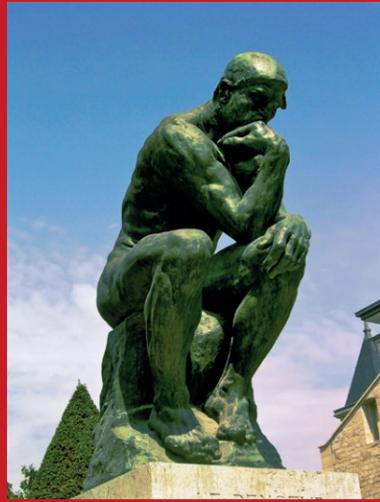


CAMDEN

A Westminster School Publication

Summer 2020

A Liberal Arts Magazine



CAMDEN

A Liberal Arts Magazine

Summer 2020



JOHAN ORLY assesses the 2017-19 Parliament
CASPAR GRIFFIN compares Ways of Seeing
PETER RUSAFOV on Religious Art in Laos

A Window on the World

The wonderful thing about Art is the ambiguity of its meaning. The wanderer stands alone, looking out over a sea of fog in the valley below. Once a symbol of the Romantic ideal, the painting two hundred years later becomes a metaphor for the current crisis of isolation, an unclear way forward, the disappearance of familiar landmarks.

On the geopolitical stage over the last decade, the tendency has been away from cooperation and towards fragmentation, as states embrace populism. Britain is not alone in messaging psychological insularity with its rhetoric of controlled borders and demonization of immigration. Modern media seduces the electorate with its message and minds are willingly massaged by them. Marshall McLuhan enjoyed the printer's fortuitous error on the cover of his book *The Medium is the Massage*. How fitting a description for modern day communication strategy. Other countries can only marvel at the British masochism of economic and political self-harm in breaking away from a mutually beneficial customs union, just at the time the UK economy is at its most vulnerable.

A lack of ideology, years of austerity and the manipulative use of social media have allowed populism to breed across Europe and the Americas and to project into power many politicians suffering from the Dunning-Kruger effect. Populism will continue to draw renewed strength through fears wrought by illness and uncertainty, playing on insecurity and fear of migrants, through a need for authority in a confusing world. Voting may well often be irrational, and elections won by emotion, but on both sides of the Atlantic, political opportunism and a disregard for Truth produced election results deemed preposterous just four years ago.

If the emphasis on life before coronavirus was the blithe acceptance of unbridled capitalism and a firm belief in the benefits of globalization, the sudden interruption to the rhythm of daily life has laid bare the shortcomings and fragility of this model. Consumer-dominated society has forgotten its basic values: being is more important than having. The hiatus has brought with it days without structure, fear of the epidemic stoked by the media, where football results and movements in the stock market have been replaced by the statistics of deaths and the graph of doom. Big data no longer represent a comforting idol to guarantee personal security and well-being. Uncertainty and fear of the future are back in vogue. In these days of social deep freeze, the crisis invites reflection, questioning, introspection.

Teachers and pupils alike have found the dislocation of

school life shocking and emotionally draining. No man is an island, but the social world under lockdown feels like an archipelago, more than a connected whole. Human interface has been replaced unsatisfactorily by the screen and distance teaching. The normal and vital camaraderie of human contact is sorely missed. Adaptation to isolation, both social and physical, is psychologically demanding, especially for the young.

It was the French psychoanalyst Françoise Dolto who formulated the instructive analogy between adolescents and lobsters. When the lobster has just moulted, it does not have the protection of its old carapace and the new one is not yet robust. With this soft carapace, the animal is unable to defend itself or to escape harm effectively. It is this period of vulnerability in the crustacean's life which is a metaphor for developing teenagers. The metaphor reminds us how essential is the support of protective adults – parents and teachers, especially when many teenagers have a habit of misjudging situations and getting into hot water.

This fragility is profoundly linked to the sense of identity within individual pupils. Not just identity in the narrow sense of understanding oneself, coming to terms with fitting in with the peer group and developing personal values. Identity is about putting down roots, developing stability in how teenagers see themselves across different places and social groups, how they relate to the wider world. School can help strengthen these roots, develop a sense of resilience to maintain control of a situation and promote new means to solve or confront problems. The current crisis is a challenge for us all, but especially for youth. They must be encouraged to see beyond the immediate chaos and bring meaning and sense to their existence. The crisis may be seen as having primarily economic causes, but its origins go deeper than the obsession with the balance sheet: there is an urgent need to give meaning to our age, to stress the importance of culture, spirituality and sense of common purpose.

A sense of one's place in the world requires more than a passing acquaintance with History and some knowledge of a nation's heritage – literature, music, art and architecture. If schools can show that culture is a fertile soil which allows roots to spread, that ideas and ambiguity are to be sought out and valued, they will illuminate pupils' inner lives and enrich their emotional world. If they can instruct them to look beyond the sound bites and vacuous communication strategy of government and media, to be critically engaged, not be content with glib answers or insular navel-gazing, then they will be training resilient citizens for the future.

Student Statue, Sherbrooke Street, Montreal (La Leçon by Cedric Loth)



3 EDITORIAL

FEATURE

- 19 Beardsley and Wilde's *Salome*
Sybilla Griffin explains why Victorians were shocked
- 45 Objectivity in the 20th Century Culture
Caspar Griffin traces changing approaches
- 71 Hokusai: Illustrating One Hundred Poems
Zoe Turoff analyses the artist's innovative talent

OPINION

- 6 Blue-blooded Blues
Johan Orly explains how Britain's political landscape has changed
- 11 Reform in South Africa
Benjamin Heyes wonders what has gone wrong
- 15 Against the Oligarchy
Titus Parker reveals the real power base of Russia

PERSPECTIVES

- 24 Patriotism
Sharon Chau examines the double-edged sword
- 27 Return to Civilised Political Discourse
Hamish Kennedy yearns for a return to respectful debate
- 31 The Legacy of the Enlightenment
Olivia Saunders on why the Age of Reason is still palpable

HISTORY

- 34 Ancient China and Ancient Rome
Liberty Osborne is struck by what they know about each other
- 38 Muslim Reaction to the First Crusade
Tom de Csilléry puts the Arabic version of events

LETTER FROM ...

- 42 Letter from Shanghai
Sahil Shah on living in China

OWW COLUMN

- 50 An Education in Rome
Gloria Marmion on volunteering for L'Arche

CULTURE

- 52 Buddhism and Religious Art in Laos
Peter Rusafov is astonished by the country's culture and resilience

LITERATURE

- 58 Guilt and Responsibility
Rachel Zerdin analyses attitudes of writers and readers
- 62 The Nasty Woman in Literature
Coco Kemp-Welch rebels against 'the bitch'
- 66 Born to be Wilde
Laetitia Hosie enjoys Oscar's wit

POETRY

- 76 Identities by Zoe Smith
- 80 Poems by Joe Bell

SHORT STORY

- 82 Cultural Identity
Suzie Huang delves into her family's past

FROM THE ARCHIVES

- 82 Sir Robert Lorimer and the Westminster War Memorial
David Critchley admires the Scottish architect

ENDPIECE

- 90 Patrick Derham gave an Address in Latin Prayers

91 LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

CAMDEN
– A Liberal Arts Magazine –

Editor: Geran Jones geran.jones@westminster.org.uk

Design: Jamjar Creative Graphic Design Oxford

Camden is a Westminster School publication

The Editor would like to thank Tom Durno, Abigail Farr, Gareth Mann, Gabrielle Ward-Smith and Elizabeth Wells.

The views expressed are those of the authors. The copyright of each article remains with its author.

The editor warmly invites alumni and current pupils to submit articles for publication in the next edition of Camden. Please contact the editor for further information.



Front cover:
Caspar David Friedrich,
Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer, 1818



Mrs May (2019).
Jaques Tillys "Brexit-Motto-Wagen" in the Karneval procession in Düsseldorf, 2019. Photo by Lassewillken

Blue-blooded Blues

Johan Orly, in giving an appraisal of the shortcomings of the last Parliament, argues that the consequences for Britain's democracy are grave. The disregard for truth, at the expense of rhetoric and gesture politics, has changed the political landscape

When one thinks of what has happened at Westminster, and in our politics more broadly, over the last two-and-a-half years, the word omnishambles comes to mind. Indeed, according to a report by the Hansard society, dissatisfaction with the UK's system of government reached its highest point in 15 years in mid-2019, higher even than in the aftermath of the Iraq War or the 2009 expenses scandal, with 72% saying that a 'great deal' of change was necessary. In light of this, it is undeniable that Westminster has failed to serve the people of this country properly, and at times inflamed tensions and division rather than calming them. It is impossible to separate the disaster of the post-

referendum period in terms of public trust in the current political system from the party that has presided over it in government, the Conservatives, who are in many ways a perfect microcosm for the broader failings of Westminster. Across the two Conservative governments of the last Parliament – under two different prime ministers – the seeds of this extraordinary upheaval in our democracy can be seen.

