

ENVISIONING THE RIGHT:  
CARICATURE AND THE ACTION FRANÇAISE, 1920-1926

by

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B.A., Boston University, 2001

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of History)

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

August 2004

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Title of Thesis:

Envisioning the Right: Caricature and the Action  
Franchise, 1920-1926

Degree:

MA

Year:

2004

Department of

History

The University of British Columbia

Vancouver, BC Canada

## Abstract

Between 1920 and 1926, Jehan Sennep, later a prominent French cartoonist and journalist of the Right, published cartoons in the *Action française*, the journal of the eponymous French monarchist and integral nationalist movement led by Charles Maurras and Leon Daudet. Cartoons illuminate how cultural products intersect with ideas in the formation of a discursive set of conditions understood as “reality.” This allows for a deeper understanding of the culture in which Action Française ideology acquired meaning by revealing the images and symbols that, in furthering this ideology, resonated or were expected to resonate with the public. The key thing for Sennep was to convey meaning through the invocation of ideas, assumptions and stereotypes that were current at the time. Caricature permitted him to tell detailed stories about the state of French culture in a one-panel format by relying on shared associations. Sennep relied on “everyday knowledge” in creating his cartoons. His work reveals a discourse surrounding such aspects of the everyday—that is, of the dominant “common knowledge”—as gender, through feminisation, the rural/urban or peasant/city denizen dichotomy, phobias, through motifs of infestation, and empire or colonial subjects. I will interpret Sennep's pictures of the nation and identify the exact nature of the threat he perceived from internal and external enemies, showing that fears about the French nation centred on the potential danger posed by elements in French society and government that were deemed not truly to belong. Even his depiction of external enemies, such as Germany or international communism, can be shown to reveal a preoccupation with internal elements. In showing this and assessing the recurrent themes, I will discuss what the symbols reveal about the culture in which they had currency and the cultural and intellectual debates that raged at the time and helped structure Sennep's symbolic language.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
List of Figures .....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	v
I: The Action Française .....	1
II: Caricature and Cultural History .....	3
III: The 1920s, the Action Française and Sennep: Stages and Phases.....	7
IV: Thesis, Outline and Historiography .....	10
V: Sennep as Journalist.....	13
VI: The Marriage of Leon Blum: The Meaning of Feminisation.....	16
VI: " <i>L'Ambassadrice</i> " .....	23
VII: Infestation and Infiltration.....	30
VIII: Impotence and Submissiveness.....	34
IX: Conclusion.....	38
Bibliography .....	55

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1.....	41
Figure 2.....	42
Figure 3.....	43
Figure 4.....	44
Figure 5.....	45
Figure 6.....	46
Figure 7.....	47
Figure 8.....	48
Figure 9.....	49
Figure 10.....	50
Figure 11.....	51
Figure 12.....	52
Figure 13.....	53
Figure 14.....	54

## Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Warren Weir, Ph.D., without whom none of this, in the broadest sense, would be possible.

There are not words enough to express the debt of gratitude I owe my supervisor, Professor Allan Smith. If this essay is drastically different from the project I first proposed to Professor Smith in the summer of 2001, it is because of books and articles that he recommended. My interest in cartoons, newspapers and the interplay of gender and national identity stems directly from scholarship to which I was introduced by Professor Smith. He allowed me the freedom to explore these new interests and gave me the time to discover therein an idea for an MA thesis. He did this while consistently offering guidance, close reading and sensitive evaluation at all stages in this essay's long development. If this thesis as it stands realises more successfully the promise of my sources, it is because he believed that a better work was possible and insisted on more careful engagement with the material. Professor Smith helped me find a solution to writing problems that have bedevilled me not just in writing this thesis but in scholarly writing generally. He helped me integrate theory and the wider context into a study without sacrificing attention to a specific body of sources. Most of all, I have enjoyed and been enriched by our conversations. Allan, thank you.

I also thank Professor Joy Dixon. In addition to serving as the second reader for this thesis, Professor Dixon has had a profound effect on my work and on my understanding of historical scholarship. In the course I took with her during my first semester at the University of British Columbia, Professor Dixon exposed me to innumerable possibilities for historians' work. Through her serious and critical evaluation of various papers of mine, and through our discussions in two courses, I have begun to understand the purpose of historical scholarship, as well as what is at stake.

Although the vagaries of our schedules and the time it took me to complete this essay precluded the possibility of Professor Caroline Ford evaluating it as the second reader, she still read a draft and provided me with extensive comments and suggestions. Without the benefit of these, this essay would be of significantly lesser quality.

I thank Professor Christopher R. Friedrichs for the great personal interest he has taken in me and my work. I remember our lunches at Helen's Grill with great fondness and hope that our relationship will continue.

My colleagues in the history department at the University of British Columbia have made the last two years the most intellectually challenging and personally satisfying of my life. Jennifer Anderson, Justin Bengry, Michele Haapamaki, James MacNevin and Clint Westgard all read sections of my thesis and offered valuable suggestions. Justin Bengry introduced me to the idea of masculinity as an historical problem; he and Clint Westgard nurtured my budding interest in visual culture. James MacNevin always selflessly devoted his time, energy and the benefits of his experience to helping me piece together issues in French culture, history and language that eluded me. My conception of what part I might take in the historical conversation was formed through hours spent with Michele Haapamaki. I am grateful for her friendship. Most importantly, all of these individuals provided constant friendship and an intellectual community beyond anything I could have imagined. Thank you all.

Katrin Urschel never complained about the hours I kept while working on this thesis. She graciously made photocopies and helped me find books. But most of all, she always helped me find the words, as she is, in all things, a novelist. I thank her for her understanding, love and support.

My mother, Nancy R. Cantor, always believes that things can get better. This is largely why they have. Our conversations and arguments as I began to realise my philosophies of culture and history showed me the meaning that ethnic and religious identities have for people. I hope that I am

able, in my work, to take seriously that cultural identities and ideas of heritage had great meaning for my subjects. If I am successful in this endeavour, it is partly because of the seriousness with which my mother has always approached any intellectual challenge. I am grateful for the arc of our relationship.

My grandfather, Hyman Rothkopf, takes pride in being my "biggest fan." I wish I had the drive and energy now that he has at age 89. That he visited me from another country and across the continent touched me and impressed my friends. My grandmother, Selma Rothkopf, fostered my interest in cultural commentary and in periodicals. I like to think that her reading the comics section of the newspaper to me throughout my childhood helped shape my interest in political cartoons and gave me a basis for reading them as an historian. My family, to paraphrase Joseph Heller in the dedication to *Good as Gold*, often unwittingly, through conversations and even disagreements, fostered the development of the ideas developed in this essay.

## I: The Action Française

In France during the years between the World Wars, the Action Française was a major force in defining the ideology of the entire French Right; it “provided the fundamental doctrines” of the extreme Right in France and beyond.<sup>1</sup> This monarchist and “integral nationalist” movement arose from the Dreyfus Affair or, more directly, from the failure of the anti-Dreyfusards, when the philosophy of its dominant ideologue, Charles Maurras, crystallised.<sup>2</sup> Along with Maurras, who provided its philosophical base, this French nationalist movement was led by Leon Daudet. The two men also edited the movement's eponymous daily newspaper.<sup>3</sup> Above all, integral nationalists professed anti-Semitism, opposition to democracy and Germanophobia. As a pessimist concerning human nature, Maurras held that institutions such as the Catholic Church and a strong state were requisite for social cohesion.<sup>4</sup> Consistent with his faith in institutions, Maurras settled on the restoration of the monarchy as one of his movement's goals in 1904.<sup>5</sup> This desire to return to a monarchical form of government also expresses the Action Française's rejection of modern society.<sup>6</sup> Its leaders contended that Romanticism and the French Revolution were “break[s] with our tradition;”<sup>7</sup> the republican philosophy of Enlightenment individualism was considered objectionable because it elevated individual autonomy over “natural” national or communal obligations.<sup>8</sup>

Studies of this movement have tended to adopt a political or intellectual approach. Recently, however, scholars have attempted to approach the Action Française from a more cultural perspective,

<sup>1</sup> Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), vii.

<sup>2</sup> Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* trans. David Maisel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 44.

<sup>3</sup> Following convention, I use Action Française to refer to the movement and *Action française* for the daily newspaper.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Winock, *Nationalisme, Antisémitisme et Fascisme en France* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1990), 21.

<sup>5</sup> J. P. T. Bury, *France 1814-1940* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 205.

<sup>6</sup> Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, “The Intellectual Extreme Right in the Thirties,” in Edward J. Arnold, ed., *The Development of the Radical Right in France: From Boulanger to Le Pen* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 119-122.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Barrès, “Le Problème de l'ordre,” *Le Gaulois*, 9 July, 1905, cited in Michael Sutton, *Nationalism, Positivism and Catholicism: The Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics 1890-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Sutton, *Nationalism, Positivism and Catholicism*, 1, and Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Toronto: D. Van Nostrand, 1955), 77.



discerning, for example, an “alternate idiom” to the dominant republican iconography, or exploring the role of masculine identities in shaping the views of the nationalist Right.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, members of the French Right publicised their philosophies and asserted their message in many ways, including novels, journalism, essays and street demonstrations, for example those staged by the Action Française's youth “policing” division, the *Camelots du Roi*.

Movements of the Right, such as the Action Française, must be treated as based on coherent and considered ideologies.<sup>10</sup> As an “integral nationalist” movement, which means that it placed France as the highest value, it follows that the Action Française sought to disseminate a particular idea of the nation, including who belonged and who did not. Maurras's movement, and the wider French Right, found itself on one side of a significant divide in constructing the nation that had obtained in France since the Revolution. These two versions of France were the Action Française's, Catholic and

<sup>9</sup> Martha Hanna, “Iconology and Ideology: Images of Joan of Arc in the Idiom of the Action Française, 1908-1931,” *French Historical Studies* 14/2 (Autumn, 1985): 215-216, and Joan Tumblety, “Revenge of the Fascist Knights: Masculine Identities in *Je Suis Partout*, 1940-1944,” *Modern and Contemporary France* 7/1 (1999): 11, 18.

<sup>10</sup> This is a debate among historians, some of whom view such movements, particularly those that can be termed fascist, as fundamentally irrational. In the context of fascism, Eatwell has argued convincingly for approaching these movements as founded on a “body of ideas” and rooted in earlier intellectual developments. See Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1995), xvii-xviii, 3-4. Eatwell's book discusses the Action Française, which has been described as fascist, proto-fascist, and as non-fascist but reactionary and authoritarian. For an argument that it was fascist see Ernst Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche: die Action française, der italienische Faschismus, der Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: R. Piper, 1963). Wilson understands the Action Française primarily as an intellectual school of extreme nationalism but distinct from the “new Fascist-type organizations” to which its members sometimes gravitated. See Stephen Wilson, “The ‘Action Française’ in French Intellectual Life,” *Historical Journal* 12/2 (1969): 328, 332.

I will leave these precise distinction to historians with other foci. I am less concerned with assigning the proper ideological label to the Action Française than with analysing its particularities and the causes thereof. Understanding a particular manifestation of nationalism in light of wider theories is the best way to illuminate both those theories and contextual explanations for variations among the movements they seek to explain. This allows a nuanced comparative approach to the study of nationalism and nationalist movements. In my view, then, the purpose of a definition is to enable the discussion of various or disparate strands in relation to each other; the goal remains a differentiated understanding of cultures and ideas through the appearance of similar movements. This type of broad definition adopted for utilitarian purposes is advanced by Passmore in his general study of fascism. See Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 21-32.

