By Alexa Stemmler
Honors Thesis in the Department of History University of Richmond
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Imagining Anti-Semitism: Artistic Representations of the Dreyfus Affair

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The Anti-Dreyfusard Mass Media: Making Anti-Semitism Visual

In the same way that Noam Chomsky proposed that people possess an innate sense of the grammar of their original spoken language that allows them to follow argument in speech or writing, art critics and scholars suggest that visual communication relies on a similar natural understanding of the grammar of images that allows us to derive meaning from pictures.¹⁹ A person looking at an image has a more considered response than might be assumed at first; the reaction is not simply one of reflex, despite the more immediate emotional effect of pictures than of text. While images cannot be “read” in a conventional sense, they create a language with form, structure and convention. This language of images was one of the most important methods of communication and persuasion used by the popular press during the Dreyfus Affair, especially from 1898 onwards. Dora Polachek writes, “If the Dreyfus case became the Dreyfus Affair because of the power of the pen (and the breaking of Dreyfus’s sword takes on further symbolic overtones as a result), it is precisely because the pen was the generator not only of logos but of imago.”²⁰

Of the beginning of the Dreyfus case, Jacques Lethève writes, “It all started in a relatively discrete manner and the French were not profoundly moved: it concerned a sad affair of espionage, once more a worrisome game brought to us by German agents.”²¹ In 1894, when Dreyfus was first convicted, a scattering of images appeared in the republican and anti-Semitic

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²¹ Lethève, *La Caricature et la Presse Sous la IIIe République*, 78.
publications. Realistic sketches of Dreyfus’s cashiering were published in national newspapers, some illustrated journals put forth grand classical images that denounced Dreyfus as a traitor, a modern Judas, and anti-Semitic journals satirized the event. *La Libre Parole*, the first publication to have publicly announced Dreyfus’s guilt, featured a cover illustration showing Edouard Drumont holding a figure of Dreyfus who is depicted with exaggerated Semitic features with a pair of tweezers (fig. 2.1). The caption reads: “Frenchmen, I’ve been telling you every day for eight years!!” The Dreyfus case was represented as proof of what the anti-Jewish journalists had said for years and, with Dreyfus out of sight on Devil’s Island, the case seemed to slip out of the minds of most of the artists. It seems that no one paid any mind to those few who had been struck by the miscarriage of justice; there is certainly no representation of their cause in the popular press.

After Dreyfus’s imprisonment, his wife Lucie and his brother Mathieu petitioned tirelessly for a review of his case. In 1896, the efforts of Dreyfus’s family inspired Bernard Lazare, Jewish anarchist and journalist, to write a pamphlet entitled “A Judicial Error: The Truth on the Dreyfus Affair,” and whispers of possible injustice began to echo through France. The Dreyfus Case and the revision debate exploded into The Dreyfus Affair in early 1899 after *L’Aurore*’s publication of Zola’s “J’accuse!” letter. Over the following eighteen months, Dreyfusards rallied to demand another Court-Martial and the anti-Dreyfusards responded with renewed fervor affirming his guilt. The largest number of Dreyfus related images in the popular press were published during this time of revision and it was then, really for the first time, that Dreyfusard artists emerged in support of the captain. Each side soon developed a unique visual language using differing techniques that allowed them to argue against each other without the use of text.
Two journals in particular stand out as examples of the distinct iconographies developed by the Dreyfusards and their challengers. *Psst...!* founded on February 5 1898 by Jean-Louis Forain and Caran d’Ache, was an entirely illustrated publication dedicated to confirming Dreyfus’s culpability. In response, artist and Dreyfus supporter Henri-Gabriel Ibels began publication of *Le Sifflet* (The Whistle) with Achille Steens as director. The two men devoted their journal to demanding the convening of a second Court-Martial; they maintained the captain’s innocence and the injustice of the Affair. These two weekly publications enable us to trace the development on each side of a style of drawing and illustrative techniques as well as motifs that quickly became attached to prominent figures involved in the Affair. Both journals ran from the beginning of 1898 until Dreyfus’s retrial in Rennes in September 1899.