Prominent among Westminster's failings in the 2017-19 Parliament was the remarkable paucity of non-Brexit legislation and policy from the Conservative government being passed, which has halted progress in key areas. For example, there is a consensus around the need for social

care reform, given the already outdated care system was stretched to breaking point by the depth of cuts to local authority budgets during the Coalition, and the additional strain on the NHS this has caused – the King's Fund stated there is 'almost no support' for the current system, and yet there has been no much-needed reform. The government was so spooked by the brutal backlash to its social care plans in the 2017 election, notoriously dubbed the 'Dementia tax', that it delayed a promised green paper for the whole Parliament (and to this day). Innovative reforms to criminal justice under the then-Lord Chancellor David Gauke, eliminating shorter sentences which have been widely shown to be ineffective in terms of rehabilitation, which would almost certainly have drawn cross-party support, were put to bed over fears of a backbench rebellion from Tory MPs, which would damage the May Government's attempts to pass Brexit legislation, and then abandoned. Even a policy which had cross-party support, vital legislation concerning domestic abuse, was delayed for over six months, passed the end of that Parliament, due to the dissolutions of Parliament under Boris Johnson. Moreover, in that period, the Conservative government and its parliamentary party showed a repeated inability to tackle big, long-term issues, with no concrete policy on how to decarbonise the economy despite the introduction of legally binding decarbonisation targets, and very little legislation to address the dangers posed by under-regulation of big tech companies, such as 'fake news'. Westminster politics was gripped by short-termism and stagnation in domestic policy, as Brexit consumed time and attention.

The Brexit crisis led to a pronounced decline in discipline and unity in the Conservative parliamentary party, and to such bitterness and division in the House of Commons between Government and the opposition parties, that the Government's ability to pass any remotely controversial legislation was minimal until the 2019 general election. The normal carrots and sticks of Parliamentary discipline – the wielding (or not) of patronage usually through ministerial jobs – lost their force as many MPs under both May and Johnson made clear that they did not want ministerial posts, such as the gulf between them and the leadership, and developed independent ways of gaining media attention and wielding power in Parliament, such as the ERG, cross-party work, and Select Committee Chairmanships. The decline in parliamentary discipline came from the very top – after the 2017 election, the Cabinet started openly defying May and threatening resignation (often with half an eye to the anticipated leadership election) with disastrous results for policy and party unity. No10 and the relevant ministers engaged in 'Mexican standoffs' over policy, with No10 unable to bring ministers to heel: social care reform was blocked by a public, three-way briefing war over the cap on costs between May, Matt

Hancock (the Health and Social Care Secretary) and Philip Hammond. The Chancellor also publicly blocked May's attempts to boost education funding in the summer of 2019, Amber Rudd's attempts to end the benefit freeze, and a whole plethora of other spending requests which had the support of No10. The rest of the party took their cue from the Cabinet, and once the ERG began acting like a 'party within a party' it was clear to all that any attempts to pass domestic legislation would end in failure. As a result, Westminster became consumed with what Alex Morton described as 'gesture politics', where policies were announced more for the sake of the career of the minister concerned than out of a genuine drive to put them in the statute books. Perhaps the most indicative symptom of this new dynamic was the rise of leaking from Cabinet, where ministers would make lengthy, dramatic, quotable speeches to Cabinet (often against May's positions), then leak them to the media to signal their political positions and their influence in government; the most egregious example of this was of course leaks from the National Security Council on Huawei, which caused an uncharacteristically brutal sacking of the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson, such was the anger in No10. The Brexit cacophony led to a breakdown in parliamentary and Cabinet discipline, and in that major, long-term issues such as digital regulation, decarbonisation, local authority funding, infrastructure investment and social care were

This was once a party of the 'nation-state', which prided itself of its guardianship of the key institutions of our democracy

drowned out.

However, the failings of our political class run far deeper than simply stagnation. By far the most damaging effect of the Brexit crisis during the 2017-19 Parliament was the damage dealt to public trust in our institutions, and the Conservative Party is a perfect microcosm of this. This was once a party of the 'nation-state', which prided itself of its guardianship of the key institutions of our democracy, against the supposed risk posed to these by socialism. However, it abandoned this, and many of its other core values (the slow death of fiscal responsibility is a glaring example) in the transformation of the Conservative party, for electoral reasons, into a "single-issue campaign group with no soul or purpose beyond the completion of [its] Brexit dream", to quote Matthew D'Ancona. This occurred most prominently over the judiciary; in 2017, the then-Lord Chancellor Liz Truss refused to condemn the infamous Daily Mail front page that branded judges who had ruled in favour of Gina Miller's in the legal battle to secure a 'meaningful vote' on any Brexit deal; Anthony Seldon's book *May at 10* reveals that it was May's Chiefs of Staff that blocked her from condemning it. In 2019, the Lord President of the Council, Jacob Rees-Mogg, branded the Supreme Court ruling over Prorogation a 'coup' and 'inaccurate'. These incidents may seem minor, but they have absolutely contributed to the politicisation of the public's view of the Judiciary, an alarming development.

This was mirrored in the nadir in relations between



Press Pack outside the Supreme Court
Journalists assembled outside the Supreme Court in London as legal debates continue in case brought by Gina Miller challenging Boris Johnson's decision to prorogue UK Parliament. Photo by Steve Nimmons

government and Parliament under Boris; however, the attempt to prorogue and shut down Parliament for six crucial weeks this year was merely the latest event in a whole series of evasive manoeuvres from the Government, beginning with the attempt in December 2016 to vote down the Grieve Amendment and deny MPs a 'meaningful vote' on any Brexit Deal. While the

repeated use of Standard Order 24 to seize control of the parliamentary timetable for the passage of backbench legislation against the Government (e.g. the Cooper and Benn bills to forcefully avert No Deal) was been unprecedented and constitutionally questionable, it was only been necessary because the Government repeatedly ignored the will of Parliament, in this case the fact that

MPs voted three times to reject a WTO exit. The inability of MPs and the Government to exchange in a civil and constructive way over Brexit, from May's assertion that there would be no 'running commentary' on Brexit all the way up to Johnson dismissing Labour MP Paula Sherriff's concerns about death threats to MPs being fuelled by inflammatory rhetoric from him as 'humbug', undoubtedly contributed to a damaging, toxic atmosphere in public discourse. The decision to call an election last

month despite the passage of the WAB (Withdrawal and Implementation Bill) to second reading, so that Johnson could fight an election on the theme of Brexit being frustrated by Parliament, is a perfect example of how the Conservative Party and the political nation as a whole inflamed rather than calmed an angry, divided nation, in this case fighting a 'People vs Parliament' election, which once again damaged trust in our key democratic institutions.

The Conservative Party is also reflective of another broader failing of Westminster politics: a complicated relationship with the truth. Boris's defiant assertion that 'No British Prime Minister' would ever sign to a deal that compromised the integrity of the UK was betrayed by the very deal he secured in October 2019, which by the admission of Steve Barclay, the Brexit Secretary, would lead to customs checks across the Irish Sea. The Conservative attack line on Labour's spending plans was built upon the claim that they would cost £1.2 trillion (and £2400 in taxes for each household), which has been widely discredited as knowingly inflated by the BBC, Sky, and the IFS. The changing of the name of CCHQ's Twitter account to 'FactCheckUK' during the leaders' debate was a similarly disingenuous stunt, as was the use of a doctored video of Keir Starmer, the Shadow Brexit Secretary, showing him unable to answer a question which in the real interview he did without hesitation. Even more egregious was the much-ridiculed pledge to recruit 50,000 more nurses, even though the campaign admitted 19,000 of these would merely be 'retained', and thus not be new recruits. The Conservative Party is certainly not alone in lying and not sticking to pledges but it has willingly contributed to a culture of untrustworthiness and misinformation which has done much to fuel public mistrust in politicians.

The greatest failing of the Conservative Party was one that was indeed deeply tied to the stagnation in Westminster, the unwillingness to remove itself from office. In the past, when governments lost key votes in the Commons – a Queen's Speech for example – they would resign and call a general election (for example, Stanley Baldwin or Ramsay MacDonald). The defeat of the Withdrawal Agreement 'meaningful' vote in January 2019 (then again in March and April) left the Government unable to carry out its main piece of legislation, and yet the following day the Conservative government defeated a motion of no-confidence. Therefore, Conservative MPs who had blocked the Government's one main policy initiative left the Government in place, leaving the country in constitutional deadlock, a government without the numbers or authority in the Commons to govern but unable to be removed from office unless it resigned. The tribalism and polarisation of our politics meant that Conservative MPs dared not risk a Corbyn premiership, or an election under a leader that they had officially voted confidence in (Theresa May won the December 2019 vote of confidence by Tory MPs by almost 2-to-1) even though the constitutional convention would be for a general election; this led to the gridlock and disillusionment which allowed the record showing of the Brexit Party and Liberal Democrats – essentially protest parties – in



PM Boris Johnson
Prime Minister Boris Johnson signed the Withdrawal Agreement for the UK to leave the EU on January 31st. Photo UK Government

Reform in South Africa: an Unfinished Business

Benjamin Heyes charts the nature and range of changes in political and economic spheres in South Africa over the last quarter century. The end of apartheid and Mandela's election trumpeted great promise for the 'rainbow nation', yet poverty, inequality, violence and corruption persist, primarily for reasons of political mismanagement

South Africa has reached a critical juncture in her history. Whilst memories of apartheid linger, many see a prosperous future, facilitated by a sturdy bedrock of democratic institutions, vast mineral reserves and the most industrialised economy on the African continent. However, beneath the veneer of a vibrant nation, lies a state which suffers in many ways from the same maladies as it did in the days of apartheid. It is a country with the largest gap between the rich and the poor¹, the highest youth unemployment rate on the planet, and one of its weakest economic growth rates. The reasons for these deficiencies are numerous but, to scratch the surface, one must first consider the course of South Africa following the conclusion of white minority rule 25 years ago.