Whether the Action Française is understood as fascist or simply of the extreme Right, the two approaches to fascism outlined by Eatwell, as an irrational movement needing psychological explication or as a system of ideas, are represented in its historiography. Shirer rails against the Action Française leadership's “outrageous outbursts” and asks “How could one take them seriously?” Weber, on the other hand, takes these intellectuals quite seriously as the architects of a consistent set of ideas, stating that historical actors derided by another historian as “café intellectuals” are, for him, “influential publicists and public figures.” See William L. Shirer, *The Collapse of the Third Republic: An Inquiry into the Fall of France in 1940* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 93-94, and Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), x.

monarchical, and the dominant Third Republic political order, secular and republican.<sup>11</sup> The rupture in French society between adherents of these alternate ways of imagining the nation was more pronounced in the period between the two World Wars than at any time since the Dreyfus affair.<sup>12</sup>

Maurras and Daudet unfolded their conception of “true France” and identified its internal and external enemies in the pages of the *Action française*. Maurras above all expounded his political and cultural philosophy in articles on the front page of almost every issue. News items from around the world appeared, usually with the integral nationalist spin in which all events were viewed through the lens of their effect on France as defined by the Right. From 1920 to 1926, political cartoons by Jehan Sennep, who later became a prominent draughtsman of the Right, were featured in the *Action française*, and from 1924 they often appeared on the first page.

## II: Caricature and Cultural History

Caricature is an especially important source for the cultural historian of ideas, as newspaper cartoons illuminate how cultural products intersect with ideas in the formation of a discursive set of conditions understood as “reality.” This crossing allows for a deeper understanding of the culture in which Action Française ideology acquired meaning by revealing the images and symbols that, in furthering this ideology, resonated or were expected to resonate with the public.<sup>13</sup> The interrogation of caricature also forces a reconsideration of the binary opposition of truth and fiction.<sup>14</sup> Caricature is, in

<sup>11</sup> Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity 1900-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 10.

<sup>12</sup> Maurice Agulhon, *La République*, vol. 1, *L'Élan Fondateur et la Grande Blessure (1880-1932)* (Paris: Hachette/Pluriel, 1990), 323.

<sup>13</sup> The distinction between resonance and expected resonance is not trivial. Reconsidering the distinction between production and consumption is also a goal of cultural history. Sources such as letters to the *Action française*'s editorial office in response to Sennep's caricatures would be desirable. They would assist in discerning the role of these cartoons in shaping and reflecting both the Action Française's ideas and those of its newspaper's readership, which extended beyond the movement. See Mark Poster, *Cultural History and Postmodernity: Disciplinary Readings and Challenges* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 7-8. Roger Chartier provides the starting point for challenging this and other binary oppositions which, when integrated and approached holistically, provide intriguing avenues for understanding people and cultures of the past. See Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (London: Polity, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> This is another important imperative for the practitioners of cultural history. See Poster, *Cultural History and*

effect, a form of fiction—public figures are placed in fictitious situations and attributed with imaginary dialogue—that expresses beliefs deeply held as true. In the case of nationalist caricature, these “truths” centre on the perceived essential, eternal and “natural” of the “French civilisation” as a determining force in the lives of those born within its fold.

Finally, political cartoons comprise a body of sources that allow the scholar of a particular movement to uncover the culture it sought to influence—as well as the manner in which that wider culture structured the symbols available to that movement—in that they dictate a synthesis of elite- and popular-culture representations. Earlier work tends to privilege the former. While the traditional “high-culture” approach of the intellectual historian is equally important, the failure to incorporate the symbolic manifestations of a philosophy at the popular level precludes a full understanding of a nationalist movement in its culture. Caricature is aimed at “passionate, stand-taking, mass reading publics” and not thoughtful readers.<sup>15</sup> By giving caricature prominent and frequent placement in its journal, along with more philosophical commentary, the *Action Française* endeavoured to address multiple reading audiences. Maurras and Daudet strove to make an impact through their newspaper, which “had something for everyone from the gutter to the academy.”<sup>16</sup> In less derogatory language, investigation of this movement's image of the nation must account for its overtures to both popular and intellectual readerships. As Dominick LaCapra writes, the comic book merits scholarly attention as it “has at times been an experimental form exploring contested areas of modern culture.”<sup>17</sup> Its one-panel counterpart, the political cartoon, can be equally revealing.

Additionally, whether or not we accept the American magazine *Time*'s contention, in a 1938 profile of Sennep, that caricature has or had a particularly influential role in the fashioning of French

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*Postmodernity*, 7-8.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence H. Streicher, “On a Theory of Political Caricature,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9/4 (July, 1967): 433. Also of import is Streicher's call for scholars to interpret critically, and not merely inform the readers about, caricature.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Mazgaj, *The Action Française and Revolutionary Syndicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 5.

opinion,<sup>18</sup> it does seem as though caricature was, in early twentieth-century France, an effective means to affect public opinion.<sup>19</sup> This is reflected in the resurgence of interest in political caricature among historians of France.<sup>20</sup> The multidisciplinary of studies of France and visuality has enabled forays by historians into visual sources, such as political cartoons, beyond those generally considered by art historians.<sup>21</sup> Caricature is not missing in the historical literature on the Action Française and the French Right, but it is usually employed illustratively and not analysed as a text, or as a source with the potential to shed further light on the Right. Its mention in historical studies provides an intriguing spur to a more comprehensive investigation that focuses solely on caricature.

Among studies that employ caricature mainly to illustrate points supported through other sources is Eugen Weber's seminal and indispensable study of the Action Française, to which, as Stephen Wilson has written, any historian of the Action Française is profoundly indebted.<sup>22</sup> Weber's approach to cartoons as sources raises intriguing points and begs closer study. For example, he writes that "[r]oyalist prestige had never stood higher than at the end of the war," and buttresses this contention by describing "a cartoon of the victory parade" that showed prominent French politicians

<sup>18</sup> "Pennès' Name," *Time* (28 November, 1938): 20.

<sup>19</sup> Willa Z. Silverman, "Female Anti-Semitism during the Dreyfus Affair: The Case of Gyp," in Melanie Hawthorne and Richard J. Golsan, eds., *Gender and Fascism in Modern France* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 13. Silverman describes how the professional anti-Semite known as Gyp, excluded from the franchise and political office by her gender, sought to exert influence over public opinion in other ways, such as "fiction-writing, journalism, caricature," and "appalling behavior."

<sup>20</sup> David S. Kerr comments on this phenomenon in *Caricature and French Political Culture 1830-1848: Charles Philippon and the Illustrated Press* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1. Among the works listed by Kerr are: Beatrice Farwell, *The Charged Image: French Lithographic Caricature 1816-1848* (Santa Barbara: 1989); R. J. Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989); and Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallymer, *Eugène Delacroix: Prints, Politics and Satire 1814-1822* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). More anthologies than works of history, but still providing historical comment among reprinted images, are: Roy Douglas, *Between the Wars 1919-1939: The Cartoonists' Vision* (New York: Routledge, 1992); idem., *The World War 1939-1943: The Cartoonists' Vision* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Robert Phillippe, *Political Graphics: Art as a Weapon* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982); *Le Dessin D'Humour* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1971). Of this latter group, none, save the last, deals exclusively with France, although all contain many images from France. Intended to display cartoons with informed commentary, these works bespeak an interest in caricature to understand the past. All except Phillippe's contain a drawing by Sennep. This list is by no means exhaustive.

<sup>21</sup> Mary D. Sheriff and Daniel J. Sherman, "Convergences: Visualizing French History" *French Historical Studies* 26/2 (Spring, 2003): 175.

<sup>22</sup> Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), and Wilson, "The 'Action Française,'" 334n34.

“with Daudet and Maurras following close behind.” A footnote reveals that this cartoon appeared in *Le Canard Enchaîné*.<sup>23</sup> We are not told what the royalist leaders look like in this cartoon, or what their exact position in the parade, ahead of “lesser scribes” and behind “a Pyrrhic elephant,” might have conveyed to contemporary readers. Also, what does it mean that this cartoon appeared in *Le Canard Enchaîné*, a newspaper whose views are quite difficult to ascertain?<sup>24</sup> As evidence of the prestige attained by the integral nationalists in government and the press, Weber mentions left-wing caricatures of “His Almightiness Daudet.” Again, a description of these drawings is lacking. What does the manner of his portrayal reveal about the Left's conception of royalism or of the nation? Perhaps the Left's lampooning of Daudet could shed light on that political faction's understanding of the role of gender in French political ideology, but it is impossible to know without an analysis of the caricature. Tony Judt also notes the ubiquitous cartoon portrayal of the French socialist leader Leon Blum as a woman or sexual deviant,<sup>25</sup> but he seems to treat this trope of caricature as an unfiltered window into public opinion. These passing references to caricature spark interest in it as a source in its own right.

As employed here, “caricature” refers specifically to the political cartoon. I equate these terms in the interests of clarity and brevity. “Caricature” and “political cartoon” are often used interchangeably, but this is only possible when the terms of debate are clear, that is, when it is apparent that only political cartoons, defined here as one-panel drawings with dialogue, narration or a punch line, are under investigation and not other media that could fall under the rubric “caricature.”<sup>26</sup> Within the field of representation that can be labelled caricature, the political cartoon is distinguished as a distinct

<sup>23</sup> Weber, *Action Française*, 124, 544n1.

<sup>24</sup> See Laurent Martin, “*Le Canard enchaîné*, un 'objet politique mal identifié,’” *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 50/2 (April-June, 2003): 73-91.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 74-75.

<sup>26</sup> For a broad consideration of the history and definitional properties of caricature beyond the mass-produced political cartoon, see Werner Hofmann, *Die Karikatur von Leonardo bis Picasso* (Vienna: Verlag Brüder Rosenbaum, 1956), and Werner Hofmann, “Die Karikatur—eine Gegenkunst?” in Gerhard Langemeyer, Gerd Unverfehrt, Herwig Guratzsch and Christoph Stölzl, eds., *Bild als Waffe: Mittel und Motive der Karikatur in fünf Jahrhunderten* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1984), 355-383. For the history of the term “caricature,” see Gerd Unverfehrt, “Karikatur—Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs,” in *ibid.*, 345-354.

type partly by its form but mainly because it is intended to be mass-[re]produced.<sup>27</sup> In a discussion of the theory of political caricature carried on in the late 1960s in the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, one contributor linked caricature, understood here more limitedly as the political cartoon, with the illustrated press, which created a new class of professional full-time caricaturists, within which we can number Sennep.<sup>28</sup> The relationship to the press is crucial. The noted caricature artist Paul Hogarth gives a definitive role to the nineteenth-century development of the “new illustrated press” in the rise of caricature, treating this art form within the long tradition of “the artist as reporter.”<sup>29</sup>

### III: The 1920s, the Action Française and Sennep: Stages and Phases

This promise of the political cartoon, and more, is apparent in Sennep's *oeuvre*, particularly in terms of the period of his employ with the Action Française's quotidian newspaper, 1920-1926, for a number of reasons. First, his tenure corresponds to a distinct period in the Action Française's development. The Action Française, between the end of World War I and its condemnation by the Pope in 1926, was at the height of its cultural and political influence. The “royalists now represented the most solid-looking bastion against the threats of revolution and disorder” sparked by revolutions in Russia and Germany.<sup>30</sup> The Republic began to adopt foreign policy measures it had long advocated, such as the 1923 decision by the *Union Nationale* government, headed by Raymond Poincaré, to occupy the Ruhr. This was part of an attempt to enforce the letter of the Treaty of Versailles regarding German reparations, a passion of the Action Française.<sup>31</sup> During this period, it became a mainstream

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989), x. Goldstein's concept of “political caricature” corresponds to what I delimit as the “political cartoon” in order to distinguish it from other forms of caricature.