A reviewer of the exhibition of Dreyfus-related illustrations at the Jewish Museum in 1987 commented that the skill of the Anti-Dreyfus artists was greater than their opponents’. He writes, “This is not to belittle the caricaturists on the other side: there are some telling examples of their work on view. But with the single exception of Vallotton, none of the Dreyfusards are really in the same class as the most gifted of their opponents. A sad fact, but one that has to be faced.” 22 In truth, this is a misleading comment. The differences in style and technique between the two groups can be attributed to the divergent goals of the artists and their very different target audiences.

Anti-Dreyfusard publications both mirrored and sought to influence public opinion. They were directed at the working class Parisian crowd, who gathered in the streets looking to be entertained. Anti-Dreyfusard artists attempted to appeal to these people by making use of vulgar humor and caricature. The Dreyfusard journals, on the other hand, aimed to interest a like-

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minded intellectual minority who were accustomed to reason and debate. Accordingly, they preferred to call upon the education and tastes of their audience by referencing works of fine art and literature and by using subtle irony rather than crude humor. Given its strategies, the Dreyfusard press did not hope to attain the same scale of influence as its opponents, but many artists and journalists seemed to prefer their peripheral status. At the height of the Affair, the Dreyfusard press had only eleven regular publications in Paris and seventeen nationwide. It is estimated that they reached approximately eleven percent of the Parisian readers and only fifteen percent of those in France. Despite their condescension, the Dreyfusard Intellectuals saw the crowd as a threat; its sheer force could overwhelm even the most rational men, and the temptation of the urban spectacle was difficult to resist. In response to the anti-Semitic student riots in the Parisian Latin Quarter, for example, Christopher Forth quotes Steens as saying, “They are contemptible because they have willingly renounced their free will. They could have been independent but they want to be part of the crowd.”

The exhibition reviewer’s preference for the anti-Dreyfusard images is understandable given their exaggeration and obvious comedy. People are able to recognize caricatures more quickly and with more ease than non-caricatured drawings. This preference has been the subject of studies in the field of experimental psychology. Gillian Rhodes and her colleagues at the University of Western Australia compared people’s reactions to caricatures (drawings where distinctive physical features are highly exaggerated) with their response to anticaricatures in which the features are less emphasized and to uncaricatured drawings that are as realistic as possible. Rhodes concluded that figures in the caricatured drawings were recognized more than

23 Bredin, The Affair, 518.
twice as fast the realistic illustrations. The average passer-by was much more likely to be enticed to buy a journal with a striking, immediately recognizable cover illustration than one that demanded closer analysis and reflection. By the time the specialized journals began publication the pursuit of profit and mass appeal encouraged the anti-Dreyfusards to use obscenity and farce. The more obvious the racism, the more crude the comedy, the more absurd the figures, the more revenue for the artists. The exaggerated style of drawing also removes the people depicted from reality, dehumanizing them in a way that makes the abhorrent jokes less shocking for the reader.

In late 1899, after the Rennes trial, V. Lenepveu began to sell his “Musée des Horreurs” (Freak Show), a poster series of more than fifty lithographs that transposed the heads of prominent figures in the affair onto the bodies of monsters and animals. The posters are outstanding among anti-Dreyfusard mass produced images in that the figures’ faces are photorealistic, in no way caricaturized and exaggerated as the trend had been before. The sixth poster shows Dreyfus himself with the body of a seven-headed Hydra and, if compared to a photograph of Captain Dreyfus, the accuracy of the depiction of the face is astounding (fig. 2.2 and fig. 2.3). Despite echoing aspects of images that had been published in the preceding year, the posters were too shocking and the Ministry of the Interior ordered Lenepveu to cease publication less than a year after printing began, probably through fear of promoting a negative image of France at the Exposition Universelle of 1900. This experimental break with the caricature tradition of the anti-Dreyfusards illustrates how useful their earlier technique of exaggeration was in placating censors.