As recently as the early 1990s, the Republic of South Africa was under siege. The international community had placed crippling embargos on South African businesses and, internally, security forces brutally suppressed dissenting black citizens. Then, it all changed. The white-minority government of F.W. de Klerk, relenting in the face of cries for racial equality from both his own citizens and the international community, reluctantly cleared the vile miasma of racial segregation and ushered into its place 'the rainbow nation'. In 1994, the first multi-racial election in the nation's history was held, delivering a landslide victory for the African National Congress (ANC) and its leader Nelson Mandela. *Where there was hatred, love was sown, where there was injury, pardon, where there was darkness, light et cetera.* The story is pleasantly familiar - through the triumph of moral fortitude, an oppressive regime was brought to a peaceful end, replaced with a truly democratic nation. And yet, such a narrative is at best incomplete, and at worst, false altogether. It is true that black citizens may now vote, work, live and travel as they wish in their own country. No longer are they bound by law to live in squalid, disease-ridden townships, in shacks made of scrap metal. The significance of this legal transformation should not be underestimated. However, even if black citizens have legal freedom, economic freedom is, for most, well out of reach. The conditions in which so many millions of South Africans live today are just as appalling as they were three decades ago. Only when such conditions are addressed

1 World Bank: Gini Coefficient 2014)

can we honestly say that real, tangible change is afoot.

The prevailing sense in apartheid South Africa was one of division. Black or white, uneducated or educated, sick or healthy, rich or poor: each citizen was one or the other. Regrettably, contemporary South Africa is not much different. The salubrious, white suburbs of Cape Town and Johannesburg are still insulated from the outside by high walls topped with electric fencing. It is no coincidence that there are over 1.7 million private security employees in South Africa². Inequality, crime and social discord run in a vicious circle. The nation's stratospheric level of inequality still has a strong racial component. Although poverty among the white population is present, in 2017 it sat at a negligible 1% compared to a rate of 55.5% among blacks, a rate that has steadily increased since 2011. This inequality is only one item on a long list of socio-economic woes afflicting the nation. Youth unemployment stands at 53.2%³. South Africa has one of the lowest economic

Through the triumph of moral fortitude, an oppressive regime was brought to a peaceful end

growth rates on the African continent, at 0.7%⁴ (In 1980 by comparison, growth stood at 6.6%⁵). This economic morbidity was underlined in 2017 when both S&P and Fitch credit rating agencies, consigned South Africa to junk status⁶, advising investors to avoid the country.

This economic stagnation has a number of causes over which the South African government has no control, notably a global slump in commodities demand. However, there are just as many for which the government is responsible. Among these is the prevalence of state-owned enterprises in the country, which are riddled with corrupt officials and plagued by unprofitability. Managerial incompetence has led the state-owned national airline, South African Airways to run into the red for the sixth year in a row, to the tune of over £250m⁷. The state electricity supplier Eskom owes £23bn and is unable to generate enough electricity for the nation's needs. The state-owned national broadcaster, the postal service, the national oil company and the railways are all heavily indebted. The source of such pervasive and permanent deficiencies within South Africa ultimately lies with the

2 PSIRA Annual Report (2017/18)

3 World Bank/I.L.O. (Dec. 2019)

4 CIA World Factbook (2017)

5 International Monetary Fund (1980)

6 Bloomberg: 'Junk for South Africa' (2017)

7 South African Airways: Financial Report (2018)

the Europeans Elections of May 2019, which itself caused another disconnect between the views of the country and their representation in the Commons.

Overall, the Conservative Party during the Parliament of 2017-19 was in many ways a perfect microcosm for the crisis in our democracy over those years, in its abandonment of traditional regard for our national institutions and constitutional processes, in the stagnation in domestic policy under its administration, and in its embrace, in some instances, of post-truth politics. After their thumping victory in the December 2019 general election, there has been some improvement; the restoration of cabinet discipline is to be welcomed, as is the briefing from No10 that ministers concentrating on their briefs will be rewarded over those posturing in the media; it is also welcome that in its albeit questionable decisions on Huawei and HS2, the government has made firm decisions, instead of dithering and kowtowing to backbenchers, an omnipresent issue in the final years of the May premiership.

However, many of the problems outlined previously have remained, or even worsened: government sabre-rattling towards the judiciary (in particular the Supreme Court) and the BBC by threatening reforms is neither constructive nor healthy for public trust in our institutions, and indeed has more than a whiff of

revenge politics about it; the aggressive briefing of deeply unpopular reforms towards the civil service, including machinery of government changes, in particular the push towards folding International Development into the Foreign Office, risks being seen as change for change's sake, and the government must seek consensus instead of throwing its weight around. The government has also been fundamentally disingenuous in its proclamation of the end of austerity, as the Chancellor has been asking every department to find 5% of their budgets in savings to fund exorbitant manifesto commitments, and there has been a total lack of attention paid to glaring issues like the five-week wait for Universal Credit, an 'austerity' policy linked to rising homelessness and food bank usage. The government seems to be, in its criminal justice sentencing policy and its bellicose approach to the 'future relationship' talks with the EU to name just two further examples, playing up to the tabloid press and shoring up its image, instead of a constructive, long-term, evidence-based approach. The lessons from the failings of the 2017-19 Parliament - that divisive, cheap rhetoric and short-term, gesture politics is not only potentially very damaging to public trust but also no substitute for active, bold, consensus-based policymaking - are now in great danger of being forgotten. We can only hope that they will not.

No evaluation of modern South African history is complete without an understanding of the ANC

one institution that has been a constant since the end of apartheid: the African National Congress.

No evaluation of modern South African history is complete without an understanding of the ANC. Founded in 1912 to further the rights of Africans across the continent, the ANC soon became focused on the issue of voting rights for black and mixed-race South Africans. In the 1948 general election, open only to white citizens, D.F. Malan's National Party beat Jan Smuts' United Party on a platform of putting the country's white citizens first. Henceforth, the National Party (NP), which would rule until 1994, began to introduce a series of racial segregation laws, which became known as apartheid. Initially, the ANC's response to the introduction of apartheid was based around peaceful protest. However, following the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960, it began to use

increasing levels of violence to achieve its goals. This armed wing was founded by Nelson Mandela and went on to kill around 100 civilians in various bombings. In 1990 president, F.W. De Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC. At the same time, he released Nelson Mandela from prison, where he had been held following the Rivonia Trial of 1964, in which he gave his now famous "It is an ideal for which I am prepared to die" speech. Following the 1994 election, the ANC swept to power. The ANC has won every election since 1994 and has produced South Africa's four post-apartheid presidents: Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma and Cyril Ramaphosa.

As with any country whose government enjoys such unconditional support from its electorate, the possibility arises of elected officials beginning to behave unscrupulously. The ANC's voter base seems so strong

President Cyril Ramaphosa
Photo by Armand Hough



Politics remains deeply polarised, corruption is rampant, inequality is without parallel in the modern world

that the party will be comfortably re-elected, no matter the transgressions of their leaders, the extent of high-level corruption, nor legislative apathy. Whilst Nelson Mandela is widely acknowledged to have been instrumental in the peaceful end of apartheid, his successors have had considerably less distinguished tenures. Thabo Mbeki was embroiled in many controversies during his nine years in office. Most destructive among these, he rejected the link between HIV and AIDS, before banning antiretroviral drugs in South African hospitals, despite international drugs companies offering them for free. A Harvard study in 2008⁸ found that Mbeki's denialist stance led to the premature deaths of 365,000 people in South Africa. Mbeki also drew widespread criticism for consistent ridicule of reports critical of the country's high murder-rate.

That said, his successor, Jacob Zuma, has had an equally scandalous tenure. Allegations of corruption have afflicted Mr Zuma before he became president. Among these, in a 1999 arms deal, both Mbeki and Zuma were alleged to have acted improperly when signing a contract with BAE Systems for fighter aircraft, worth £3bn⁹. Furthermore, he famously used the equivalent of £13m in public funds to make so-called 'security improvements' to his private homestead in KwaZulu-Natal, these including a helipad, a chicken-run and a swimming pool¹⁰. To add to this, many government contracts awarded to Gupta companies have been under scrutiny for preferential treatment as a result of Mr Zuma's personal relationship with the family. Upon his resignation in 2018, Zuma pressed the ANC to elect his ex-wife, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, as leader, so as to protect himself from prosecution; however to this end at least, he was unsuccessful. Today, he is accused in the courts of accepting 783 illegal payments.

