-academic sources was a critical source of primary research material.

Throughout my five years at Dalhousie University, I have gained an appreciation for academia and the dedication it takes from the academics to both produce amazing innovative work and teach new generations of students and scholars. I would like to thank Professors Gary Kynoch and Philip Zackernuk for enabling students like myself to explore African History and allow me to explore African military topics throughout my time in their courses. I would also like to thank Honours Coordinator Professor Christopher Bell whose mentorship

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and coaching throughout the Honours process was instrumental to my success this year. I wish to thank Professor Gary Kynoch once again for volunteering his time to be my Honours Supervisor, while there were challenges to my research topic, Professor Kynoch's guidance was instrumental to the completion of this thesis.

## **“Beyond the Anglicist Paradigm: The Hybrids of Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Education Policy in India”**

*Jamieson Urquhart*

For my honours thesis I set out to tackle knowledge circulation and cultural synthesis. My initial intention was to study Mughal India and the ‘Persian cosmopolis.’ That is, the ethical, social and moral order that stems from the circulation of ideas, practices and values enshrined within canonically Persian languages, texts, and customs. Importantly, these ‘orders’ were not static or rigid. The Mughals, along with other members of the cosmopolis, adapted this kind of ‘Persian universal’ to the particular realities of India. The result was a hybrid government superstructure, a mixture of contexts that were themselves mixtures. Enthused by these ‘hybrid’ displays of composite identities, I wanted to unpack how ‘hybridity’ did or did not underpin the learned classes and education. Unfortunately, my lack of facility in Persian or Arabic pushed my timeframe into the East India Company (EIC) era which began roughly in the 18th century.

EIC paramountcy in India is temporally straddled by the twilight of the Mughal dynasty and the dawn of the British Raj in 1857. Over its roughly ninety-year tenure, the Company was ruthlessly profit driven and its servicemen were selfishly rapacious. It is no question that British, mercantilist and exploitative economic and political imperialism began as the EIC consolidated. I became interested in the cultural and educational ramifications of this ascendancy. The more I researched, the more I realised that the popular narrative surrounding this period describes the education enterprise as cultural imperialism. These historians, drawing mostly on nationalist sentiments or Michel Foucault, identify an “anglicist paradigm” in EIC education policy. A shift towards English education is incontrovertible but those calling cultural imperialism maintain that EIC education disrupted existing systems of learning via swift monolithic imposition. Honestly, these oppositional binaries like coloniser/colonised, seen in other colonial contexts too, seem only to exist to keep historians employed. Historical study, then, is just a never-ending injection of *nuance*. More recent scholarship on education in India has taken up the task of muddling these binaries, by – you guessed it – prioritising nuance. Drawing on this literature, my thesis offers histories of hybrids to move beyond this anglicist paradigm. I argue that as a result of EIC precariousness, early education policy was designed entirely to preserve traditional hierarchies and gloss themselves

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in legitimacy. Further, it is ignorant to assume Indians were simply indoctrinated. Certainly, modish utilitarianism, aspirations of free-trade and evangelical resurgence spurred a turn towards anglicism, but state-sponsored English lessons were not an EIC priority (especially given precedents for English public education only emerge in the 1830s). My thesis basically uses 65 pages to say, “it’s more complicated, contradictory and ambiguous than a pattern.”

To provide a sense of early 19th century EIC education policy, my preamble discusses the rise and fall of Fort William College in Kolkata. Inaugurated in 1800, the College was designed to teach company officials the intricacies of respectable civil service. The local languages, systems and histories were taught. By 1854, the College was declared obsolete because Indians became Company officials and English became more prominent. To explore this complex evolution of education I first detail the hybrid Indo-Persian systems of learning that predated British education policy. In doing so, Britain’s ‘contact’ is understood as an entanglement, not unravelling, of continuities or another thread within a complex ball of cultural yarn. I then analyse EIC officer Charles “Hindoo” Stuart and his most famous work the *Vindication of the Hindoo* (1808). Followed by a discussion of Brahman Raja Rammohan Roy and his *Letter on English Education* (1823). Stuart, the Englishman who championed traditional systems of learning is now buried in Kolkata. A tomb in the shape of the north Indian temple sits atop his grave. Roy, a learned Indian that requested government support in provisioning English education, is buried in Bristol also commemorated by a north Indian mausoleum. Neither were Their life, work, and intellectual spheres offer a unique perspective into the complex educational dynamics of the period.