<sup>28</sup> Streicher, “On a Theory,” 432-433.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Hogarth, *The Artist as Reporter* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1986), 23.

<sup>30</sup> Weber, *Action Française*, 124.

<sup>31</sup> Philippe Bernard and Henri Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938* trans. Anthony Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 111-113.

faction as the parliamentary Right accepted it into the fold. The *Liberté* wrote, "if...for an eventual electoral arrangement, we had to choose between the royalists who serve France and...the Radicals who harm it, we should not hesitate in choosing [the friends of] France."<sup>32</sup> Some Action Française members, most notably Daudet, had been elected to the Chamber as part of the *Bloc National* in 1919.<sup>33</sup> The close of Sennep's association with Maurras's movement, in 1926, also marks the end of this period of success for the monarchists. In 1926, the Pope banned the Action Française and put its newspaper on the Index. (This decision was published in January, 1927). This was a "traumatic moment" for a movement that had formulated its nationalist doctrines around the authority of Catholicism and had garnered enthusiastic clerical support.<sup>34</sup> Without retelling the story of the papal condemnation, which had significant costs to the movement in terms of support, it is enough here to note that the Pope's displeasure stemmed from the "intrinsic paganism" of the agnostic Maurras's espousal (or co-option) of Catholicism for the baldly political nationalist purposes of tradition and authority.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, the period during which Sennep drew for the *Action française* marks a distinct and under-researched phase in his long career, which extended from the time of his first published drawing, in 1910, through publications in newspapers and collections, until his death in 1981, making him a staple of the French political scene as a cartoonist of the Right.<sup>36</sup> He was the most renowned caricaturist of the Right, and of political events more generally, from the 1920s until World War II.<sup>37</sup> While Sennep has received scholarly attention from the French media historian Christian Delporte, who

<sup>32</sup> *La Liberté*, 21 July, 1923, cited in Weber, *Action Française*, 148-149.

<sup>33</sup> Barnard and Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic*, 160.

<sup>34</sup> Barnard and Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic*, 160.

<sup>35</sup> For the details of the papal condemnation, see Oscar L. Arnal, *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action Française 1899-1939* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985) and Agulhon, *La République*, 340-341. For the text of the papal condemnation, which was first prepared in 1914 but postponed until 1926, see "Decree of the Holy Office Condemning Certain Works of Charles Maurras and the 'Action française'--January 29, 1914 and December 29, 1926," reprinted in David Thomson, ed., *France: Empire and Republic, 1850-1940, Historical Documents* (New York: Walker, 1968), 94-97.

<sup>36</sup> Laurent Gervereau, "Sennep, Le Fantastique du Politique," in Christian Delporte and Laurent Gervereau, eds., 3 *Républiques Vues par Cabrol et Sennep* (Paris: Musée d'Histoire Contemporaine-BDIC, 1996), 101.

<sup>37</sup> *Le Dessin D'Humour*, 58, and Christian Delporte, *Les Journalistes en France 1880-1950: Naissance et Construction d'une Profession* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), 230.

mentions that he sought to publish his drawings primarily in the *Action française* during the period in question, it is this phase of his career that is usually glossed over perfunctorily for reasons discussed in the following section. Neither in his history of journalism in France nor in his *Les Crayons de la Propagande* does Delporte write specifically about what Sennep drew for the *Action française*.<sup>38</sup>

It is important to remark that Sennep was not an enthusiastic amateur or occasional producer of visual satire. His cartoons that appeared in the *Action française* are worth investigating partly because of the international celebrity which Sennep later possessed. As suggested above, most testimonies to his renown date this from the 1930s. There is not much mention of the first half of the 1920s, when he was visible primarily in the pages of the *Action française*. Establishing his prominence and also that he was specifically known as a political or journalistic figure, that is, as an artist but one associated with an ideology, lends credence to the project of approaching the nationalist cultural climate through his work. Sennep's international celebrity shortly after the time of his association with the *Action française* is evidenced by his 1938 profile in *Time*, as well as by the comment of an audience member of a 1931 lecture entitled "Anglo-French Relations" that the lecturer's satire was reminiscent of Sennep's work.<sup>39</sup> His fame extended beyond Europe, as shown by the 1943 pronouncement by the redoubtable *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* that Sennep was among the "perfect men" who "are not so much draughtsmen as great political satirists with their own means of expression."<sup>40</sup> The massive, multi-volume *Histoire Générale de la Presse Française* states that Sennep achieved the status of a great caricaturist in the late 1920s.<sup>41</sup> Sennep was discussed in a 1959 special political satire issue of *Crapouillot*,<sup>42</sup> a literary and artistic monthly that had achieved renown during World War I for printing

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<sup>38</sup> Delporte, *Les Journalistes en France*, and Christian Delporte, *Les Crayons de la Propagande* (Paris: CNRS, 1993), 15.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen King-Hall, "Anglo-French Relations," *International Affairs* 10/6 (November, 1931): 794.

<sup>40</sup> Feliks Topolski, "Contemporary Comment and Caricature," *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 83/484 (July, 1943): 166.

<sup>41</sup> Claude Bellanger et al., eds., *Histoire Générale de la Presse Française*, vol. 3, *De 1871 à 1940* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 593.

<sup>42</sup> Florent Fels, "La Caricature Française de 1789 à nos Jours," *Crapouillot* 44 (April, 1959): 70.



the drawings of artist-combatants.<sup>43</sup> Ulrich Hägele's study of the iconography of Germany in interwar French illustrated newspapers includes Sennep's anti-Hitler efforts,<sup>44</sup> and he appears in a general history of France as a "celebrated caricaturist."<sup>45</sup> Finally, a 1971 French collection of humorous drawings from the fifteenth century to the present calls him the most celebrated caricaturist of current events of the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>46</sup>

#### IV: Thesis, Outline and Historiography

A picture of the nation, variously expressed, unfolded in the pages of the *Action française*. Sennep's cartoons, taken as a whole, portray the nation and concerns surrounding it in a consistent fashion; literally, they represent a developing picture of the nation and its "Others," those defined as beyond the national community. The key thing for Sennep was to convey meaning through the invocation of ideas, assumptions and stereotypes that were current at the time. Caricature permitted him to do this, that is, to tell detailed stories about the state of French culture and government in a one-panel format by relying on shared associations. Expressing broader meaning through the presentation of individuals endowed with certain characteristics is dependant upon the recognition by the readership of these traits and what they imply about the people or concepts so portrayed. In this sense, cartoons are "cultural narratives." They tell a story about society, either explicitly, with an explanatory narration, or by situating figures and events in an implicit larger story by illustrating one scene or aspect of it.

As cultural artefacts, cartoons, like more verbal and less visual kinds of stories about culture, are performative. That is, they construct a culture and its symbols as well as reflecting them. As with other

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<sup>43</sup> Hogarth, *Artist as Reporter*, 111, 183.

<sup>44</sup> Ulrich Hägele, *Fotodeutsche: Zur Ikonographie einer Nation in französischen Illustrierten 1930-1940* (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1998), 339.

<sup>45</sup> J. P. T. Bury, *France: The Insecure Peace* (New York: Rockefeller Heritage Press, 1972), 112.

<sup>46</sup> *Le Dessin D'Humour*, 58.

forms of action, the act of reading or creating a satirical cartoon simultaneously expresses, reinforces and creates societal norms. This illustrates the interrelatedness of Sennep's intent as an author and the cultural language structuring his symbolic narratives.<sup>47</sup> Historians of cultural artefacts must be “preoccup[ied] with balancing structure and agency.” Important historical work “is premised on the same dual preoccupation with the active and autonomous nature of culture on the one hand and the free agency of groups and individuals on the other.”<sup>48</sup> Meaning in Sennep's *oeuvre* emerges from the intersection of his cultural convictions or political beliefs with the language of symbols to which he could turn unconsciously for resonance. The author, then, is not the sole origin of the meanings of the text, which result from “the meanings and values in circulation at its own historical moment.”<sup>49</sup>

Sennep relied on “everyday knowledge” in creating his cartoons. His work reveals a discourse surrounding such aspects of the everyday—that is, of the dominant “common knowledge”—as gender, through feminisation, the rural/urban or peasant/city denizen dichotomy, phobias, through motifs of infestation, and empire or colonial subjects. I will interpret Sennep's pictures of the nation and identify the exact nature of the threat he perceived from internal and external enemies, showing that fears about the French nation centred on the potential danger posed by elements in French society and government that were deemed not truly to belong. Even his depiction of external enemies, such as Germany or international communism, can be shown to reveal a preoccupation with internal elements. In showing this and assessing the recurrent themes, I will discuss what the symbols reveal about the culture in which they had currency and the cultural and intellectual debates that raged at the time and helped structure Sennep's symbolic language. The most striking perception that emerges from Sennep's work is that republicans, Jews and Germans were conflated in a conspiracy of opposition to “true France.” I will begin, though, by situating Sennep as a journalist in the Action Française clique of nationalist

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<sup>47</sup> For narrative and performativity in history, see Sarah Maza, “Stories in History: Cultural Narratives in Recent Works in European History,” *American Historical Review* 101/5 (December, 1996): 1493-1515.

<sup>48</sup> Maza, “Stories in History,” 1501.

<sup>49</sup> Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 25, 37.

fashioners of opinion.<sup>50</sup>

This project is a step toward discerning a “visual rhetoric of nation,”<sup>51</sup> the goal of which is understanding how nationalists constructed their nation and identified its “Others.” It is also an attempt to further an emerging school of visual history to parallel developments in oral history, the goals of which are “‘seeing’ what people saw, and...interpreting the significance of visual signs.”<sup>52</sup> Approaches that employ visual sources have secured a place in the historiography of France. In 1974, the *Galerie-Jardin des Arts* discussed the reproduction, in the magazine *Caractère*, of forty-seven political posters from the previous sixty years. The anonymous author wondered whether it was possible to write the recent history of France through posters. Continuing, the author bemoaned the absence of the work of certain significant draughtsmen among *Caractère*'s assortment of posters. In this category he included Sennep.<sup>53</sup> In 2003, the journal *French Historical Studies*, in a special issue entitled “French History in the Visual Sphere,” also raised the question of images and French history. The introductory essay to this special issue notes “the willingness of historians to scrutinize...visual images with an attention to their formal properties as well as to their subject matter” as a component of the creation of a joint “field of inquiry devoted to the visual dimensions of the past both as political and social forces in their own right and as constitutive elements of a larger historical situation.” This approach, which views images as both responses to and moulders of the historical moment in which they appear, can precipitate new ways of drawing meaning from the past. Much like the 1974 article, the 2003 issue of this leading journal of French history is a call to consider “how images inflect, augment, interpret, and complicate”

<sup>50</sup> This approach is similar to Christina Burr's, to whom I owe much in formulating an approach to the nation through cartoons. See Christina Burr, “Gender, Sexuality, and Nationalism in J. W. Bengough's Verses and Political Cartoons,” *Canadian Historical Review* 83/4 (December, 2002): 505-554. See also Fatma Müge Göçek, “From Empire to Nation: Images of Women and War in Ottoman Political Cartoons, 1908-1923,” in Billie Melman, ed., *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 47-72, and Erica Lee Fraser, “Masculinity and the Sexual Politics of Self and Other in Soviet Political Cartoons, 1945-1955,” unpublished MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 2000.

<sup>51</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Introduction, The Multiple Viewpoint: Diasporic Visual Cultures,” in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 2.

<sup>52</sup> Roy Porter, “Seeing the Past,” *Past and Present* 118: 186.