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26 The Hydra was a mythical monster with many serpent-like heads. When a head was cut off, more grew in its place making the Hydra increasingly difficult to kill and one head was said to be immortal. Dreyfus is portrayed as a Hydra to symbolize, in the anti-Dreyfusards’ minds, the never-ending danger of traitors and Jews.
The “Freak Show” series is also notable as it moves away from the traditional rendering of the stereotypical nameless, representative Jewish man. Lenepveu put faces to his allegories, Dreyfus himself and Jewish public figures like actress Sarah Bernhardt. Dreyfus himself is featured less in the anti-Dreyfusard press than one might imagine, indeed Zola is caricaturized more often by far. Before the release of these posters, it seems that the press at large was more comfortable using the image of “the Jew.”

This fundamental change in anti-Semitic imagery was facilitated by the political environment of the Third Republic during the late nineteenth century. Historically, anti-Semitic journalists in France were almost exclusively socialist. Their views had little relevance to the political issues of the time and they attacked Jews en masse as a representation of capitalism. The images from this time are mostly financially based, showing Jews universally as greedy bankers praying to the stock market. However, as the supposed treachery of Jews began to be suspected as the cause of the corruption scandals that almost crippled the Third Republic, their representation in images changed and became more threatening. In the illustrations from the time of the Dreyfus Affair, Jews are represented as locusts and rats – pestilent swarms and symbols of destruction.

After the accusations against Dreyfus were made public, anti-Semitic images flooded publications and many exhibited a newly menacing tone. For example, a cartoon by Adolphe Willette published in Le Pierrot in August 1889 shows a threatening Jewish figure crouching on the river bank outside Paris, waiting to loose rats and vicious wolves into the city (fig. 2.4). The caption reads “winter will be hard for the goyim (Christians) this year.” Also striking is a drawing by Alfred Le Petit that shows a disgusting reptilian creature with Semitic features tearing the flesh off France’s breast (fig. 2.5). Jews in these cartoons had emerged from the
caricatured world of the stock exchange and were now shown to be disrupting government and the judicial system. Note Forain’s cover illustration for the 13 October 1898 issue of Psst...!, captioned “An Enlightened Magistrate.” It shows a large Jewish businessman pushing a judge, usually meticulous as suggested by the magnifying glass, face-first into his papers (fig. 2.6). Another shows a Jewish man in judicial robes breaking the tricolore over his knee (fig. 2.7). The title, “cassation,” refers to judicial annulment but is also a pun on the verb “casser” (to break).

Another interesting technique used often in anti-Semitic cartoons, especially by Forain, to mock the Jews and make them immediately recognizable to the reader is the suggestion of accent. The cover illustration of the ninth issue of Psst...! entitled “A Success” features yet another Jewish businessman, this time returning home to his wife, who asks him how his dinner went (fig. 2.8). He replies: “Charming, nobody dared to talk to me of the Dreyfus Affair” (Charmant, Bersonne n’a osé me barler de l’affaire Treyfus) spelt phonetically with “b” replacing “p” and “t” in the place of “d” to demonstrate the speaker’s Jewish accent. Similarly, the cover of the first issue of Psst...! featured an illustration by Forain that shows Zola posting his open letter to President Faure (fig. 2.9). The title “Le Pon Badriote” is an inversion of the correct French “Le Bon Patriote” (The Good Patriot). Any French Christian seen to be aiding the Jews was also a target of the artists’ bile and considered a foreigner. Here, Forain is clearly stating sarcastically that Zola’s submission of his letter was an act of treason and, considering that the caption is spelt “Ch’ accuse,” it is clear that the artist is again suggesting a Jewish accent. In a drawing from Psst...!, “Allegory,” a German soldier ties a mask of Zola’s face onto a Jewish man in a business suit (fig. 2.10). It is, as the caption says, a summary of the entire affair according to the anti-Dreyfusards. In another, Zola, crying for help, swims towards a dark and menacing shore on which a shadowy German stands (fig. 2.11).
Maurice Barrès, a fervently anti-Semitic writer and politician, wrote, “I need no one to tell me why Dreyfus committed treason... That Dreyfus is capable of treason, I conclude from his race.”