Cyril Ramaphosa became the third president of the rainbow nation, but has been in office for too little time to draw conclusions on his competence. However, many see in the current president a way out of South Africa's deteriorating situation. He seems more willing than his predecessors to root out corruption in the government and is keen to tackle South Africa's youth unemployment rate, by establishing a Youth Unemployment Service initiative¹¹. Whether such commitments are genuine remains to be seen, and many see them as mere electoral empty promises. In other areas, concerns are being raised over Mr Ramaphosa's steadfast commitment to land reform, where he has amended the constitution to allow the state to expropriate land without compensation, a policy which he claims will bolster economic growth. However, some see on the horizon a repeat of Robert Mugabe's disastrous land confiscation policy in Zimbabwe, which led to serious food shortages, economic collapse and hyperinflation. A further problem is the response of Zuma-affiliated ANC members, who are far less willing to implement

such wide-ranging reforms – indeed many doubt Mr Ramaphosa's authority within government is sufficient to carry through such a bold agenda. It is unlikely that any problems arising from this policy will seriously affect the ANC's grip on power in South Africa though. In May 2019, despite a persistently torpid economy, the ANC once more swept the boards, winning 57.5% of the vote. To put the ANC's consistent electoral success down to its legendary historical position as a champion of the rights of black South Africans is indeed a major factor, but an equally significant factor is the total inadequacy of the political opposition.

The cause for South Africa's political infirmity can perhaps be found in its uniquely challenging ethnic configuration – the country's indigenous people can be divided roughly into four groups: Nguni, Sotho-Tswana, Shangana Tsonga and Venda. Each can be divided into sub-groups and has its own distinctive languages. Indeed, there are nine indigenous languages enshrined in the South African constitution, in addition to English and Afrikaans. Zulu is the most commonly spoken language, though it is used by only 22.7% of the population. English, the language which dominates government, business and the media, is spoken by a paltry 9.6%. Although linguistic diversity is not an impediment to a national identity or economic growth *per se*, the lack of a single, unifying language means that ethnic divisions are reinforced to the extent where they become serious barriers to economic progress. The correlation between ethno-linguistic fragmentation and low economic growth rates has been observed since the late 1990s¹², and is a major obstacle for South Africa, the eighth most ethnically fractionalised country in the world.

Another example of South Africa's deep crisis lies in the emigration of an estimated 800,000 South Africans since the end of apartheid¹³. Although emigration has slowed since the Great Recession, there is still a serious concern that a brain drain is drawing highly skilled workers out of South Africa to the U.K. the U.S. and Australia, where unemployment rates are at record lows and jobs are plentiful¹⁴. For South Africa, this is translating to a shortage of skilled workers and the further erosion of an already shaky tax base (just 2% of South Africans pick up 69% of the bill)¹⁵. The nonchalant attitude of the government towards the economy is a primary reason for this exodus, but there have also been conscious policy decisions that have played an important role. Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) is a government-run programme, established in 2003, which seeks to redress the economic disparities between South Africa's white and coloured populations through giving preferential employment opportunities to coloured people. This form of affirmative aggression has been criticised across

⁸ New York Times: 'Toll of AIDS Policy...' (2008)

⁹ BBC: 'South Africa arms deal...' (April 2018)

¹⁰ Mail&Guardian: 'Nkandla report...' (Nov. 2013)

¹¹ The South African (Nov. 2019)

¹² Easterly and Levine: 'Africa's Growth Tragedy...' (1997)

¹³ The Economist: 'Between staying and going' (2008)

¹⁴ The Economist: 'The rich world is enjoying...' (May 2019)

¹⁵ Biznews.com: 'All-inclusive accelerated emigration...' (Aug. 2019)



South Africa Cape Town Imizamo Yethu Township
Photo by Diriye Amey

the political spectrum as being too aggressive and is widely recognised as the main cause of the brain drain, as white South Africans see their job prospects shrink yet further. There is little evidence to suggest that BEE is helping ordinary South Africans either¹⁶. BEE concentrates power in the hands of South Africa's wealthy black elite and has been shown to exacerbate corruption through the improper selection of inflated tenders by preferred bidders. Despite these widely understood consequences, Mr Ramaphosa is decided on the matter – BEE will stay. Thus, so too will the gnawing brain drain.

This compendium of burdens, political, economic, and social facing South Africa remains huge. Politics remains deeply polarised, corruption is rampant, inequality is without parallel in the modern world, and its leaders have, so far, been hopelessly incompetent at tackling any one of these problems. In a democracy in which corrupt politicians are not punished at the ballot box, the judiciary must step up and hold the ANC to account for the transgressions it has made during its unbroken quarter-century in power. Without this, meaningful reform will remain a distant aspiration. Moreover, South Africa's other political factions have, time and time again, failed to find

¹⁶ S.A. Institute for Race Relations: 'BEE might be good for...' (July 2019)

any kind of *modus vivendi* with the ANC, without which it will be impossible to lift the country from its current mire. And yet still many view the 'rainbow nation' as a paragon of politics done right: a success story that saw the peaceful end of an oppressive regime and the start of a healthy, modern democracy. A quarter of a century on, one is able to see the naïveté of such an outlook. Patently, the prayer of Saint Francis does not ring true. The deep scars that were so grimly visible during apartheid remain, only today they lie partially hidden from view. A successful political transfer of power has proved to be but a half-truth; although the evils of white-minority rule lie firmly in the past, the menaces of corruption, crime and poverty still afflict those who were meant to have been saved. 10 million people are without jobs, and a quarter of the country's 57 million people go without sufficient food¹⁷. For too long, the ANC has put its own interests above those of South Africa. Such an arrangement is not sustainable. The reform promised by Mr Ramaphosa must be delivered without delay, because without it, many South Africans will endure yet another generation of hunger, poverty and broken promises.

¹⁷ StatsSA (Jul. 2019)

Against the Oligarchy

Titus Parker traces the early years of the Russian republic, political change and 'wild East' capitalism

During the early Middle Ages, Venice became one of the richest states in the world. With its ready access to spices and slaves from Byzantium in the East, it developed an inclusive trade system called a *commenda*, whereby two partners would enter into a contract for the duration of one journey. One partner, usually older and wealthier, would stay in Venice and put in the majority of the capital required, while the other, younger and more aspiring, would accompany the cargo. During the 10th century, a time dominated by feudalism and a lack of social mobility, Venice seemed to be the exception, providing inclusive economic innovations like the *commenda* that led to the formation of inclusive economic institutions such as trade guilds, and enabled young entrepreneurs to get into business and rise economically and politically, and numerous inclusive political institutions¹ that comprised its Republic-structure that enabled non-aristocrats like Domenico Flabianico in 1032 to be elected as doge. However, this was not to last.

From October 5th 1286, where a proposal to give the aristocrat-controlled council of forty (one of many councils in the Republic) veto power over new nominations to the Great Council, the inclusive political system gradually gave way to one that sought to preserve the power of the aristocracy and the elite at the expense of the non-ruling and mercantile classes; naturally the inclusive economic systems such as the *commenda* that ensured the prosperity of the many and thus the polity as a whole deteriorated alongside this negative political change to a more aristocratic society. Economists Acemoglu and Robinson in their book 'Why Nations Fail' argue that the decline of Venice is due to the progressive decline of what they term 'inclusive economic and political institutions' – cyclical institutions that generate their own prosperity through inclusiveness and policies that can allow as many people as possible to achieve. Inclusive economic and political institutions accompany sustainable growth and

¹ Acemoglu, Daron and James A Robinson. *Why Nations Fail*. Crown Publishing, 2012.

prosperity – this is clear. Therefore, following the collapse of The Soviet Union, Russia should have experienced a surge in industrial output and living standards as the collapse of the USSR paved the way to a more market-friendly and inclusive organisation of society. However, even considering the few years of socio-economic stability



Oligarchs Boris Berezovsky and Roman Abramovich in 2000.

The inclusive political system gradually gave way to one that sought to preserve the power of the aristocracy and the elite

following the privatisation of Russia, (considering Margaret Thatcher had trouble privatising a few national industries, it is understandable that Russia would have problems privatising most of their industry), there was no boost nor was there a magic money tree at the end of the privatisation process. Why was this the case?

Let us turn our attention to Russia – a country that is still affected by its privatisation process. When Yeltsin took power, he was faced with a huge task – to privatise the largest socialist economy in history. He delegated this to Anatoli Chubais, dubbed 'The Most Hated Man in Russia'. His legacy is still felt today in Russia's very oligarchic and kleptocratic economy. Chubais' transition from the Soviet economy immediately caused inflation, which only grew when he established the 'Rouble Zone', whereby former Soviet republics could issue roubles and receive credit from Russia, further devaluing the rouble and causing inflation. In 1991, GDP dropped by approximately a sixth. In 1995, the IMF established a rouble corridor, which artificially fixed the rouble's exchange rate; however, due to a lack of proper structural industrial reform, the state was still printing money to prop up inefficient and failing Soviet-era industry, thereby setting a false exchange rate not based on the value of the currency. A prime example of Hayekian price signalling, this continuous inflation and false price signal corrected itself in the 1998 rouble crisis, when Russia defaulted on its debt and the rouble devalued significantly.