<sup>53</sup> “L’Affiche Prend Parti,” *Galerie-Jardin des Arts* 135 (March, 1974): 99.

that which they illustrate, or, more directly, “how images make history.”<sup>54</sup>

The best example of this approach that involves French caricature comes from Jo Burr Margadant, who interprets caricatures surrounding the July Monarchy based on an informed analysis of metaphor and the cultural moment. She tracks, for example, changes in the “repertoire of symbols that evoked the king” as the topic of satire shifted.<sup>55</sup> In another context, Peter Lord employs an awareness of the artistic and social contexts of images to investigate shared cultural experiences within a national community and erect an international comparative base for considering the relationship of nation to landscape and portraiture.<sup>56</sup>

### V: Sennep as Journalist

As stated above, before turning to the cartoons I will locate Sennep as a journalist of the Right and of the Action Française. In an essay that accompanies a collection of the work of Sennep and another prominent cartoonist, Delporte seeks to de-emphasise Sennep's involvement with this nationalist movement, citing the cartoonist's disdain for Maurras, stating that he was closer to Daudet, and locating him as a Bonapartist, and therefore not a monarchist Maurrassian, especially since he was wont to mock the royal family.<sup>57</sup> This reasoning, however, mostly bespeaks an attempt by Delporte to fuse the bitter division in constructing the nation between republicans and counter-revolutionaries that has marked French history since the Revolution into one consistent heritage of Frenchness.<sup>58</sup> This is especially apparent in Delporte's argument that Sennep learned his love of country from his republican

<sup>54</sup> Sheriff and Sherman, “Convergences,” 175-176.

<sup>55</sup> Jo Burr Margadant, “Gender, Vice, and the Political Imaginary in Postrevolutionary France: Reinterpreting the Failure of the July Monarchy, 1830-1848,” *American Historical Review* 104/5 (December, 1999): 1477.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Lord, *The Visual Culture of Wales: Imaging the Nation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) 10-11.

<sup>57</sup> Delporte, “Sennep,” 22.

<sup>58</sup> See Pierre Birnbaum, *The Idea of France* trans. M. B. DeBevoise (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 10-11. Delporte's argument, including his invocation of contemporary observers who ascribe to Sennep a patriotism bordering on nationalism, but not royalism, fails to convince because the Action Française had decided on royalism as a vehicle for its nationalism; it remained more nationalist than particularly royalist. Maurras's philosophies were marked by what they negated, not what they asserted, and so it was possible to be a devotee of his movement without devotion to the royal family. The Action Française, in fact, attracted nationalist and anti-Semitic enthusiasts without winning great converts to monarchism. See Agulhon, *La République*, 341, and Weber, *Action Française*, 51.

father, suggesting that republicans and Catholic monarchist traditionalists were somehow two variations on a shared French conception of nationality. I prefer to acknowledge the competing narratives and the battles over culture wrought by their opposition.

Sennep himself would later attempt to distance himself from the extreme Right, commenting, in 1938, "It's true I've taken more digs at Left politicians but that's because they are so much funnier to draw."<sup>59</sup> This is facile. It reduces the consistent ideology of Sennep's cartoons to supposed factors of humour and expediency. *Time* also sees in Sennep's skewering of Hitler evidence to support his claim to be something other than a committed Rightist. This connection would be credible in the American context where support or rejection of Hitler can be neatly divided into Left and Right. The French Right eventually adopted a more conciliatory attitude toward Hitler, but during the period in question it was rabidly Germanophobic.<sup>60</sup> Even in 1940, the Action Française regarded Germany and Russia equally as enemies, with the only distinction that those who preferred Stalin to Hitler were more misguided than those who would have it the other way.<sup>61</sup> Sennep's opposition to Hitler should also be contextualised; he illustrated a book in 1937 that described three dictators: Hitler; Stalin; and Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>62</sup> His work appeared in many publications of the French Right, even after he parted company with the *Action française*. These include: *Le Charivari*, for which he drew in 1926 and which had been revived by the Action Française and "soaked in an Action Française solution;"<sup>63</sup> the conservative *Le Figaro*, which, from 1927 to 1933, was owned by François Coty, a financial supporter of the Action Française;<sup>64</sup> and *Candide*, a non-royalist but anti-parliamentary publication of the nationalist Right that openly advanced Action Française ideology and featured foreign affairs articles by

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<sup>59</sup> "Pennès' Name," 20.

<sup>60</sup> Charles A. Micaud, *The French Right and Nazi Germany 1933-1939: A Study of Public Opinion* (New York: Octagon, 1964), 3.

<sup>61</sup> Weber, *Action Française*, 437-438.

<sup>62</sup> Georges Suarez, *Nos Seigneurs et Maîtres, Illustrations de Sennep* (Paris: Les Éditions de France, 1937), 213-242.

<sup>63</sup> Delporte, "Sennep," 34, and Weber, *Action Française*, 394-395. Weber points out that even if the readers did not recognise it, *Le Charivari* and other publications were seen by their contributors as being "under Maurras's influence."

<sup>64</sup> Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 150-151.

the Action Française historian Jacques Bainville.<sup>65</sup> Sennep's self-proclaimed distance from the Right, and, by extension, from Maurras and his circle, is an example of the common tendency in post-World War II France among historical actors to re-imagine their past to conform to the dominant narrative in light of pre-war ideologies that became, to say the least, unfashionable. Claims to patriotic resistance during the time of the Vichy regime is one example. In Sennep's case, before World War II, this more attractive narrative was one of solidarity with Western democracies against the German threat. Delporte's aforementioned attempt to associate Sennep with Daudet over Maurras is another example of this tendency, since only the latter was convicted of collaboration with the German occupiers during World War II and discredited. These are small manifestations of the historical re-telling, both by participants and current intellectuals, that Zeev Sternhell addresses in the preface to his landmark study of French fascism.<sup>66</sup>

There is justification for treating Sennep as a journalist, and for approaching the Action Française's vision of the nation for its journalist. The key points are that Sennep conceived of his art as expressly political and thought caricature to be "a sharp form of journalism."<sup>67</sup> He was, in this sense, a political journalist of the Right, but he was also a journalist in the more conventional sense. He began his term with the *Action française* as a reporter and continued to write as well as to draw.<sup>68</sup> Beginning in 1921, he illustrated and increasingly provided the text for a weekly column entitled "*L'Effet de la Semaine*," or "The Impression of the Week." As to the second issue, the relationship of the Action Française, as a movement, to its newspaper, the two were hardly separate entities. Maurras lived for his newspaper and the movement was once derided by a disillusioned former supporter as being nothing more than a newspaper.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Adolf Kimmel, *Der Aufstieg des Nationalsozialismus im Spiegel der Französischen Press 1930-1933* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1969), 204, and Micaud, *French Right*, 240, and Verdès-Leroux, "The Intellectual Extreme Right," 121.

<sup>66</sup> Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, ix-xvi.

<sup>67</sup> Delporte, *Les Crayons*, 15; Delporte, "Sennep," 22 and Delporte, *Les Journalistes*, 230.

<sup>68</sup> "Pennès' Name," 20.

<sup>69</sup> Agulhon, *La République*, 339 and Weber, *Action Française*, 188. Disappointed with the movement, André Gaucher called it "no more than a newspaper." Weber takes it to have been more than a newspaper, but "the paper must have

It should be clear that Sennep was a journalist of the Right. It is now appropriate to turn to the discourse surrounding the nation and its "Others" that emerges from his body of work for the *Action française*. The most common trope is feminisation, and the deeper meaning of Sennep's portrayal of men as women is never more clear than in his depictions of Leon Blum.

## VI: The Marriage of Leon Blum: The Meaning of Feminisation

Blum was the Jewish leader of the French Socialist Party. To understand the significance of his frequent appearances in Sennep's political cartoons, it is important to know that a collaboration between Blum's socialists and the radicals, in 1924, brought to power the *Cartel des Gauches*, a centre-left coalition. Eduard Herriot served as the President of the Council, commonly known as the Premier or Prime Minister.<sup>70</sup> The return of the radicals to power, with socialist support, galvanised the Right, which viewed such a development as a "repudiation of the 'true France,'" and occasioned the founding of France's first fascist league. Opponents of the *Cartel des Gauches* were marked by a concern for the nation as family.<sup>71</sup> This, along with the Right's outrage over a government viewed as the height of un-Frenchness, is the context in which Sennep's feminised Blum appeared.

In fact, when Sennep satirises the *Cartel des Gauches*, Blum repeatedly appears as a woman even when he is not the focus of the cartoon, which indicates the extent to which Blum's femininity was the defining feature of the government of the *Cartel des Gauches*. The cultural meanings of this femininity, then, must be explored as it is frequently the key to nationalist derision of the republican government. In turn, this deployment of current stereotypes, or culturally and discursively constructed "knowledge," about gender should be discussed in light of the contemporary discourse of masculinity

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served as a titanic lever." Verdès-Leroux sees the newspaper as an index of the movement's thought. See Verdès-Leroux, "The Intellectual Extreme Right," 121.

<sup>70</sup> Bernard and Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic*, 163.

<sup>71</sup> Cheryl Koos and Daniella Sarnoff, "France," in Kevin Passmore, ed., *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 168-170, 176-177.

and femininity. In my understanding of gender, I follow Joan Scott's Foucauldian definition of this category of analysis as "knowledge about sexual difference," where knowledge refers to "the understanding produced by cultures and societies of human relationships, in this case of those between men and women."<sup>72</sup>

But first it will be instructive to consider some examples of the ubiquity of a feminine Blum, even as a peripheral figure in cartoons that ostensibly tell another story. This is the case in a cartoon that appeared in the *Action française* on 29 August, 1924, entitled "*Le rétablissement de la paix*," or "the re-establishment [restoration] of the peace" (figure 1).<sup>73</sup> This cartoon shows another government official straining to support Herriot as he hangs from a circus bar. This probably speaks to the strained and forced nature of peace with Germany, since that country continually failed to pay reparations or abide by the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. But germane to our purposes is the presence of Blum in a leotard and tutu observing, or perhaps assisting to direct, the proceedings. Whatever the cartoon's message concerning the specifics of government policy toward Germany, important to this drawing and the larger narrative of Sennep's cartoons is the appearance of Blum as a woman.

Similarly, in a 1925 cartoon entitled "*Avant la seance*," or "Before the meeting [session]," Herriot poses coquettishly with a handkerchief and Blum sashays away, exhibiting similar comportment (figure 2). Alexandre Israël, Herriot's cabinet chief, observing Herriot's curious posturing, asks the Premier, "...*qu'est-ce qu'il te prend?*," or, "what has gotten into you?" to which Herriot replies, "Nothing: Blum told me to imitate his attitude."<sup>74</sup> The pun here comes from the French word "*attitude*," which can mirror the English word "attitude" but can also refer to bodily posture. Herriot's willingness to copy Blum's "*attitude*," with this satirised meaning as posture, also suggests Blum's dominant or directorial role in Herriot's government. The significance of a Jew in this role for the

<sup>72</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Action française*, 29 August, 1924, 1. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

<sup>74</sup> *Action française*, 26 March, 1925, 1.



French Right will be discussed below. But this cartoon may also, on some level, hint at a sexual relationship between Blum and Herriot, as, in French, the use of the verb “*prendre*” with a person as the direct object can mean “to copulate.” While this sentence has another idiomatic meaning, it is possible that the phrase “*il te prend*,” at a conscious or subconscious level, conjured up or was intended to conjure up the image of Blum and Herriot in a sexual relationship. I hope that my English rendering of the French “*qu'est-ce qu'il te prend?*” as “what has gotten into you?” with this English phrase's imagery of penetration beneath its meaning as an interrogative. In this way, the English translation reproduces the effect of the original French on its readers; in both, a sexual idiom is embedded within an innocuous query.