Barrès emerged as a prominent thinker in the ethnic nationalism movement in France with the claim that “the individual is nothing, society is everything.” “France to the French” became the rallying cry of the far-right and the anti-Dreyfusards, along with “Down with the Jews! Down with traitors!” Ironically, on a poster advertising the verdict of Zola’s trial, these two slogans are included with the motto of the republic that promotes inclusion and tolerance: “Freedom, equality, brotherhood” (Liberté, égalité, fraternité) (fig. 2.12 and fig. 2.13). The anti-Dreyfusard press unanimously responded to the affair with exaggerated nationalism in which France, her army and her church were lauded as beyond reproach, and Dreyfus was seen as a threat and a traitor to all three.

Barrès’s definition of nationalism was exclusionary: only people whose ancestry was French and Catholic could be considered true Frenchmen. Zola, a favorite subject of the anti-Dreyfusard artists, was a Parisian born Christian and an influential scholar, yet the anti-Dreyfusards had to make him “other” in order to explain his apparent treachery. The names given to other Dreyfusards by their opponents also reflect this idea; they are often “sellouts” (vendus) or “without a country” (sans-patries). In a pamphlet published and distributed around the time of his trial, Zola is described as a supporter of the Dreyfusard syndicate and an insulter of the French Army but, most importantly, he is “the Italian” - a reference to his father’s Italian origin. With a foreign parent, Zola was apparently unable to think and act like a real French citizen would. The anti-Dreyfusard press emphasized an instinct that apparently came with

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being part of a national tradition. The illustration on the brochure is called “Zola against Zola” and shows a well dressed Zola with a laurel wreath around his head trying to get into the l’Institute de France building, home of the L’Académie Française (fig. 2.14).²⁹ He is stopped by another Zola, a sewage worker, standing at a barricade of containers of steaming human waste that are labeled with the names of Zola’s novels. The illustration is a warning to Zola that his involvement with Dreyfus has made him an outcast. It is also one of the first scatological references that would become synonymous with the writer.

To the anti-Dreyfusards, Zola was the embodiment of the dangerous Intellectual. The term “Intellectual” was used widely by both Dreyfusards and their opponents with different connotations. Dreyfus’s supporters popularized the word, using it in a positive way, but it was quickly adopted by the anti-Dreyfusards and used pejoratively.³⁰ To be sure, Zola was already very much a public figure by the time Dreyfus went to trial. As one of the foremost members of the literary school of Naturalism, Zola had gained some critical acclaim and popularity. At the same time, his novels incited much public outrage. In contrast to the Symbolist writers who preceded him, Zola was candid and pessimistic in his writing, often dealing openly with such subjects as alcoholism, prostitution and poverty. Naturalism, above all, showed respect for truth without the overly poetic and affected literary mechanisms of previous schools.³¹ The harshness of expression and the frankness of subject matter attracted much criticism from the more conservative Catholic circles in France who condemned the work as sordid and inappropriate.

²⁹ An extremely sarcastic blow. Zola is described as the perennial candidate to the French Academy whose members are the official authority on the French language. Despite his influential work, Zola was never admitted to l’Académie.


The illustration that appeared on the cover of the first issue of *Psst...!* has already been mentioned (fig. 2.9). Zola is hidden under a large overcoat and his face shaded by a hat that does not completely disguise two crafty, half-closed eyes and a large hooked nose. Despite being a French national and a Christian, Zola is undeniably being tied to the Germans and the Jews. Of particular importance, however, is the fact that Zola is dropping his letter not into a postbox but an outhouse. This association of the Dreyfus supporters, particularly Zola, with filth and bodily waste was to become a recurring theme in the work of the anti-Dreyfusard artists. On the twenty-sixth of the same month, the fourth issue, the cover of *Psst...!* showed a street sweeper brushing away a pile of debris that includes a copy of "J'accuse!" as well as other papers signed by Zola (fig. 2.15). The caption reads "What garbage!..., this could get 100000 men killed!"

Note also the cartoon from 10 June 1899, entitled "Peek-a-boo! There he is!" (fig. 2.16). Zola is represented as a Jack-in-the-box emerging from a toilet.