However, this is not enough to explain Russia's current inequality and low economic development compared to Western Europe. Despite being rich in natural resources with a large workforce and the potential for heavy industry, Russia's GDP per capita is over 3 and a half times smaller than The United Kingdom's, and below that of Costa Rica and Slovenia according to IMF

statistics. Furthermore, according to Leonid Bershidsky of The Moscow Times, 13 percent of the population, have incomes below the official subsistence minimum of about \$150 a month or about \$7 a week. Russia also bears harsh inequality figures, with income inequality being 'roughly comparable' with Tsarist Russia (Novokmet, Piketty and Zucman) and the distribution of property in Russia being more unequal than in any major economy in North America, Asia or Europe according to the World Inequality Database.

Though Russia's economic malaise has improved since Russia's immediate post-Soviet days, the key to Russia's current economic limitations lie in its socio-economic makeup and distribution of wealth – the oligarchs. Upon the Soviet Union's breakup, Yeltsin and Chubais embarked on an ambitious privatisation programme. This was no easy task; considering Thatcher encountered difficulties when she set out to privatise only a couple of British state enterprises, Yeltsin and Chubais' task was never going to be easy. However, the privatisation of Russian industry was rigged against the masses from the start. The nomenklatura, the old Soviet government official 'elite' who were close to Yeltsin and his family benefited massively from the privatisation process. When factories and businesses' shares were auctioned, the auctions would be rigged for them, and they would then buy up factories and strip their assets. Considering at the time factories were often the primary source of health insurance, pensions and other forms of social security, this was devastating to the average Russian. The oligarchs in many cases put no money into the companies they purchased to help them grow, prosper and become more efficient, stimulating domestic production and creating jobs. Instead they were more interested in selling off anything of value, converting assets to cash and cash to dollars that were smuggled out of the country, depriving the Russian economy of growth-spurring money and resources.

There was another attempt to make the transition to a privatised economy more inclusive with the introduction of privatisation vouchers in 1992. These vouchers were distributed to 144 million Russian citizens for the purchase of shares in medium-sized and large enterprises that officials had designated and reorganized for this type of privatization. Voucher holders could also sell the vouchers, whose cash value varied according to the economic and political conditions in the country but were typically around £50. Unfortunately, many Russians did not know what to do with these vouchers and sold them to oligarchs and more aspiring neighbours who preyed on their lack of knowledge. One can draw parallels here between this and Stolypin's land reforms of the early 20th century: both were attempts to make society a little more economically inclusive, and both failed miserably. The oligarchic, extractive structure persisted after the privatisation phase (for example, Gazprom directors reserve the right to approve in advance the purchase of

the company's stock by prospective Russian directors) and came into conflict with Putin in the early 2000s. This conflict between oligarchs and Putin resulted in the arrest of a number of oligarchs including Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former richest man in Russia; instead of creating a new, more inclusive organisation of society and the economy, it bent the oligarchs into line, and made them support Putin's government and his agenda. This is the current structure of Russia's economy – a large number of very wealthy individuals controlling industry and factories, in league with Putin that still persists today.

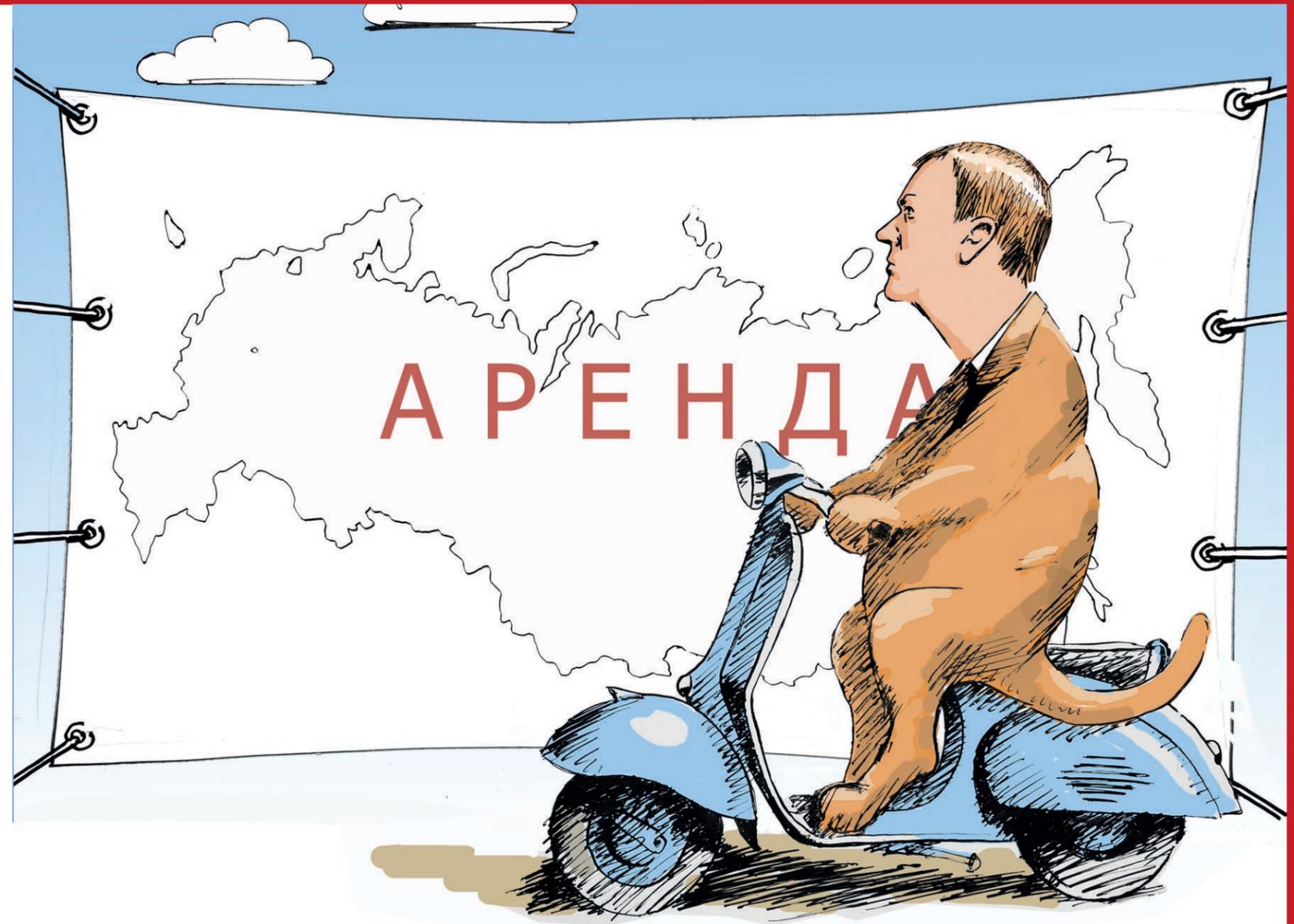
Vladimir Putin is beginning his fourth term as President of Russia. He is 67 years old. At the start of this year, we were welcomed with chaos in Moscow – Putin's entire cabinet had resigned in order to 'make space' for constitutional reform. His reforms constituted an increase in power both to Parliament and to the Security Council, a shadow body that advises the President on issues regarding national security. Experts said this solidified Putin's power as he could have transferred to a powerful position in the Security Council – this looked like the option Putin would take after his term ends in 2024. Yet these same experts were caught off guard, when, on March 10th of this year, Putin appeared before the constitutional court to request another two six-year consecutive terms after 2024. Putin's true colours are shown – clearly he is not quite ready to relinquish his grip over the country and staying president instead of switching to a position in the Security Council means that after 2024, Putin will retain even more power in the country than what experts predicted two months ago.

This is not the most interesting thing, however. Putin isn't immortal, despite what

how he might try to portray himself. He will be too old to rule at some point, or, as many of these autocrats do, remain in power until he dies. Either way, his constitutional changes in January and March, not only exposed him as a crony and an autocrat even further, but expanded more power to

the parliament, a potential instrument for democracy even if it isn't right now and even if Putin does, in the worst case scenario, remain until 2036. When Putin eventually goes, the parliament will have more power compared to the President than, say, a year ago – this is good because it changes the very fabric of the Russian polity to one that is more inclusive. Inclusive political institutions share a symbiotic relationship with institutional economic institutions; hopefully, this expands the political and thus economic inclusivity of Russia in the future.

The end of his rule over Russia, though now ever



Anatoly Chubais
Photo by Valeriy Osipov

The distribution of property in Russia being more unequal than in any major economy in North America, Asia or Europe

References

delayed, provides an opportunity to correct the persistent issues that have been plaguing Russia since the 90s. First of all, the divisive hold of the state-oligarchy complex needs to be ended, with effective antitrust and anti-corruption laws, and the breakup of large corporate monopolies. While this is easier said than done, it is significantly less of a daunting task than that which faced Yeltsin and Chubais in 1991, and could herald a new era of Russian growth. This looks unlikely under Putin's presidency; his confrontational foreign policy resulted in a 2015 recession in Russia and his perpetuation of extractive institutions using oligarchs harm the Russian populace. Inclusive institutions are of paramount success to the wealth and prosperity of a nation and its people; for Russia to maximise the prosperity and happiness of its citizens, Putin's extractive policy must go.