This interpretation is only credible because, in addition to Blum as a woman, the theme of Blum and Herriot as sexually linked is recurrent throughout Sennep's work. Although the radicals assumed power with the support of Blum's socialists, “the coalition was weak. The socialists supported it only in a limited way and would not take part in government.”<sup>75</sup> While historians may write of a weak partnership and economic appeals to the socialists, Sennep consistently personalised the radical-socialist union as a marriage between two individuals, Herriot and Blum. In his 1926 published collection of caricatured drawings of *Cartel* members and their allies, in which each figure is given one drawing and a brief description, Blum is described as “the wife.” The caption reads, “the *Cartel* was born from his union with Édouard Herriot.” Herriot's page dubs him “the husband,” and again the *Cartel* is the offspring of his marriage to Blum.<sup>76</sup> The one piece of information selected about both figures is their “marriage” to each other. The theme also appears in another 1925 cartoon, in which Herriot and Blum appear together in royal dress, with Blum as the queen, and Herriot announces, in the fashion of Louis XIV, “*L'Etat, c'est nous!*” (figure 3).<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Bernard and Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic*, 163.

<sup>76</sup> Jehan Sennep, *Cartel et Cie: Caricatures Inédites d'après nature de Sennep* (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1926), 16-17, 42-43.

<sup>77</sup> *Action française*, 27 August, 1925, 1.

Appearing in a monarchist newspaper, figure 3 can be taken as an illustration of the perversion of “natural” governance represented by the *Cartel*. Again, this government represented, to the counter-revolutionaries, the height of un-Frenchness. A government deemed contrary to what was “French” was constantly depicted by Sennep as an improper marriage. Parties, issues and coalitions are reduced, in his cartoons, to a physical union between a Jew/woman and the Premier. This can add to our understanding of how the nation was removed from abstraction and made tangible as a collection of familial, gender and sexual relations. In this period, one of the fears of those on the Right was the “modern woman” who chose not to have children.<sup>78</sup> Such women imperilled the nation. In an intellectual climate where natalism was so prominent, the analogy to Blum and Herriot is clear. Surely theirs will be, by necessity, a childless marriage (except for the coalition itself, labelled their child). As such, the *Cartel*'s danger to the nation is effectively conveyed by evoking a development in gender identity understood as a threat to France. If natalist discourse determines, in part, the visual language that best captures the danger of the *Cartel*, so too does the analogy of an “unnatural” and childless marriage shape and solidify the discourse in which such marriages as facts and ideas promise such peril.

Sometimes the gender roles in this “marriage” were reversed. Figure 4 shows the radical and socialist alliance is shown through Blum milking Herriot, who is drawn as a cow.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps Herriot's rotundity led to his bovine portrayal, but by having this cow produce milk, Sennep emphasises its femininity. In addition, this is one of the few portrayals where Blum is not emphatically portrayed as feminine. The usual techniques for achieving this are missing; Blum is not clad in feminine garb, nor is he striking an exaggeratedly “feminine” pose. Still, the sexual imagery of Blum coaxing milk, with his hands, from Herriot's udders is unmistakable and suggests the more familiar Herriot/Blum relationship, where Blum fulfils the feminine role. Also, Blum is filling Socialist Party (*P.S.*) pails with Herriot's

<sup>78</sup> Koos and Sarnoff, “France,” 171.

<sup>79</sup> *Action française*, 30 October, 1924, 1.

milk, suggesting an exploitative relationship where Blum and his group benefit from the collaboration.

Stories are intertextual—they contain allusions to other stories<sup>80</sup>—and so the archaeology of a “discourse of cows” could shed further light on the meaning this cartoon had for readers in interwar France. It appeared in a nationalist journal, and the narrative of the “true” nation lurks here too. This cartoon evokes the peasant, central to the definition of the nation but perverted through the usurpation of the peasant's work (and the reigns of government) by the “rootless” Jew. In interpreting Sennep's cartoons as constituent and formative elements of nationalist discourse and sentiment, it is crucial to bear in mind all possible layers of meaning, from the direct authorial goal of the satire to the larger cultural narratives of which one cartoon comprises a scene. Awareness of the story being told, the story assumed as “natural” by author and audience and the concentric circles of stories in which the symbols acquire meaning is essential for a sensitive interpretation of visual sources.

These cartoons reveal that Sennep viewed the nation as threatened, in its government but also in the practices that define it, such as rural work, by an internal enemy. This was the *Cartel des Gauches*, but the emphasis on Blum shows that the real danger came from Blum, a Jew. Nationalists defined Jews as a “race” separate from the French nation yet resident in its territory, and Sennep's cartoons reveal a pronounced anxiety about a Jew so close to the centre of power. This is further illustrated by the fact that Blum was not a minister in the government and, as mentioned above, his party supported the government without participating. Theirs was not an enthusiastic alliance, yet the *Cartel* is invariably drawn by Sennep as resting in the personal union between Herriot and Blum.

This confirms and expands our knowledge of the specific nature and purpose of the Action Française's anti-Semitism. Royalist leaders had high hopes for anti-Semitism extending beyond a campaign against Jews as “foreigners.” The Action Française and the rest of the radical Right saw anti-Semitism politically, as the potential cohesive element to unite the populace in opposition to democracy

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<sup>80</sup> Maza, “Stories in History,” 1514.

and the established order. It was common on the Right to base the envisioned French unity and “purification of the *national body*” on the rallying power of anti-Semitism (my emphasis).<sup>81</sup> How was this mass anti-Semitism to be inculcated? Henri Vaugeois, a founder of the Action Française, called, in the movement's newspaper in 1900, for anti-Semitism as “an instinctive, quasi-physical repulsion for the Jew and for his skin.”<sup>82</sup> That the Action Française was convinced that “truths” about Jews and the fate of a nation in their grip took physical form in Jews' bodies is demonstrated by Daudet's discovery of the primary proof that the assimilated Alfred Dreyfus was “not French” in “his act, his demeanor, his physiognomy.”<sup>83</sup> “Racial” characteristics were mainly revealed in the body.

In his portrayals of Blum, Sennep mirrors this physical anti-Semitism; the editors afforded him so much space because his was a powerful medium for allowing the nation personified, the “national body,” to seep into popular consciousness. The impure elements in the “national body,” having risen so high in its government, take the form, in Sennep's idiom, of one perverse body, the Jew's body. And it was on widespread physical revulsion at this body that the Action Française rested its hopes for French solidarity against the Republic. Given the importance of the physical in anti-Semitism, a most important doctrine, Sennep's visual sources provide an understanding of the functioning of anti-Semitism in this culture as well as the prevalence of the body and gender as sights where more abstract fears were projected.

Returning to Sennep's feminisation of Blum and sexual pairing of him and Herriot, it must be said that this too occurred within a particular discourse of gender in France. After World War I, one of the primary means by which certain French intellectuals understood their nation was gender, or the proper functioning of men and women within the nation. The social upheaval wrought by the war led

<sup>81</sup> Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, 44-45. This opportunistic anti-Semitism has produced a debate about the degree to which Action Française leaders were personally anti-Semitic. See Weber, *Action Française*, 199-200.

<sup>82</sup> Weber, *Action Française*, 199.

<sup>83</sup> *Le Figaro*, 6 January, 1895, cited in Jean-Denis Bredin, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus* trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: George Braziller, 1986), 7.

some, particularly on the political Right, to seek order and to link gender roles to the state of the nation. Men of the Right such as Pierre Drieu la Rochelle “confus[ed] gender disruption with the demise of French civilization itself,” and “[t]his conflation of gender anxiety and...cultural despair would persist...so that debates about the sexes also became attempts to address the meaning of the war.”<sup>84</sup> Norman Kleeblatt locates similar anxieties about the nation reflected through gender in an earlier period, specifically in the body of Alfred Dreyfus. Assimilated Jews such as Dreyfus, an “able-bodied” soldier, challenged stereotypes about Jews and weakness, and Kleeblatt shows how supposed Jewish traits, held responsible for France's problems, could be “reinscribed onto the body of a Jew who virtually could pass for a gentile.”<sup>85</sup> These examples demonstrate how fears about the nation were grasped through the performance of gender, its subversion and the greater “knowledge” of an individual or “race” that it conveyed.

For a movement primarily concerned with the nation, the prevalence of images that rely on gender, whether through the feminisation of Blum and his “marriage” to Herriot or the portrayal of concepts such as the nation as gendered bodies, to be addressed below, shows the primacy of gender identities in defining what was French. As Siân Reynolds writes, “both men and women with all their varieties of status, age, actions and beliefs, were part of the historical entity 'France' between the wars.”<sup>86</sup> I take this to mean that the idea of France was largely constructed according to the perceived appearance, dress and behaviour of the men and women within it as well as those construed as outsiders. The sexual elements of Blum's portrayal in the cartoons discussed thus far demonstrates that Blum's Jewishness was seen as a threat to the nation, but more importantly that this threat could be elucidated through references to “everyday knowledge” about gender, specifically biological men who

<sup>84</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 8-9.

<sup>85</sup> Norman L. Kleeblatt, “The Body of Alfred Dreyfus: A Site for France's Displaced Anxieties of Masculinity, Homosexuality and Power,” in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 76-91.

<sup>86</sup> Siân Reynolds, *France Between the Wars: Gender and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 13.

exhibited inner femininity, and its association with Jewishness.

Intertextually, the narrative of Blum as wife has power because it conforms to and expands upon a culturally ingrained story of Blum and Jews as feminine. Turning Blum into “the wife” adds a chapter of menace, rooted in prevailing fears about the nation, to a stereotype that precedes Sennep. George Mosse has excavated the twin association of Jews as homosexual and feminine, its intellectual heritage and insertion into cultural knowledge and the result of this stereotype that the Jew becomes culturally disruptive by “infringing upon the space that was supposed to divide true men from women.” He remarks that Blum specifically was a common target of feminine or transsexual depiction.<sup>87</sup> Again, Blum stands out as a candidate for this caricatured portrayal because his claims to it are twofold—some thinkers of the French Right, such as Antoine R  dier, also conceived of those possessed of the republican construction of the French nation as effeminate. Once again, “real” and effete men are inextricable from society and culture; for R  dier, the “true man” would save the French nation.<sup>88</sup> Feminised because he was a republican and a Jew and involved in government by marriage, the meaning of Sennep’s caricatures of Blum play on contemporary conflation of gender and nation. A cultural tale can be related in a one-panel cartoon only because Sennep’s symbol system builds upon stories that others have told and characters that they have introduced.

## VI: “*L’Ambassadrice*”

We have seen how Sennep seizes upon the person of Blum as a site to convey fears about Jews within the French polity, if not the national community, as well as about the related “gender trouble’ [that] loomed large in French political discourse” in the years following World War I.<sup>89</sup> Figure 5 again

<sup>87</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 68-70.

<sup>88</sup> Koos and Sarnoff, “France,” 171.

<sup>89</sup> Koos and Sarnoff, “France,” 168-170.

relates a threat to the nation with instability in the gender order.<sup>90</sup> This cartoon from July, 1925, entitled “*L'Ambassadrice*,” or “The [female] Ambassador,” shows Blum and Moroccan rebel Abd el-Krim standing in front of the door of Eduard Herriot's office. Carrying Abd el-Krim's conditions for peace, *Action française* readers saw Blum, with Abd el-Krim behind him, knocking on Herriot's door, delivering the Moroccan leader's terms to the Premier. A caption attributed to Abd el-Krim reads, “*Travadja la mouquère! Travadja bono!*”<sup>91</sup> *Mouquère*, or *moukère*, is, via Spanish, a derogatory French pseudo-Arabic word for woman, prostitute, or mistress.<sup>92</sup> The caption, then, in Spanish inflected pseudo-Arabic, has Abd el-Krim urging Blum, “his woman,” to do his work and deliver his terms of peace to the French head of government. Again, the currency of Blum as a woman is called upon in the telling of a larger story.