The most telling example of Zola’s association with dirt and excrement, however, does not come from a journal but from the “Freak Show” posters. The fourth in the series is entitled “The King of Pigs,” and shows Zola’s head transposed onto a pig’s body sitting on a chamber pot full of his own novels (fig. 2.17). The creature holds a pot of feces labeled “Caca international” and is busy painting the contents onto a map of France. The association of Zola with pigs, undoubtedly a revival of the derogatory Judensau images popular in Europe since the thirteenth century, was another way to depict him as unclean while associating him with the Jews. Zola appears as a pig in many subsequent posters in the series as well as in prints and later journal illustrations. Some of the same people who accused Zola of spreading obscenity with his novels are here using vulgar images of filth to mock him.

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32 Judensau, German for “Jewish Sow,” was a recurring theme in images of the Middle Ages showing Jews in inappropriate contact with pigs.
With intense expressions of nationalism, the inviolability of the republic and the honor and importance of the military dominated anti-Dreyfusard imagery. This idea was common to all publications and all artists in that camp. “What is Dreyfus?” asks Oswald Heidbrinck in an 1895 illustration for *Le Rire* magazine (fig. 2.18). The response comes from a crowd of women with their arms stretched out in accusatory gestures as well as scared children and angry men who have cornered a handcuffed and sinister looking Dreyfus: “It’s the man who wanted to make all the women of France widows, make the small children cry tears of blood and deliver his comrades-in-arms into enemy bullets, for 30 deniers!” The word “L’homme” (man) is written in italics, suggesting that Dreyfus cannot even really be considered human. Other publications were equally eager to provide Dreyfus with a label. Perhaps the most popular, and the most expected, was “Judas,” which was particularly successful as it not only identified Dreyfus as a traitor but did so with specific Christian connotations. In an illustration by Lionel Royer, “The Degradation,” a soaring female figure representing both justice and the republic casts Dreyfus, branded Judas, out of France with the military standing behind her in support (fig. 2.19).

“Long live the Army!” was another resounding call from those professing Dreyfus’s guilt. The rights of a single Jewish officer could not be allowed to threaten the power of the entire army. In a print with that caption artist L. Calot shows the sun rising over a dark France while a giant figure in military uniform sweeps away a horrible Semitic lizard and several Dreyfusard newspapers (fig. 2.20). In the foreground are Zola and Dreyfus with two other presumably Jewish men also being cast out by the strength of the army. In 1898, in the midst of the Dreyfusards’ demand for a retrial, the anti-Dreyfusard feeling was that the civilians were pressuring the judicial system into making rulings that were disrespectful and harmful to the military whose authority was unquestionable. Forain was one of many artists who depicted this
sentiment in the illustrated journals on the cover of the third issue of *Psst!* (fig. 2.21). The title reads "let weapons yield to the toga (the audience’s impression)" with the caption adding "And we allow it!" A judge is shown kicking a military cap, symbolizing what a publicly demanded revision of the Dreyfus case would be: an injustice and an insult to the army.

Robert Hoffman writes, "To form and maintain a conviction that Alfred Dreyfus was guilty, people had to believe an unending series of unlikely and incredible assertions and fables." The question that must be asked, then, is why the urban audience was generally more receptive to the arguments of the anti-Dreyfusards? The answer, perhaps, when talking about the illustrated press, could be as simple as taste. "Aesthetic disposition," writes Pierre Bourdieu, "Like every sort of taste...unites and separates. Being the product of the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence, it unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others." The anti-Dreyfusard artists used tropes and everyday references that would have been familiar and appealing to the average person on the street. The Dreyfusard discourse, on the other hand, addressed a different, much smaller audience. The pro-Dreyfus press catered to the educated classes with more subtle, complicated images that often made use of literary or artistic allusions. These illustrations would most probably have been ignored by the Parisian crowd because, as Bourdieu explains, "Considered as symbolic goods, works of art only exist for those who have the means of appropriating them, that is, of deciphering them."