Acemoglu, Daron and James A Robinson. *Why Nations Fail*. Crown Publishing, 2012.

Bershidsky, Leonid. "Russia Can't Decide If It's Rich or Poor." *The Moscow Times* 24 January 2019.

Goldman, Marshall. "The Pitfalls of Russian Privatization." *Challenge* (1997). JSTOR

Novokmet, Filip , Thomas Piketty and Gabriel Zucman. "From Soviets to Oligarchs: Inequality and Property in Russia 1905-2016." 2017.

Aubrey Beardsley: *Salome* and the Subversive

Sybilla Griffin examines the background to Beardsley's illustrations for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* and considers how Beardsley sought to subvert the values of Victorian patriarchy



The Climax, Aubrey Beardsley 1893

Beginning with an unofficial image of Salome's lurid climactic scene published in 1893 by an avant-garde art journal, Beardsley's commission began as a way of validating Wilde's Aesthetic vision of his work, transcending its literary form and becoming an intrinsically decorative object.

Beardsley's circle encouraged him to subvert the patriarchy through liberal depictions of carnality and the unnatural; his personal methodology proved just as contrary to Victorian ideas of public morality as the subject matter he was portraying. Examining the precedent of *Salome* as subject matter, it becomes evident that Beardsley, in his style, method and attitude, was offering a potent challenge to the establishments embodied by the Academy, public opinion, and Wilde himself.

After seeing his initial drawing based on *Salome* in art publication *The Studio*, Wilde commissioned Beardsley to create ten full page illustrations and a cover design for the English edition of the play, to be released under Bodley Head. The amount of work produced in excess of his contract was a result of extensive censorship and the rejection of a number of illustrations by John Lane due to their explicit nature; according to Arthur Waugh, Lane was 'dreadfully afraid of offending the proprieties'. This censorship ensured that even in pre-publication, the play became 'reified into everything that opposed true Englishness', a status that Beardsley's illustrations exacerbated.

However, reservations expressed by publishing houses represent a fraction of the rigidly conformist mentality that characterised mainstream Victorian public opinion, held in place by institutions including journalism, advertising,

public schools, religion, and the Academy. Assigning the word 'patriarchy' to this cultural climate may seem heavy handed, yet it expresses the absolute dominance of male power throughout these institutions that became arbiters of public taste. Beardsley, Wilde and their Aesthete contemporaries came to represent a 'private realm of art and sexuality impervious to middle class conformity', opposed to the natural, functional world of patriarchal bourgeoisie standards.

Wilde's play itself posited, in the view of Regenia Gagnier, the 'castration of the forces of law and order by the forces of illicit sexual desire'. The fact of *Salome's* femininity mixed with the triumph of her desire over divine and secular law (both significantly masculine, presented by John the Baptist and Herod respectively) appeared to be a direct challenge to the repressive forces of Victorian society, that dictated gentlemanliness, masculinity and stability as cultural ideals. Banned from the stage in England until 1931, the play in its written form was described by *The Times* as 'an arrangement in blood and ferocity, morbid, bizarre, repulsive and very offensive in its adaptation of scriptural phraseology to situations the reverse of sacred'.

Beardsley's first illustration, entitled *J'ai Baise ta Bouche, lokanaan* (the first version of *The Climax*) attracted Wilde's attention as it seemed to embody the qualities of the 'exaggerated, the "off".. -things-being-what-they-are-not' that the play came to represent through its salacity and irreverence. *Salome* is depicted as a witch-like figure with her eyes fixed lustfully on John the Baptist's dismembered head; both faces are epicene, although the features of the corpse seem more fragile and feminine than that of lust are clearly evident in this initial drawing, and would have been recognised by Wilde as fitting the tone of his play.

They came to represent a private realm of art and sexuality impervious to middle class conformity



Stomach Dance, Aubrey Beardsley 1893

Much of the popularity of the story of Salome was the result of a Symbolist attraction towards the exotic and the mystical. Beardsley, though, strips away much of Salome's context: she is not defined by the accoutrements of her royal status or biblical significance. Beardsley leaves her as a cipher for the Decadent ideologies of artifice, excess and sensation: rather than being covered in jewels and enveloped in a Byzantine palace, Beardsley's Salome floats in a liminal space, her form exaggerated almost beyond the human. Wilde's only instruction regarding Beardsley's execution of the drawings was for Salome to 'have a different face in every picture'; this compounds the sense that representation of her character is secondary to expression of what Sturgis deems the 'naked lust and cruelty' that runs through the images. Thus, Beardsley's portrayal of Salome being perceived as 'the icon of the ideology of the Decadents', providing a distillation of the Decadent animosity towards respectability and productivity that the patriarchy upheld.

Beardsley's line, often unrelated to mass, becomes an entity distinct from its subject; compounding the sense that the importance of Salome's narrative context is diminutive. In *Stomach Dance*, the lines describing the folds of Salome's clothing veer out of the frame and into the centre of the image, seeming to depart from their representative role. *Stomach Dance* is inappropriately static for an image that is meant to be representative of movement; but it could be argued that the flourishes created by the extended fold of Salome's coverings and the strings of the seated figure's musical instrument are an expression of the musicality of the scene. Beardsley's leaning toward abstraction through his often oblique use of line demonstrates his discarding of Salome's Symbolist connotations and instead uses the subject matter to play with representational boundaries.

The idea of style informing, and perhaps eclipsing, content is central to the ethos of the Decadent movement; while Wilde wanted his play to remain the focus of the finished work, he was eager for his illustrated play to become a holistic piece of art. Through his transformation of reading into an aesthetic experience, Wilde's commissioning of Beardsley rings true to the decadent ethos of producing 'art for art's sake', fighting against the rationality and utility of Victorian moral systems.

The Decadent movement was definitively opposed to the patriarchal systems of industrial capitalism and the increased emphasis on material gain, finding a form of artistic escapism through a focus on the morbid, erotic and the spiritual. Described by Arthur Symons, as a 'a new and beautiful and interesting disease', the movement's literary tenets of artificiality, refinement and fin de siècle ennui soon became appropriated by visual artists. Wilde's desired vision for its staging and atmosphere was more equivalent to the Byzantine environment of Moreau's *Salome*. In contrast, Wilde likened Beardsley's interpretation to 'the naughty scribbles a precocious schoolboy makes on the margins of his copybook', reducing the drawings in tone to tongue-in-cheek sexual mischief. According to Sturgis, Beardsley's style was considered by Wilde to be too 'Japanese' for a play intended to be Byzantine. Filled with

'medical technicalities, pornographic slang, Renaissance appropriations, [and] daring neologies', the Wilde felt the illustrations lacked completely in the atmosphere of tragic gravitas that Mallarmé and Moreau succeeded in conjuring. Haldane MacFall, a contemporary of Beardsley, described the Salome drawings as 'mock-Japanesque', inspired by 'Japanese art.. -in its cheapest forms'.

The Saturday Review deemed Beardsley's style a 'derisive parody of Felicien Rops, embroidered on to Japanese themes'; this comparison neatly demonstrates Beardsley's subversion of the normative Decadent style. Beardsley's pictorial language was a deviation from the Decadent mores of gothic depravity, while simultaneously expressing and perhaps refining the values at the heart of the movement.

Erotic imagery, rather than being the shocking and spectacular focus, becomes incorporated into the environment of the characters - for example, the phallic candle holders in *Enter Herodias* blend innocuously into the furnishing of the room, while a single tine describes the left-hand figure's grotesquely massive erection draped in cloth. Beardsley's ability to seamlessly incorporate the explicit into the visual landscape of his illustrations implies that the very essence of the realm they are inhabiting is that of undiluted sexuality.

Beardsley's use of materials also potentially challenged convention. His employment of Line Block Technology was unusual in its quotidian nature, as its use was associated with low quality illustrations in newspapers and other cheap, ephemeral publications.