While Blum and Abd el-Krim met and collaborated on the front page of the *Action française*, there is no reason to suspect that such an encounter ever took place. Since 1921, Abd el-Krim had been leading the resistance to the imposition of a Spanish protectorate over the Rif, a mountainous region in northern Morocco.<sup>93</sup> The details of how France came to take part in the Rifian War lie beyond this study. Suffice it to say that it had to do with defending the Spanish sphere in Morocco, lest the Rifian rebellion spread to the French zone.<sup>94</sup> In June, 1925, a conference was held in Madrid at which French and Spanish representatives discussed terms of peace to present to Abd el-Krim. He refused these terms in August, hoping for full recognition of the Rifian republic.<sup>95</sup> But Abd el-Krim did not attend this conference, and he certainly did not visit Blum or prevail upon him to act as his ambassador. Yet

<sup>90</sup> *Action française*, 29 July, 1925, 1.

<sup>91</sup> *Action française*, 29 July, 1925, 1.

<sup>92</sup> William Leonard Schwartz, “A Glossary of Franco-Arabic Words,” *French Review* 12/2 (December, 1938): 139.

<sup>93</sup> C. R. Pennell, *A Country with a Government and a Flag: The Rif War in Morocco 1921-1926* (Cambridgeshire, UK: Middle East and North African Studies Press, 1986), 1, and Gérard Maurer, “L'Environnement Géographique Rifain,” in *Abd el-Krim et la République du Rif: Actes du Colloque International d'Études Historiques et Sociologiques 18-20 Janvier 1973* (Paris: François Maspero, 1976), 15.

<sup>94</sup> For a full account see David S. Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif: Abd el Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968).

<sup>95</sup> Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif*, 179-182.

significant space on the first page of the 29 July, 1925, edition of the nationalist daily was devoted to showing these two figures to be in cahoots.

The surface meaning of this fictionalised situation is readily apparent: the *Cartel des Gauches* is doing the bidding of a colonial rebel, probably to the detriment of “true France.” Sennep's selection of Blum, who probably never met with Abd el-Krim, over the abundance of other political figures who could have been shown doing the Rifian leader's bidding, reinforces the earlier discussion of the significance of this figure, placed in these fictional situations because he synthesised so much meaning about the nation's foreign and gender-related perils. That is, Blum appears as the “*ambassadrice*” because as a woman and as a Jew, civilly (at least in so far that women could not be parliamentarians) and “racially” outside of the national community, he encapsulates, in one body, the enemy within among the republicans. But what has this to do with the Moroccan rebel?

In this case, Sennep is relying on yet other commonplace associations with Blum's Jewishness to assert a provocative vision of the nation subverted. The most important internal French political reverberation of the war against Abd el-Krim was the telegram of support sent to the Moroccan in 1924 by the communist deputy Jacques Doriot. It is this event that often provides the only reference to Abd el-Krim in general histories of France in this period.<sup>96</sup> The Rifian cause, then, was linked with the nationalists' nemesis, the communists. The communists, in turn, especially Soviets, were often caricatured by Sennep as Jews—not as Jews like Blum, suave internal threats, but as blatantly scheming black-hatted Orthodox Jews. This is shown in figure 6, where Jews/Soviets are shown to have financed the *Cartel's* campaign.<sup>97</sup> This confluence of communists and Jews might have also dictated the selection of Blum as Abd el-Krim's fictional representative.

Equally, though, it may have called to mind the Germans, enemies of France *par excellence*.

French Jews, many of whom were descendants of immigrants from Germany and had German last

<sup>96</sup> Fabrice Abbad, *La France des Années 20* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1993), 138 and Agulhon, *La République*, 366.

<sup>97</sup> *Action française*, 27 October, 1924, 1.



names (such as Blum), were often associated with Germany. Maurras “continually associated the Jews with the German Empire;”<sup>98</sup> as they were feminine, so was Romanticism, another German import.<sup>99</sup> The connection between Germans and Rifians is made more plausible by the appearance, directly to the Right of “*L'Ambassadrice*,” of an interview with a deputy who had just returned from Morocco. The interviewer notes that the Rifians' manoeuvres call to mind the “German manner,” and asserts that “it is surely a German who is directing the operations of Abd el-Krim, a colonel.” The deputy, Clarou, appears, in response, to refer to Abd el-Krim as “this German colonel.”<sup>100</sup> This reveals a paranoia that the enemies of France would converge in Morocco and attack from beyond the nation, as they converged in the person of Leon Blum and attacked from within.

All of this is to show that Jewishness offered a multiplicity of dangers to nationalists obsessed with the regeneration of “true France.” It is visually, in the representation of one Jew's body as well as by its very selection as a character in a particular narrative, that these contradictory associations can exist at once. Blum as the “*ambassadrice*” conjures up Jewish, Republican, communist and German attacks on the essential France simultaneously. Doctrine and conspiracy theory that might take pages to explicate can be powerfully combined in a single frame, when that frame is, by its publication in the *Action française*, inserted into the nationalist conversation and when its author avails himself of the extant symbolic language.

There is another level on which feminisation operates in “*L'Ambassadrice*.” The portrayal of Abd el-Krim himself offers some suggestions for what nationalists saw when they looked at France's empire, specifically North African colonised peoples. In her study of the French republican idea of empire, Alice Conklin writes that, while she is concerned with “the official secular discourse of

<sup>98</sup> Michael R. Marras, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), 99. Patriotic Jews, in turn, located Germany, the national enemy, as the source of anti-Semitism which “had no indigenous roots in the country of the Revolution and emancipation.”

<sup>99</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 214n29.

<sup>100</sup> *Action française*, 29 July, 1925, 1.

civilization,” the role of colonisation in the alternate, Catholic construction of the nation “remains a rich topic for historical investigation.”<sup>101</sup> The treatment of the construction of race in France is also in its developing stages.<sup>102</sup> Assessing the visual representation of one colonial rebel is a limited attempt to fill this scholarly lacuna. Not only do historians of the French Right not engage with Abd el-Krim, but published works on Abd el Krim explore his relationship with various players in French politics, but not the extreme Right.<sup>103</sup>

It seems clear that the Action Française in this period would have taken an interest in overseas colonies. First, in the 1920s, France's colonial empire was at its zenith.<sup>104</sup> Combined with this, the metropole was coming into increased contact with colonised subjects; wartime censorship had previously meant that many remained ignorant of anti-colonial political movements<sup>105</sup> and the war had brought 300,000 non-European workers to France.<sup>106</sup> In 1923, the Action Française set up a new regional secretariat for Algeria. This in a context of ongoing debate about the *mission civilatrice*, the project of fashioning Africans into French people, and the circumstances under which Africans could acquire French citizenship.<sup>107</sup>

Because of the Action Française's elevation of “Frenchness” to the supreme value and its obsessions with perversions of this spiritual concept, it is reasonable to assume that the movement concerned itself with developments in the colonies. Even so, it is difficult to tease these issues out of

<sup>101</sup> Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 259n2.

<sup>102</sup> Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, “Introduction: Race, France, Histories” in Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 1-7 and Tyler Stovall, “The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War,” *American Historical Review* 103/3 (June, 1998): 738-739.

<sup>103</sup> Paul Isoart, “La Guerre du Rif et le Parlement Français,” in *Abd el-Krim et la République du Rif: Actes du Colloque International d'Études Historiques et Sociologiques 18-20 Janvier 1973* (Paris: François Maspero, 1976), 173-217, Robert Charvin, “Le Parti Communiste Français face à la Guerre du Rif,” in *ibid.*, 218-236 and Charles-Robert Ageron, “Les Socialistes Français et la Guerre du Rif,” in *ibid.*, 273-292.

<sup>104</sup> Agulhon, *La République*, 363-364.

<sup>105</sup> Bernard and Dubief, *Decline of the Third Republic*, 125.

<sup>106</sup> Stoval, “The Color Line,” 768.

<sup>107</sup> Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 136, 142-143, 151-153 and Myron Echenberg, “Paying the Blood Tax: Military Conscription and French West Africa, 1914-1929,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 9/2 (1975): 174.

the historiography. Maurras's writings on the colonies and the development, after 1935, of a colonial programme in his newspaper have been discussed along with the Vichy regime's colonial philosophy.<sup>108</sup> This, however, concerns a later period and an altered political and cultural context. In Mauritius, a formerly French British colony, the sugar barons had a party in the 1940s, the *Ralliement Mauricien*, that was affiliated with the Action Française.<sup>109</sup> At the very least this, along with Maurras's embracing of adherents in Algeria,<sup>110</sup> indicates that the nationalist movement supported French rule in the colonies, presumably as an aspect of France's national glory. Sennep's portrayals of sub-Saharan Africans are generally one-dimensionally racist, such as his satire, in his weekly column, of the League of Nations that includes an imagined debate in which a central African delegate can say only, "Crrr! crrr! crrr! crrrr!"<sup>111</sup> The accompanying drawing shows a wide-eyed, large-lipped, bejewelled, barefoot "savage" wearing a loin cloth. Generally, Sennep's drawings of sub-Saharan Africans are not as nuanced and layered as his portrayal of the North African Abd el-Krim, and therefore not as suggestive for the interplay of gender and sexuality in French nationalists' understanding of the nation through its "Others."

Abd el-Krim's victories had important ripples in Europe. His 1921 victory over Spanish forces at Annual was a catalyst for the rise of fascism in Spain.<sup>112</sup> From Sennep's cartoon, it seems that his military successes also wrought fear in France. Again, this fear coupled with and took expression through fears about the gender order within France. Abd el-Krim is drawn as short, fat and grinning mischievously. This evokes the humiliation of France being defeated (or given orders) by a colonial.

<sup>108</sup> Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boëtsch, "La France de Pétain et l'Afrique: Images et Propagandes Coloniales," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28/1 (1994): 5, 7.

<sup>109</sup> High Tinker, "Between Africa, Asia and Europe: Mauritius: Cultural Marginalism and Political Control," *African Affairs* 76/304 (July, 1977): 330.

<sup>110</sup> *Action française*, 25 November, 1926, cited in Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *Action Française: French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 20.

<sup>111</sup> *Action française*, 8 September, 1923, 2. This column has the authorial byline "Jehan Sennep et Jabon." It is not clear who Jabon is.

<sup>112</sup> Wolfgang Sauer, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism?" *American Historical Review* 73/2 (December, 1967): 421.

At the same time, Abd el-Krim himself is feminised in this drawing. While he was, in life, corpulent, his particular roundness in this cartoon, along with his garb, a tight robe that could be a dress, and his almost flirtatious facial expression give the impression of femininity. When Sennep regarded Abd el-Krim, then, he saw not a military leader or martial strategist but rather a lascivious exotic “Other” of indeterminate gender.