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The day after *L'Aurore* published Zola's letter, its journalists released a statement signed by prominent members of the fields of literature and science protesting the injustice of the Dreyfus's trial. The petition is now known as "the manifesto of the Intellectuals" and its publication marked, writes David Drake, "The entry en masse of the 'Intellectuals' into politics... in the sense that they were stepping outside their spheres of expertise and publicly and collectively taking a position on a political and moral issue." To be sure, scholars and artists had always held an important place in French society, but it was for the first time in 1898 that they formed a group to involve themselves in a social and political cause. Bredin writes, "It signified not merely the moral imperative of truth and justice, but the demands of free inquiry against blind fanaticism... scruples against arbitrariness. It was, in a pure state, a revolt of intelligence." The Dreyfusards were not united by as definite a doctrine as socialism or anti-Semitism as many of their opponents were but rather they shared values and general ideas that were the product of the Enlightenment and their tertiary education. Chief among these values were universalism, tolerance and reason.

In adopting the term "Intellectual" as an epithet for their opponents, the anti-Dreyfusards were highlighting a key difference between the two groups: the anti-Dreyfusards were men who admired physical force and action and who backed the military with fanaticism. The Dreyfusards, on the other hand, were cerebral men of discourse who praised Zola as much as

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their opponents despised him. They valued debate and the concepts of truth and justice. In a cartoon, Caran d’Ache shows disgruntled women sitting unattended in an “intellectual salon” while the men convene in the background, presumably discussing the Dreyfus Affair (fig. 3.1). The artist is mocking the Dreyfusards as ineffectual then even questions their very masculinity, since no anti-Dreyfusard man would ever abandon a beautiful woman for something as effeminate as political debate. However, the label “Intellectual” was clearly one that the Dreyfusards embraced. Forth comments, “Dreyfusards scarcely had a kind word to say about the masses...even these champions of public opinion distinguished ‘the people’ whose legitimate desires merited respect, from the unruly mob whose rebelliousness and irrationality called for vigilance.”

The illustrations produced for the Dreyfusard journals tend to shy away from caricature and crude humor and tend more towards realism. The wit in these images is more subtle, using irony and cultural references. Take, for example, a cover for Le Siflet by one of its founding artists, Ibels. The work is called “The New Raft of the Medusa” (fig. 3.2). It is a parody of Gericault’s iconic Romantic painting. The Medusa was a ship that sank off the coast of West Africa in 1816, forcing a few survivors onto a raft where they lived by pushing the dead members of their group overboard after feeding on their bodies. To Ibels, the survivors are now shown as the General Staff of the French Army, adrift on a sea of lies. The reference to Gericault’s work would have meant little to the average working class viewer.

Similarly, Ibels and his colleagues produced many realistic court scenes and created a series of lithographs dedicated to Dreyfus supporters, cast in a classical style. Many of the lithographs depicted beautiful women as the allegorical figures of Truth and Justice. Female allegorical figures drawn in a classical style, quickly abandoned by the anti-Dreyfusards in favor

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38 Forth, Dreyfus Affair, 102.
of masculine military characters, were taken up universally by the Dreyfusard press. In the place of fanatic sensationalism there is a clear appeal to sympathy and logic.

The images of court scenes also emphasize the importance of the judicial process and the power and humanity of the defense. Engraver and cartoonist Charles Paul Renouard created a collection of 150 prints dedicated to the “defenders of justice during the Dreyfus Affair.” Renouard sketched prominent members of the defense during powerful moments in their speeches as well as men such as Esterhazy, considered to be the real author of the bordereau, looking sullen and sinister (fig. 3.3 and fig. 3.4). A lithograph by Maximilien Luce, “Truth at the Court-Martial,” shows a realistic court room with the naked female figure of Truth being presented as a witness (fig. 3.5). An outraged member of the military council shouts “In the name of god go and get dressed, this isn’t a physical examination!” With these words, the councilman betrays his ignorance and vulgarity. Beautiful and proud, Truth stands bathed in light while the rest of the courtroom is in shadow.