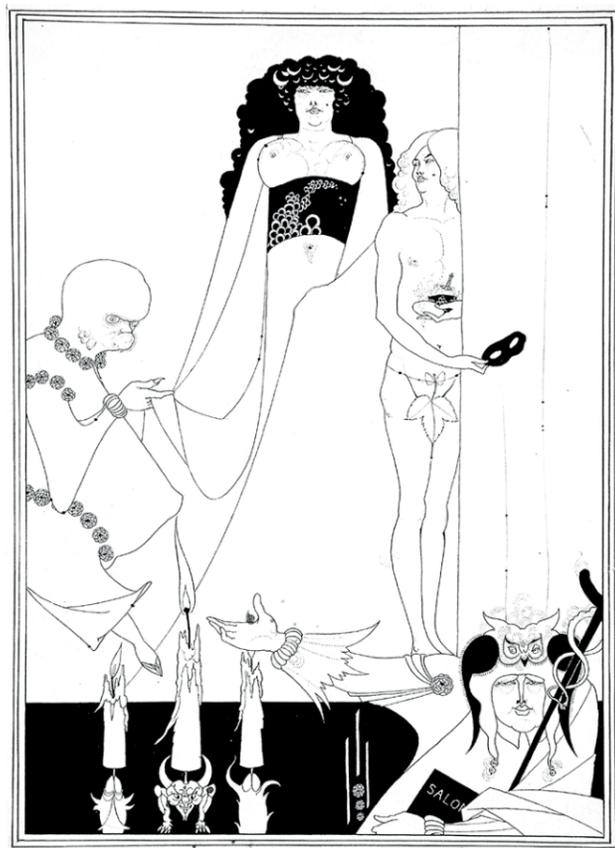
The banning of *Salome* from the English stage arguably endowed Beardsley's illustrations with even greater significance. As much of the play is based around spectacle, the lack of performance resulted in the drawings becoming a visual substitute for the play's theatrical impact. However, it seems that Beardsley's interpretation of his task far outstripped Wilde's intentions for the commission: *Studio Journal* commented on 'the irrepressible personality of the artist dominating everything'. Beardsley adeptly manipulates the subject matter he is given to work with to the point where it becomes more synonymous with his characteristic vision of aesthetic erotomania than a representation of Wilde's textual material.

Beardsley's presentation of women was highly provocative, and the Salome commission demonstrated a direct challenge to contemporary notions of feminine restraint and submission. While Salome as a literary character garnered her own reputation as a symbol of female deviancy, Beardsley's depiction of both her and her mother, Herodias, arguably transmuted this into one of power and domination. Beardsley's portrayal of Salome is thought to be influenced in part by the pre-Raphaelite woman; the exaggerated eyes and lips, elongated neck and nose and profusion of curls were described by Theodore Wratislaw as 'Rossetti-like'. This reference to Dante Gabriel Rossetti could be regarded as an act of subversive irony, as Rossetti's interest in portraying the 'Fallen Woman' as a victim in need of masculine aid contrasts sharply with Beardsley's presentation of Salome as propagating and revelling in her fallenness. This is particularly evident

Most shocking for the Establishment was the inversion of conventional gender roles that runs throughout Beardsley's illustrations

in *The Dancer's Reward*, which depicts the moment after Salome has 'won' the head of John the Baptist as part of her bargain with Herod. Framed by curls reminiscent of Rossetti's women, Salome's face is an almost vampiric mask; her teeth are sharp and inhuman, while her eyes are almost lizard-like. This chimerical crossing of the conventionally feminine with the animalistic presents Salome as a predatory creature of uninhibited desire; as she grasps the hair of John the Baptist in one hand and touches his blood with the other, her victory over a once-powerful man is made palpable.

Perhaps most shocking for the Establishment was the inversion of conventional gender roles that runs throughout Beardsley's illustrations. Imagery of male submission to female desire runs throughout the illustrations; men are consistently portrayed as epicene, while John the Baptist is given the role of sexual prey, one usually reserved for women. In *Enter Herodias*, Herodias epitomises this vision of a powerful woman: she towers over her male subjects, with a stern expression and broad shoulders. Her stomacher accentuates her large breasts, yet, veined and bulbous, their status as sexual objects seems to be redacted; they could be perceived as an expression of her feminine power rather than pure



Enter Herodias, Aubrey Beardsley 1893

desirability. She is flanked by an effeminate youth and a figure that could be seen as an elderly man or a monstrous foetus figure; both would have been perceived by a Victorian audience as equally grotesque representations of manhood.

While Beardsley's commentary on gender and sexuality shocked the public, his most incisive act of subversion was arguably directed at Oscar Wilde, and the notion of patriarchal literary celebrity that he represented. Undermining Wilde's work through his reinterpretation of the play, Beardsley began to break away from his patron and produced drawings that mutated from illustration to a body of work that dominated its patronage through its originality and unprecedented transgression. Beardsley's persecution of the commission was not limited to reinterpreting Wilde's intended vision; he publicised his disdainful attitude towards Wilde in subtly concealed satire throughout the illustrations. A caricature of Wilde appears in *Enter Herodias*; he is presented as a showman in the foreground, recognisable by his drooping eyes, crutch stick and copy of *Salome* clutched in his hand. The bells decorating the owl headdress is reminiscent of a jester's cap, implying a mockery of Wilde's affected wisdom, while his extended arm leads to the erection of the monstrous creature on the left, a thinly disguised reference to the public perception of Wilde's homosexuality as nefarious and gruesome. Wilde holds a caduceus, an attribute of Mercury: a Roman god known for both his eloquence and his thievery.

It may be convenient to view Beardsley's satire of Wilde as a scathing personal attack on the writer, and their relationship became icy over time. However, Beardsley's presentation of Wilde with the accoutrements of his perceived public persona may have been a commentary on the state of celebrity within the literary elite, as it plays upon public perceptions of Wilde rather than his actual characteristics. As it was the English press that condemned the drawings and resulted in the cementing of Beardsley's reputation as a degenerate in the minds of the public, it may be that Beardsley is making a subtle comment on the reification of creativity by public institutions when it contested the status quo.

Beardsley presented a direct challenge to the Victorian patriarchy with his graphic portrayal of 'Victorian man's fear of woman, woman's growing independence... and the overall dark side of human nature'. His drawings shocked not only through their sexual licentiousness and proto-feminist undertones, but also disturbed people with their element of almost indescribable otherness: an anonymous reviewer for *Public Opinion* described Beardsley's work as 'not belong[ing] to the sane in body or mind'. Providing an 'inversion of middle class language and life' through its presentation of a realm in which sexual desire reigns supreme and traditional masculinity is rendered impotent, Beardsley presents a fantastical alternative to the confines of patriarchal propriety.



The Dancer's Reward, Aubrey Beardsley 1893

Patriotism: Vice or Virtue?

Sharon Chau considers whether national feeling should be encouraged or discouraged by nation states today. She compares a number of modern thinkers and weighs up arguments of moral legitimacy, identity and the practical benefits for the state

Patriotism is a concept that has intrigued philosophers and political theorists for centuries. It is characterised by Stephen Nathanson as having four criteria: a) special affection for the country; b) personal identification with the country; c) special concern for the well-being of the country; and d) willingness to sacrifice to promote the country's good.

In this article, patriotism will be examined through two lenses - morality, whether patriotism is morally legitimate or even a moral obligation; and consequences, whether patriotism creates more good than harm.

Leo Tolstoy argued that patriotism is not morally legitimate under two arguments – first, that patriotism promotes one's country's interests at the expense of other nations, through whatever means necessary. This is against any moral precept, as it violates the Golden Rule of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". His second argument stipulates that patriotism is morally questionable due to its irrationality. Those who are patriotic believe their country to be the best, even though only one country can objectively hold that position. George Kateb strengthens this claim of irrationality. He argues that "citizens" are not discernable individuals, and social ties are impersonal and invisible. As this position is contrary to reason, it is hence an immoral belief. This position is further reinforced by Simon Keller, who believes patriotism to be in bad faith. He argues that the patriot does not judge his country objectively and is clouded by biases; and as rationality requires objective recognition of a country's strength, this position is in bad faith.

On the surface, these arguments appear quite plausible. It seems morally illegitimate and irrational to prioritise your own country

above all else. However, a few strong responses have been levied against this claim. To Tolstoy's first argument, Marcia Baron (1989) argues that patriotism can be compatible with morality, as love for our country need not override all other moral considerations - for example, there could be universal precepts which override concern for your own country. Her argument is more persuasive than Tolstoy's, as Tolstoy assumes a strong form of patriotism, whilst Baron's is more reasonable and realistic. This takes down Tolstoy's assertion that patriotism necessarily entails maximising your country's interest at the expense of all else. Furthermore, patriotism need not manifest itself into the belief that one's country is the best. One can feel patriotic about their own country while accepting its flaws and the objective superiority of other countries.