In using the College, Stuart and Roy as prisms, I was able to tether an otherwise exhaustive analysis of culture. Along with the straightforward policy history, I used Stuart and Roy to analyse the contextual threads their work embodied. This reification was *much* needed. My initial proposal promised a sprawling historical survey of various learned classes of the 19th century and their intermingled epistemologies. My second proposal starred Stuart and Roy but emphasised the cosmopolitan underpinnings of the education enterprise as a whole. Enthralled by notions of the ‘worldly citizen’ and obstinately repulsed by cultural relativism, I laboured to ensure my thesis would reflect my own scholarly affinities. Cosmopolitanism asks, can humanity inspire empathy towards the global, abstract and distant as strongly and effortlessly as is bestowed to the local, tangible and intimately familiar? And in my assessment, the history of education in India, and the hybridity it engenders, was an answer to this question.

After inordinate pages of reading and meticulously crafted sentences I emerged from the sunless cave of theory and jargon blissfully unaware of how little sense I was making. It would seem, all paintings are worthy of praise in the dark.

I frolicked my way into the winter semester. January's online medium meant there was little opportunity for demystification. In February, I met with my supervisor, Colin Mitchell (many thanks to him for his support). He duly advised me to corral my research and produce some two-pages of answers to the basic questions of who, what and where. In doing so, apparently incapable of writing anything without stumbling down a rabbit-hole, I read about phenomenology ... then, suddenly, it was March. The pseudo-introduction I submitted for the honours seminar peer-review workshop included intimations of my final thesis but for most intents and purposes it was 'WTF'-inducing (just ask Professor Bell). Picture the red string meme, that was me. So, armed with enthusiasm and copious notes I restructured everything. In writing, I usually strive for 'flavourful' prose, but as time ticked on, my only goal was an 'edible' thesis: ideas and arguments that were admittedly chewy but sustenance, nonetheless.

Upon reflection, the most striking aspect of the thesis-writing process is how side-tracked I became. Sometimes, to the detriment of clarity. I had the skeletal components of my argument as early as November, but the angle through which I approached the task shifted with every word I read. Luckily, this was a sentiment shared by most of my peers in the honours seminar. Speaking of, the opportunity for critical discussion afforded by the seminar was much appreciated. Thank you especially to Chris, all the lecturers and my classmates for their time. Expedited by diverse content and readings, each class bore fruit. Based on discussions, we all have varying approaches to 'doing' history. Said methodological approach, to me, is oftentimes more interesting than the processes being appraised. My role as *Pangaea* Copy Editor confirmed this. If history is the dialogue between the past and the present, our class epitomises how individual and diverse experience of this same present ineluctably alters our historical interests and conclusions.

## **“And They Were Neighbours’: Role of Collaboration in Polish Historical Memory”**

*Ireland Wright*

Throughout my childhood, I loved school and learning. Throughout Elementary and Secondary school, different areas of study interested me, but none as much as the subject of History. Learning about Ancient Greece, World War I, and the Canadian Confederation, fascinated me, and understanding the lives of famous, and infamous, individuals and events made going to school exciting. It was for these reasons I chose to pursue a Bachelor’s Degree, specifically majoring in History. Due to the sudden introduction of COVID-19 and my curiosity for history, in my third year of university education, I chose to participate in the Honours program.