Marianne, a national emblem of France as well as the personification of its republican values, appears as a kind of mother figure. In contrast to the exclusionary anti-Dreyfusard cries of “France to the French,” this representation connotes inclusion and unconditional love, suggesting that the Dreyfusards felt that this discrimination of other citizens was against the values of the republic. Many images also include the warrior-like figure of Justice, but the most common personification in these illustrations is Truth in feminine form. She appears smothered, hidden, threatened and attacked in allusions to the unfair trial of Dreyfus and his conviction

39 Colonel Picquart exposed Major Ferdinand Esterhazy as the most probable author of the list that caused Dreyfus’s arrest. In his guilt, Esterhazy fled to England but he underwent a trial by the French Military that lasted only two days in January 1898 during which he was shockingly absolved of the charge. It is said that during the trial Esterhazy refused to answer any of the questions that were asked of him by the defense.
without evidence. The representation of Truth as a threatened woman does much to invoke the sympathy and protective spirit of male readers.

The French proverb “Truth is at the bottom of a well” (La vérité est au fond d’un puits) had been used in cartoons relating to the Panama Canal Scandal as the public and the press alike became obsessed with the idea of government corruption and deception, but it reemerged during the Dreyfus Affair as the single most frequently recurring image in the Dreyfusard press. In most of these illustrations, Truth finally emerges from the well and holds a mirror to those people who had tried to keep her in the darkness: army officers, state officials and clergymen.

Note, as an example, a drawing for *Le Siflet* by Ibels published in July 1898 (fig. 3.6). Truth has risen from the well and defeated a man in military uniform. The power of this drawing lies in its inspirational beauty and emotion. Like most of the pro-Dreyfus illustrators, Ibels appeals to human compassion and the strength of reason. Compare the image to Caran d’Ache’s snide interpretation of the same idiom called “peek-a-boo, there he is!” in which the well has been transformed into a toilet and truth is now Zola holding a Dreyfus puppet (fig. 2.16). The obscene mocking humor of the anti-Dreyfusards is a stark contrast to the high-minded, realistically drawn scenes published by their rivals.

The Dreyfusard press was also quick to respond to their rivals’ exaltation of the military and the Catholic state. They also tried to play on their readers’ nationalism by alerting them to the threats they felt that France was facing. However, instead of pointing to external enemies (traitors, Jews and Germans), Dreyfus’s supporters attacked the very military-state-church alliance that their opponents were trying to protect. The Church (not yet separated from the state) and the army had become a single enemy institution in the minds of the Dreyfusards. A man
standing outside Paris in a cartoon by Ibels sees a crucifix-like object rising like a sun on the horizon and asks himself “Is that a Cross or a Sabre?” (fig. 3.7).

In yet another reference to the French idiom “Truth lies at the bottom of a well,” an illustration by Raoul Barré, part of the fifth issue of Le Sifflet published on 17 March 1898, shows Truth struggling to escape (see fig. 3.8). The young, beautiful Truth is naked and apprehensive as she tries to push the covering off her enclosure. The lid that the two men, one named as the president of France, Méline, the other in an army uniform, has put over the well is laden with military and religious artifacts: swords, drums, caps and miters. The men, despite their efforts to contain her, are worried that Truth may surface. Méline says, “In spite of it all, I’m afraid she’ll come out, the beast!” The president and the officer are huddled together, allied in their attempt to conceal truth. The title suggests that they are right to be scared, as they cannot be successful: “The truth nevertheless.”

The weekly anarchist newspaper Le Père Peinard (The Easy Father) never really took a side in the Dreyfus debate, preferring rather to mock both factions. Its artists, however, were even less discrete than those of Le Sifflet in their antagonism towards the corrupt pact between the government, the Catholic Church, the military, and the anti-Dreyfusard press’s support of it. In October 1898, the paper included a drawing called “The new Siamese twins” that showed an officer and a member of the clergy artificially joined at their stomachs (fig. 3.9). The figure in military uniform also has a halo, a crucifix and rosary beads while the representative of the church is brandishing a sword. The cartoon depicts the ridiculous results of each institution interfering in matters that do not concern it and their complicity as they both intruded on state business. Less delicate still is the illustration by renowned artist and Dreyfusard Maximilien Luce for Le Père Peinard that is dedicated to Forain and Caran d’Ache, and shows the two
artists as prostitutes hoping to catch the attention of men representing the Catholic Church and
the French Army as they sit in a bar called "Psst" (fig. 3.10). The anti-Dreyfusards, who prided
themselves on their more masculine support of the military and enjoyed accusing the
Dreyfusards of being effeminate, are here themselves drawn as women and further as prostitutes.