I maintain that this *is* what was threatening about the Rifian military leader. The implication of femininity and the appearance of Blum, which could be counted upon to symbolise femininity, falls within a widespread ascription of homosexuality to North Africans. The Spanish were concerned with “boy markets” in their section of Morocco and, reflecting the widespread nature of this construction and the desire to combat the meaning derived from it, Abd el-Krim had instituted the death penalty for sodomy.<sup>113</sup> Another strand of the discourse about Moroccans, strengthened through repetition in the popular press, was that they were “warlike savages fighting the French.”<sup>114</sup> Sennep's cartoon reflects both aspects of thought about North Africans, as Abd el-Krim's sexuality is part of his involvement with Blum, already shown to represent a threat to the “true” nation. This furthers Roberts's thesis that gender became a shorthand for discussing World War I's meaning,<sup>115</sup> in that anxiety over change vis-a-vis the colonies also took the form, calculatedly or reflexively, of imprecise gender identity and dominant (“Travadja la mouqère”) sexuality. In making Blum Abd el-Krim's “*ambassadrice*,” Sennep drew a picture in which the dominant/submissive binary opposition of coloniser/colonised is subverted through sexual power to reflect the fear of a sexually inflected dominance exerted by the colonised subject, extending theories about the ubiquity of gender in the interwar intellectual climate to the colonial sphere.

Finally, the feminine nature of Abd el-Krim as seen in “*L'Ambassadrice*” is clearer when

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<sup>113</sup> Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif*, 30.

<sup>114</sup> Stoval, “The Color Line,” 759.

<sup>115</sup> Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, 4-5.

considered against contemporary sympathetic portrayals of the Moroccan leader. Figure 7 is a photograph of Abd el-Krim from a 1927 book by an observer sympathetic to Abd el-Krim and his cause.<sup>116</sup> Here, his countenance is stern and he is not smiling as he is during his imagined meeting with Blum. Another commentator of professed friendly disposition reports that he “habitually wore a mild expression.”<sup>117</sup> In the photography, he appears heavy but not exaggeratedly round or squat. More importantly, his robe is straight and does not cling to his form as it does in Sennep’s drawing, a flourish that indicates female sexuality. Readers were shown photographs in the *Action française* only rarely. The main source of images in its pages was Sennep’s pen. We have seen the importance of the physical in revealing inherent traits. The caricaturist’s power as the creator of images to reflect and extend cultural narratives cannot be underestimated. Abd el-Krim was also aware of the power that accompanies the control of images. He ruled as a despot and, rarely appearing in public, was never seen by the majority of his people, allowing him to become “a glamorous legend—an omnipotent chieftain leading his people to unheard-of accomplishments.”<sup>118</sup> Sennep’s images are a battle for the power to represent. They demystified and domesticated this threatening military leader for a readership worried about the state and glory of France.

## VII: Infestation and Infiltration

The narrative of the nation threatened by scheming elements who were accepted by republicans as within its fold is demonstrated in sundry ways by Sennep. We have seen how fears associated with “gender trouble” were connected to republicans, understood as something other than “true men” in the nationalism idiom. Republicans were also portrayed as having infested the nation; they were an internal enemy that could be eradicated.

<sup>116</sup> Walter B. Harris, *France, Spain and the Rif* (London: Edward Arnold, 1927), frontispiece. Harris had a racist respect for the Rifians, believing them to be members of a “white race.”

<sup>117</sup> Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif*, 81.

<sup>118</sup> Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif*, 82, 146.

This can be seen in figure 8, from 1923, in which a sign points the way to the Ruhr.<sup>119</sup> As mentioned, the Poincaré government had decided to occupy the Ruhr, an act that the Action Française interpreted as a victory. A man, presumably a soldier given his boots, trousers and hat, shakes out his shirt, apparently, given the heading “*Avant l'action*,” on his way to participate in the military exercise that was directed at Germany and heartedly endorsed by the Action Française. Above the caption “*Les totos*,” or “The lice,” insects crawl out of the soldier's shirt. These three insects have the faces of republican leaders.<sup>120</sup> The moustache worn by the insect who has fallen to the ground reveals him to be Aristide Briand, a moderate republican member of the liberal Right who had been Premier most recently from January, 1921, until his resignation one year later. In the late 1920s, he would become a champion of pacifism in opposition to Poincaré-esque militaristic nationalism.<sup>121</sup> The middle louse's moustache identifies him as Blum. The upper-most bug has the bald head, straight moustache and curved eyebrows over small, black circular eyes that mark Sennep's depiction of Joseph Caillaux, another former Premier and member of the Radical Party. In 1918, he had been arrested for treason on the orders of the wartime Premier, George Clemenceau, for his opposition to French participation in World War I. In 1920 he was convicted of corresponding with Germany and banished from France for ten years. While he would be pardoned in 1924, at the time of “*Avant l'action*”'s appearance he was still banned.<sup>122</sup>

The combination of this image of infestation with a military campaign against Germany was surely a powerful one in 1923. During World War I, French territory had been ravaged by Germans; despite Germany's surrender, it was not occupied and its territory was relatively unscathed. Here, republicans are presented as vermin that have crept into the nation, reduced in this cartoon to its military. It is through militarisation and action against Germany that these republican lice may be cast

<sup>119</sup> *Action française*, 7 January, 1923, 4.

<sup>120</sup> In identifying these leaders as usually drawn by Sennep, I have relied on his depictions of them in his *Cartel et Cie*.

<sup>121</sup> Bernard and Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic*, xii-xiii, 160-161.

<sup>122</sup> Weber, *Action Française*, 109-110, 153, 159.

out of the nation; the soldier expelling the pests from his clothes parallels the removal of republicans from the “national body.” The appearance of Caillaux in this cartoon amplifies the point. His conviction and physical expulsion had been regarded by the left-wing press as a victory for the Action Française.<sup>123</sup> In “*Avant l'action*,” Sennep shows the infiltration of republican elements, one of whose banishment was attributed to the monarchist movement, as insects, or unwanted and potentially dangerous invaders with the capacity to multiply rapidly. Sennep expresses the Right's convictions about the ruling Third Republic by representing its officials through local knowledge, in this case phobias, with, literally, a political and cultural face. In this image, *action* can expose and free the French nation from this [republican] pestilence. This belief in the purifying property of action is in keeping with the Action Française's, the French *action* movement's, thought, if not always its deeds. For all his rhetoric and “verbose diatribes,” Maurras “had no plan of action,” and when pressed for action by followers at a moment of potential crisis for the hated Third Republic, in 1934, Maurras remarked, “I don't like it when people lose their cool.”<sup>124</sup>

The theme of figure 8 is that enemies of the French nation are the undesirable elements within French society. Furthermore, even once cast out, as was the case with Caillaux, these insidious invaders could creep back, unseen, into the national fold. This is suggested by the soldier's discovering them and shaking them out of his shirt. If republicans were seen to have descended upon the nation in the manner of insects, what was at stake in allowing this pestilence to remain un-exterminated? An answer is suggested by another cartoon by Sennep with the theme of infiltration (figure 9).<sup>125</sup> In “*Carnaval*,” the masquerade innocently associated with carnivals becomes sinister. The story told in this cartoon has four stages. First, a person in a duck costume removes it, revealing a pig costume reminiscent of the corpulent Herriot. When this costume is removed, the disguised figure is now

<sup>123</sup> Weber, *Action Française*, 109-110.

<sup>124</sup> Verdès-Leroux, “The Intellectual Extreme Right,” 120.

<sup>125</sup> *Action française*, 11 February, 1923, 4.

wearing the guise of a fish with Briand's head. Finally, when this fish costume is also discarded, a winking Germania, the female symbol of Germany, is shown to have been wearing the faces and bodies of republican leaders.

This cartoon suggests first and foremost that visual appearances cannot be trusted. "Beneath" and beneath this republican leaders who claim to serve France stands the eternal enemy, Germany. Germany was an external threat to France, as conceived of by nationalists, but it is interesting to note that the source of the danger posed by Germany is the republican leaders and their willingness to be co-opted in the service of Germany. Germany does not menace France; rather, she winks, indicating that she has slyly manipulated and taken advantage of the Third Republic's government. Now, her bidding is done by the faces and bodies of Herriot and Briand. In this representation, then, the threat of Germany really has more to do with traitorous republicans who serve Germania rather than acting in the interests of "France." This is still a commentary on the Republic, for the implication is that integral nationalist leaders would, by definition, assign to France the highest priority; Germania is a danger only insofar as she is able to infiltrate the highest echelons of the Third Republic.

There is, though, more at work in this cartoon and more use of local understanding to deliver a point. "*Carnaval*" appeared in February, right around the time of the French carnival celebration, or *Mardi Gras*, that precedes Ash Wednesday. As Ash Wednesday is a decidedly religious holiday with particular significance for Catholics, so too has the widely celebrated *Carnaval* religious origins. It will be remembered that the monarchists stood for "true France," Catholic and monarchical, while the faction loyal to the ideals of the French Revolution imagined a nation republican and secular. By participating in a religious festival, it is again suggested, as with the theme of lice, that republicans have infiltrated "true France." *Carnaval*, as *Fasching*, is also widely popular in Germany, and so it is not surprising to see that it is Germania who, literally, props up the secular republicans at the celebration. Not only are things not as they seem, but the republicans, themselves lice on the body of the French



nation, carry themselves hidden German interests, almost as a person carries lice, unseen and festering. By the time these are revealed, the “carnival,” or the administration of France, has already proceeded through four stages.

We have seen how Jews were alternately equated with communists, Germans and, through a shared femininity, with republicans. In “*Carnaval*,” it is republicans and Germans who are linked through an elaborate masquerade. This is to show that as Sennep’s discourse of the French nation’s enemies evolved, all of said enemies were, by some degree of separation, linked with each other if not actually fused together. But in the end, it is always the internal enemy, the republicans and the Jews among them, who enable an external threat. As in the case of “*Carnaval*,” foreign enemies could not threaten France were it not for collusion or even stupidity among the leaders of France. Besides the obvious, that the French Right despised the Republic and its Enlightenment and Revolutionary heritage, this may also be seen as an attempt to rationalise the fact that France could be menaced by the likes of Germany, given the perceived greatness of “French civilisation.”<sup>126</sup>

### **VIII: Impotence and Submissiveness**

As suggested, in Sennep’s work even France’s external enemies were drawn as threatening mostly due to republican incompetence. This reflects, in fact, integral nationalism as a programme, since it implies that all problems stem from a failure to have France as the highest value and to base all decisions according to their ramifications for France. The problems are shown to emanate from within France; if these French-specific problems could be remedied, the implication is that its woes on the international scene would disappear.

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<sup>126</sup> The progress of Latin civilisation from Athens to Rome to Paris formed the “meta-narrative” of French civilisation that underpinned Maurras’s belief in French greatness. For Maurras’s historical conception of civilisation, which posited France as the heir to Greco-Roman accomplishments that had been “interrupted” by “the Germanic Reformation,” see Gaetano DeLeonibus, *Charles Maurras’s Classicising Aesthetics: An Aestheticization of Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 11-12.

Continuing with “*Carnaval*”’s theme of Germania underneath the Republic, consider figure 10, “*L’Emprunt pour les Boches*,” or “The Loan for the Krauts.”<sup>127</sup> The meaning of this cartoon is fairly clear. Herriot aims his gun at someone, perhaps an “average Frenchman,” who is coerced into emptying his pockets. Meanwhile, Germania caresses Herriot and calls him her “*trésor*.” Again, the radical Premier is acting against the French nation, individualised into one figure. He is threatening this Frenchman’s life to raise money for Germany. This relates another section of the narrative in which Germany threatens France only through internal proxies who toil for Germania at the expense of the French nation. As is often the case with Sennep—and part of what makes his cartoons doubly revealing of an unfolding discourse—he is quite clever in his use of language. “*Mon trésor*” can simply mean “my treasure” in the figurative sense of “my dear,” suggesting a sexual relationship between the *Cartel des Gauches* and Germany at the expense of France. But “*trésor*” can also refer to the governmental department of public revenue. In this sense, Herriot is endearingly praised by Germania as her “sweetheart” and her banker. She threatens through suggestion; if France’s greatness is subjugated by Germania, it is because of the radicals’ collusion, not because the former was bested.