The Honours degree program has been one of the most rigorous projects I have completed academically speaking, and it challenged my abilities as a student and person. The program, with the help of my advisor Dr. Denis Kozlov, allowed me to take a look at my academic skills and challenge myself, to exceed beyond expectations of a traditional history degree. In writing my thesis – and participating in seminars with various members of Dalhousie’s History Department – I have been able to better develop my ability to historically analyze, as well as oral and written communication. The Honours seminars allowed me to explore areas of history I have not fully understood, such as Postcolonial Africa, historical counterfactuals, the Reformation, and the history of science. My exposure to different methodologies has made me reconsider and self-reflect on my learning. Having gone through this experience, I feel better prepared for a future in academic research and the possibility of earning a Master’s Degree in the coming years.

The Honours class was also an environment where discussion of specific events and historiographies was fostered. Through the Honours seminar, I was able to learn about historical eras that before I only had an approximate knowledge of. In each seminar, my peers and I had fruitful discussions on topics such as oral history, shifts in historical paradigms, as well as discussion of archives and documentation. Each individual in this past Honours class brought a unique perspective and opinion on these topics. These are discussions necessary for every history student, as each individual should be made well aware of the different ways history can be received and interpreted. Through the theses of my peers, I have also gained

many skills in time management, academic writing, and research methods. Despite these reasons, I am happy that I joined the Honours class, as I have gained many friends who I have learnt with over the past academic year. I thank my classmates for helping me grow and ultimately become a better History student and an even better person.

Relating to the analysis of historical memory and my entire thesis research, I cannot give enough credit to the Honour's class and its impact on my work. My thesis specifically surrounded historical memory in the context of the Holocaust in Poland. Historical memory was the lens through which I perceived documents, research, and writing during my thesis work; historical memories are how specific individuals or groups remember events of the past. Historical memory is used every day by scholars, as well as politicians and citizens, to view collective and individual memories thematically and geographically. Maurice Halbwachs, a French philosopher and historian of memory, gives light to the topic I am studying; history is often boiled down to abstract concepts, but through memory, becomes easier to understand through the use of personal and unique remembrances. In the case of the Holocaust, much of what is remembered come from either written documents or survivor testimony. The Holocaust itself has become a foundational historical event for many countries in Europe, making memorialization key in the creation of national memories. Nazi governance was entrenched throughout many countries of Europe during the Second World War, and the German occupation of Poland saw collaboration occur, especially in the creation of invader-subordinate relationships. These are remembered, or better yet forgotten, in multiple Polish cultural and social groups. The motivation behind my research was pushed by the lack of acknowledgement and recognition given to historical memory of Polish collaboration in the country today. The national historical memory established in Poland observes Poles as both victims and heroes of the period.

I chose to research historical memories of specific groups in Poland about the Holocaust due to a promotion of a specific narrative promoted by certain historians, politicians, and religious figures. In terms of structure, I separated my thesis into three chapters. The first section discusses theory and secondary sources explaining the definition and function of historical memory, along with collective memory. In the following section, a discussion about the different debates surrounding Holocaust historical memory connects the relation between specific collective memories of groups in Poland, and how historical memory is represented in the present day. Through analysis of witness testimony, novels, and

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government legislation, I strive to display how historical memory surrounding the Holocaust in Poland varies amongst different social groups. For the final chapter, I examine the creation of memory laws inside Poland, and how such laws affect the way Holocaust memories vary amongst Polish social groups, Polish Jews, and the wider diaspora in countries like Australia and the United States. The dialogue chosen by world leaders, specifically in Poland, concerns historical memory and the ability to forge a collective memory where Poles were solely victims, not perpetrators.

It was important for me as a historian to understand why the persecution of Jews in Poland has become an almost “forbidden” topic, and how possible collaboration between locals and invading forces, such as the Nazis, has influenced these circumstances. I have hoped that my research might contribute to literature discussing memories of collaboration in Poland, as a mode of reconciliation between Polish citizens, social groups and those of the Jewish faith still residing in Poland and the larger diaspora. Acceptance of Polish history, and the country’s eras of both victory and tragedy, is important in understanding the development of Polish social groups’ identities, and Poland’s national memory in its entirety.