In 1904, the French Criminal Chamber agreed to review the verdict of the second court-
martial in Rennes while on 3 July 1905, the parliament passed a law officially separating church
and state. The separation as well as the new investigation into the Dreyfus Case were both seen
as victories for the Dreyfusards. On of them, Félix Vallotton, prepared a wood engraving to be
used in printing that shows the victory of justice over the church, the army and the corrupt
magistrates (fig. 3.11). Justice, a sun, rises over France with three figures, representing the three
fraudulent groups, lying dead in the foreground.

The artists of Le Sifflet developed a particularly effective technique that allowed them to
illustrate their arguments against the anti-Dreyfusards: imitation and alteration of their
competitors' published images. The issue of Le Sifflet that was released within a week of the
third issue of Psst...! had a cover that was practically identical in composition and caption (fig.
3.12 and fig. 2.21). This time, however, an army officer is shown kicking a pair of scales
representing justice. "Let's go!" is his cry, once again said to be the audience's impression, and
the caption at the bottom of the page mockingly echoes "And we put up with it!" According to
the artist, Ibels, France was allowing the military to disregard legal procedure and justice by
convicting Dreyfus after an improper court martial with no solid evidence. This pattern of parody
recurred throughout the months of publication of the two journals. Le Sifflet, published about
five days after its rival, was usually the imitator. Whether copying images almost exactly or just
responding to themes explored by the anti-Dreyfusards, Ibels and his colleagues established their
position by obviously opposing the arguments made by the artists for *Psst...!* Forain and Caran d'Ache, on the other hand, were more content to ignore what was being said by the Dreyfusards and focus on their own sensationalist publications. It suggests that the anti-Dreyfusard majority felt completely unthreatened by the ineffectual Intellectuals.

The Dreyfus Affair, as it was represented in non-elite art, that is to say illustrations and cartoons in the popular press, exposed divisions in the French population based on class conflicts as well as simple differences of opinion. The upper classes were as wary and contemptuous of the Parisian mob as they had been a hundred years before. The rise of popular consumerism and the golden age of mass media pushed many members of the bourgeois and intellectual classes into self-imposed isolation; they attempted to create more intellectualized publications and certain of them took refuge in the sphere of elite art. Almost all of the pieces of decorative art that were created in reaction to the Dreyfus Affair exhibit Dreyfusard tendencies; there is no sign of the engaged debate that unfolded in the press. It would seem that the Intellectuals considered fine art a medium through which they could interact with each other while the anti-Dreyfusards recognized that their audience would not be effectively reached in this way. Commenting on visitors to French art museums, Bourdieu writes,

Statistics show that access to cultural works is the privilege of the cultivated class...Each individual possesses a defined and limited capacity for apprehending the "information" proposed by the work, this capacity being a function of his or her overall knowledge (itself a function of education and background) of the generic code of the type of message under consideration...When the message exceeds the limits of the observer's apprehension, he or she does not grasp the 'intention' and loses interest in what he or she sees as a riot of colors without rhyme or reason...In other words, faced with a message which is too rich, or as information theory says, 'overwhelming', the visitor feels 'drowned' and does not linger. 40

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Emile ZOLA et les DREYFUS
LA DÉBACLE DES TRAITRES
LETTRE OUVERTE

Fig. 2.14

Fig. 2.15
Fig. 2.20

Salons intellectuels

Fig. 2.21

LE SIFFLET

Fig. 3.1

Fig. 3.2

Fig. 3.3 Renouard sketches Dreyfus and his main defense Attorney.
Fig. 3.4 A series of sketches of Esterhazy by Renouard

Fig. 3.5