The theme of traitorous coöperation is often satirised along with lack of action. As we have seen, sexual metaphors are never far from Sennep’s caricature. That is, he grasps associations with and “common knowledge” of sexual and gender-based behaviour to convey complex aspects of his movement’s philosophy concisely, in one panel. One recurrent sexual image that often accompanies the lack of action against foreign threats is impotence. In figure 11, French military figures fire a cannon at Germany.<sup>128</sup> But Germania smirks in the distance as the cannon fires not ammunition but notes. Similarly, in figure 12, notes, conferences and memoranda, all made of paper, are flung at an impervious Germania.<sup>129</sup> These paper missiles either bounce off or stick harmlessly in her girth.

<sup>127</sup> *Action française*, 19 October, 1924, 1.

<sup>128</sup> *Action française*, 25 November, 1923, 2.

<sup>129</sup> *Action française*, 17 December, 1922, 4.

Figure 12 appeared one month before French troops occupied the Ruhr. When figure 11 appeared, these troops were still there. Both of these cartoons, then, appeared in the context of debates over Germany's failure to pay World War I reparations. Throughout 1922 and 1923, Germany's inability to pay loomed large in political discourse. Predictably, the Action Française favoured punishing Germany and forcing it to pay. This conforms to the nationalists' faith in action as well as their hatred of Germany and anxiety that France might be taken advantage of, or that Germany might emerge from the late war, though vanquished, in a better position than victorious France.

The injection of sexuality into Sennep's visualisation of the Franco-German dispute helps clarify who exactly was seen, by the extreme Right, to be responsible for the weakening of France by this smirking Germania. When the Republic opts for action, soft, pliable and ineffective paper takes the place of bullets or cannon balls. The trope of sexual dysfunction is employed to demonstrate the republicans' impotence to deal with the neighbouring enemy. It is not only that paper bouncing off Germania's body shows the futility of conferences and memoranda to effect change and make an impact as that could be shown in a variety of ways. The image of weaponry with paper as ammunition is crucial. It is particularly pointed that these papers stand in for ammunition; they occupy space where competent men would have hard ammunition. This substitution of soft for hard underscores the sexual dimension of France's perceived failures regarding Germany. This failure is an impotence when faced with an imposing female figure. As there was a discourse on the Right linking republican men and effeminacy, here republican leaders' sexual powers stand in for their military fortitude. As the former is lacking, so is the latter. Germania is simple and oblivious. At the very most she can be interpreted, in these drawings, as mischievous. But the threat she represents comes in truth from the republicans who either serve her or are impotent in their opposition. "Everyday knowledge" of sexual prowess and its links to power are used to strengthen Sennep's points about relations between French and Germany. Specifically, this imagery very clearly defines the true enemy of France as lying within French territory

and not beyond its borders.

As Sennep's art progressed, republican leaders were shown to be not merely impotent but prone to sexual violation. In figure 13, Herriot has returned from a trip to London. He remarks to his colleagues, "As you can see, I did not bring back my jacket..."<sup>130</sup> He also failed to bring back his pants! He is standing before his associates and not wearing any trousers. This implies, to put it mildly, that the English have taken violent sexual advantage of the Premier. But the telling aspect is not that he has submitted to sexual invasion while in London; it is rather that he seems unaware of this, commenting only that he did not return with his jacket. Once again, foreign forces can achieve at France's expense only through the Third Republic leadership's failures. Whereas in figures 11 and 12, those failures are construed as impotence, figure 13 is closer to figure 10. In both, Herriot is seduced by foreign countries. In "*Retour de Londres*," that the seduction has led to sexual relations with Herriot in the submissive position is made explicit. Incidentally, Sennep once linked the Republic to English interests in his weekly column. On 22 April, 1922, he wrote that he had been to visit Marianne, the embodiment of the French Republic. He records his opening remarks in his "conversation" with Marianne as follows: "How do you do? *dis-je, en entrant; car, depuis quelques années, elle aime qu'on lui parle anglais.*"<sup>131</sup> The symbol of the Republic, Marianne, prefers the English language, showing the genesis of a drift toward English interests that culminates when Herriot returns from London without his trousers.

Finally, the same tendency toward inaction and the humiliation of the republicans' allowing an enemy (who presumably would be no match for "true France") to take advantage of them appears in the context of Abd el-Krim. Figure 14, from August, 1925, shows Paul-Prudent Painlevé, who had become the *Cartel des Gauches* Premier in April, 1925, and remained in this position after the July break-up of

<sup>130</sup> *Action française*, 22 August, 1924, 1.

<sup>131</sup> *Action française*, 22 April, 1922, 2. I have reproduced the original French in the text to make clear that Sennep's English greeting appeared in English in the original column. Sennep's text translates as, "How do you do? I said upon entering, because, for a few years, she [Marianne] has enjoyed it when one speaks English to her.

the *Cartel*, waiting with the telephone receiver in hand for Abd el-Krim to respond to the terms of peace that have been offered him.<sup>132</sup> The title, “192...”, indicates that years have gone by since the Moroccan the proposals were delivered to Abd el-Krim. Fungi have sprouted all over the Premier's office, his beard has grown dramatically and cobwebs abound; still, he waits for Abd el-Krim to contact him. If Abd el-Krim has escaped retribution for his uprising and if he has scored a victory against the colonial power, France, it is not because of his intimidating military genius but because of republican inaction. Beyond inaction, republican naivete is indicted here. As in the other cartoons treated in this section, France is weak on the international scene solely because of republican impotence, gullibility or susceptibility to foreign (sexual) temptations.

### **IX: Conclusion**

Sennep may not be communicating a philosophy of the nation, its “Others” and its enemies that is drastically different from that of others in the French Right. Still, the purpose of analysing his visual depictions is more than simply to make assurance double sure. On the contrary, Sennep's manner of expression, his images, allows him to invoke a discourse very effectively. He is able to seize upon, employ and reinforce the “knowledge” of his culture, or the discursively constructed set of “truths” within which nationalism, through its symbols, imagery and rhetoric, had meaning and resonance. This analysis of his work helps clarify the Action Française's vision of the French nation within which its leaders developed their thought. Put differently, Sennep's body of work reveals the cultural assumptions about nationality, gender and sexuality that underpinned the French Right's conception of the nation's providence and destiny, its greatness and the dangers with which it is confronted. Sennep's cartoons demonstrate how sexual and gendered analogies can represent the “essence” of the nation.

One insight that emerges when his cartoons on different subjects are considered together, as a

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<sup>132</sup> *Action française*, 9 August, 1925, 1.

coherent exposition of a discourse of nation, is that the nation's enemies are really one enemy. Seemingly disparate elements such as communists, Jews, Germans are republicans are often connected, visually, either through a shared feminisation or the unveiling of a masquerade. Significantly for the practice of cultural history, though, these various world actors are identified with each other in a conspiracy against France by the selective use of fiction as truth. Abd el-Krim never met Sennep and Orthodox Jewish Soviets (who were not exactly a privileged group in the ethnically hierarchical and atheist Soviet society) were never dispatched from Moscow to meet with the *Cartel des Gauches* as plenipotentiaries. The sameness, or at least interrelatedness, of France's perceived enemies was a deeply held truth that could be best articulated through fictional portrayals and dialogue. This necessitates a careful approach to fiction, which has the power to reveal but cannot be reduced to ideology or taken as a window into a society that does not require theory and interpretation.

This essay is a contribution toward the cultural history of the interwar French nationalist climate. Other avenues remain to be explored. The literary, cinematic and cultural criticism that appeared in the *Action française* do not receive frequent scholarly attention. This is partly because the *Action française* did not attract ground breaking critics or discuss significant cultural developments, such as surrealism. Maurras dominated his newspaper's cultural offerings with a Puritan's editorial pen.<sup>133</sup> But if these columns do not have much to contribute to literary history or cultural criticism, they should be examined for what they reveal about the culture of extreme-Right nationalism. Historians could also deconstruct the cultural stakes in the *Action française*'s fashion and culinary columns that began to appear in the 1920s.

The Action Française worshipped action but failed to act decisively or to take to the streets, as fascist movements would, at opportunistic moments. Tellingly, Maurras believed that "propaganda was action,"<sup>134</sup> and so the visual propaganda in his newspaper must be seen as significant and chosen

<sup>133</sup> Verdès-Leroux, "The Intellectual Extreme Right," 122-123.

<sup>134</sup> Wilson, "The 'Action Française' in French Intellectual Life," 329.

advisedly. Propaganda was action, and action was paramount. In a sense, then, the space Maurras and Daudet devoted to Sennep's cartoons, and these cartoons' imagining of the nation, must be considered a form of action when produced by a movement known mostly for its posturing. The vision, then, that emerges from Sennep's cartoons was itself a form of French action, or *action française*.

Figure 1





Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



SID MOHAMMED BEN ABDEL KRIM.

*Photo. Diaz.*

Figure 8



Figure 9

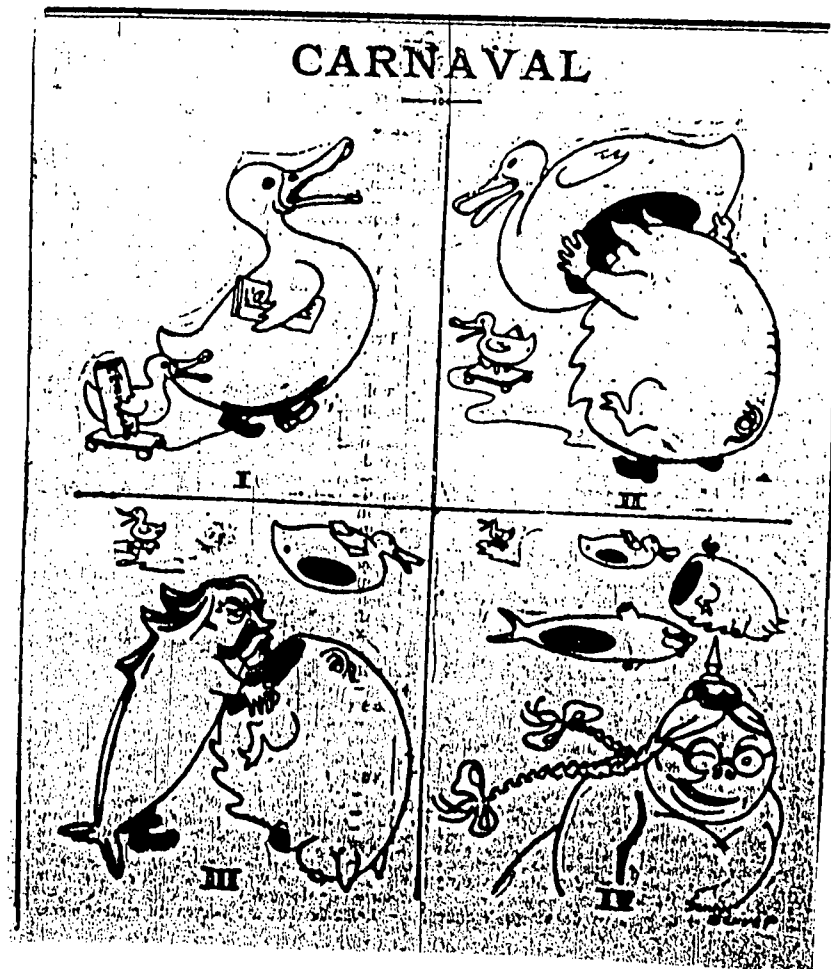




Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



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