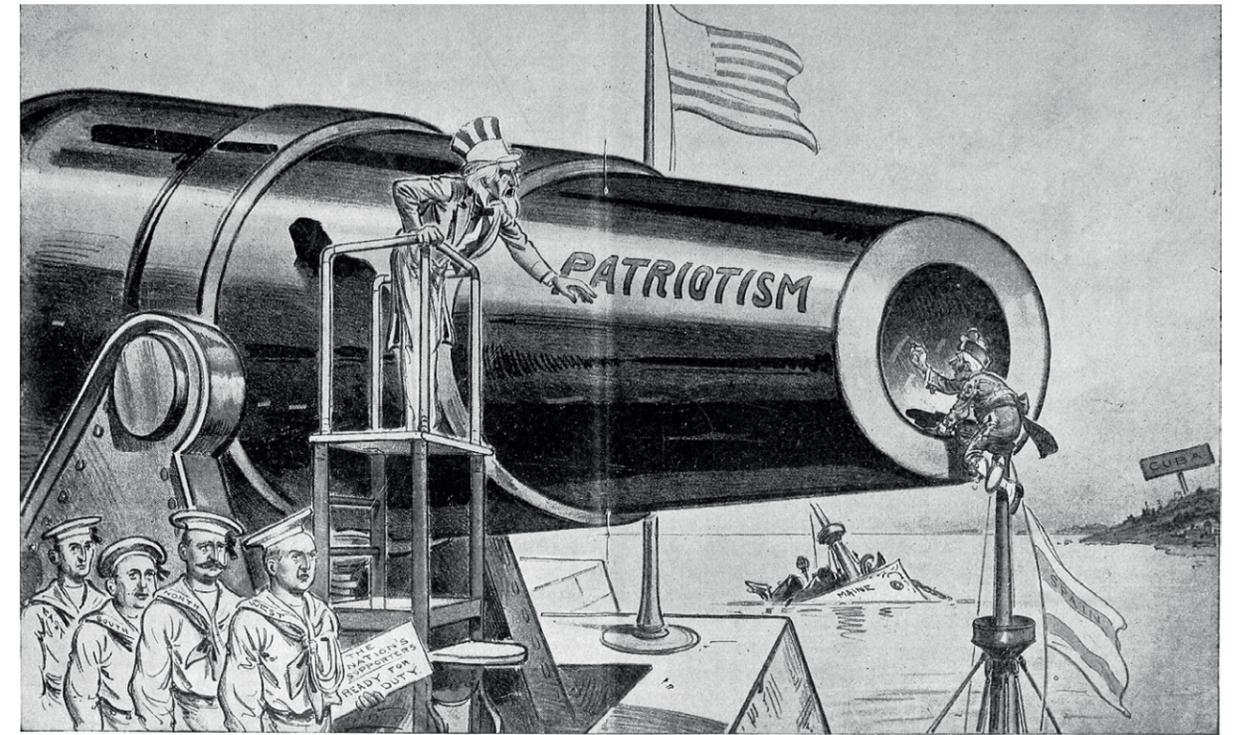
At the same time, Benedict Anderson rebuts Kateb's

argument stating social ties are impersonal and that care for your "fellow citizens" is irrational. Anderson argues that all communities are "imagined", and this does not in any way diminish the legitimacy of the bonds we have with them. This hence demonstrates how the feeling of obligation and sacrifice we have towards other members of our community is not irrational nor morally illegitimate. As for Keller's argument of patriotism being in bad faith, a simple response suffices - it is enough to say that this is *my* country and *my* fellow citizens and treat them accordingly. Even if we accept the characterisation that patriotism is a form of biased egoism and that it might not be completely rational, it is not a reason to deem it morally illegitimate. Hence on the clash of moral legitimacy, it appears that patriotism is morally legitimate.

As for moral duties, many argue that patriotism is a moral obligation. Richard Dagger argues that compatriots make the state function smoothly, allowing individuals within it to flourish. Hence, we have a reciprocal duty to be patriotic and have special concern for other members of our community. Maurizio Viroli furthers this by arguing that you owe gratitude and a special duty to your country due to the benefits it grants to you. Andrew Mason argues on the basis of associative duty that we owe a special duty to citizens who are close to us, just as how we have a duty to our close friends.

These three arguments for moral duty for patriotism have been subject to fierce criticism. Igor Primoratz disagrees with this narrow conception of patriotism and duty. He proposes a hypothetical scenario – if someone denied special concern for other citizens on top of concern for general humanity, or if she could only save one of two random people and did not

save her compatriot, would she be committing a moral wrong? Through appealing to our intuitions, Primoratz demonstrates that having a moral duty to be patriotic is illogical. At the same time, a response to Dagger states that he conflates patriotism with civic obligations. Dagger successfully proves that we might have a reciprocal duty to follow the laws of a state or to pay taxes, as the state gives us benefits and protection we might otherwise not have. This is the famous social contract argument forwarded by Rousseau. However, this does not prove that we have a special obligation to our compatriots. This hence responds adequately to Dagger's argument. As for Viroli's argument, it is argued that there are three criteria for gratitude and reciprocity, none of which are fulfilled by patriotism. First, gratitude ought to be for individuals who have acted on behalf of an entity, not the entity itself, as the entity has



'Be careful, it's loaded', Taken from The History of the nineteenth century in Caricature, by Maurice and Cooper, 1904

not directly conferred benefits onto you. For example, the individual doctors and nurses within a hospital should be thanked, instead of the hospital as an institution.

Second, gratitude ought to be for those who act for the right reason – for your benefit. In the instance of a nation-state, most actions are for the benefit for the smooth functioning of the state itself, whereas you as an individual citizen is merely an inadvertent beneficiary. A parallel can be drawn with a waitress who was given a tip, not because the customer wanted to reward her service, but because the customer did not want to keep the change. Under the same logic, the waitress ought not feel gratitude nor reciprocate the benefit she received. Third, gratitude ought

to be felt for a benefit conferred freely, not a *quid pro quo* exchange with the state – an exchange of taxes for services. Hence, we have no obligation to reciprocate what the state gives us, given it is impersonal, unintended and not free. These counterarguments appear to sufficiently demonstrate the arguments for a moral duty for patriotism to be inadequate.

In moral terms, it would appear that patriotism is neither a virtue nor a vice. Patriotism is not morally illegitimate, nor is it a moral duty that all citizens have to observe. In light of this, we have to turn to utilitarian benefits and harms to determine whether patriotism should be encouraged. A benefit of patriotism is how it promotes the public sacrifice necessary for the functioning of the state. War is a pertinent example. Soldiers often have a strong sense of patriotism, believing in the vision

of a nation greater than themselves. This justifies taking extreme risks and being willing to put their lives on the line. Within the army, a sense of patriotism also disincentivises internal disagreement that sacrifices efficiency. This is both because of aversion to jeopardising the achievement of a common mission, as well as a common feeling with your fellow compatriots. A second example is public service. If individuals believe in and are devoted to the state, they would want to participate in forwarding its strength and power through public service, which is crucial for guaranteeing functional goods and services. Hence, patriotism encourages public sacrifice and a more efficient running of the state.

Patriotism also decreases the likelihood of conflict, especially for countries which are plagued with sectarian dissent. Differences in race, religion and language are less important than the shared ideals of loyalty and devotion towards the same nation-state. Citizens become less selfish, valuing each other's welfare as their own. An example to illustrate how patriotism decreases conflict is the counterexample of Yugoslavia. The decline in Yugoslavism in the 1980s coincided with the weakening of the state, leading to bloody civil wars and its ultimate collapse.

A third benefit of patriotism is how it reduces corruption. This happens in two ways. First, highly patriotic public servants care more about the society in which they live, and are more aware of the damage they might cause to society if they are corrupt. Hence, they are less likely to attempt to profit at the expense of his

Patriotism is not morally illegitimate, nor is it a moral duty that all citizens have to observe

It seems morally illegitimate and irrational to prioritise your own country

Many argue that patriotism is a vice through causing devastating harm

citizens. Second, a patriotic public is less likely to condone corruption within the government. In a state without patriotism, there is a collective action problem due to the diluted cost of corruption to the individual and the high cost of reporting, voting or campaigning on it. However, a patriotic body of citizens cares more about the effects of corruption on the entire country and are more likely to call out any corruption. This not only prevents public servants who might be corrupt to continue their behaviour, but also provides a deterrent to public servants not to attempt this in the first place. Hence, patriotism is able to reduce corruption within a state.

One last important point to note about patriotism is its inclusivity as an identity. This happens in two ways. First, patriotism does not depend on rigid distinctions in identities or characteristics that people might not be born with. This stands in contrast to identities such as race, which rely on easily identifiable and unchangeable characteristics. Second, patriotism is much easier to opt into and opt out of. In the era of globalisation, it is important that immigrants can identify with different nation-states. This demonstrates patriotism to be a system of collective identity not based on immutable characteristics, but one which can be adopted by newcomers, and can be opted out of by those who leave. Patriotism is hence virtuous in its inclusivity.

On the other hand, many argue that patriotism is a vice through causing devastating harm. First, competing patriotic identities could be extremely divisive. An example of this is the fragmentation of Yugoslavia, which happened due to the competing identities of Serbs and Croats, culminating in civil war. Second, patriotism can make people blind to their country's faults, and is problematic if mixed with the belief that one's country is beyond standards of morality. Nazi Germany is one such example, as the Germans' love for their nation was not counterbalanced by a moral doctrine that valued compassion. Third, patriotism can also be used as a dangerous tool by populist leaders, who exploit their citizens' care for their country to their benefit. Ambitious leaders could pursue risky strategies to boost their popularity, such as invading a neighbouring country to their state's detriment. Hence, patriotism can cause various serious harms.

However, one response is crucial - patriotism is not nationalism. Although the two concepts have similar meanings, nationalism exalts one nation above all others, and "by definition excludes from its purview all who do not belong to its own 'nation'" (Hobsbawm, 1992). This exclusionary and biased nature is not shared by patriotism, which emphasises concern for one's compatriots. This rebuts the first two challenges to patriotism, including that of divisiveness and immorality. As to the third challenge of exploitation of patriotism to the detriment of the country, one can argue that patriotism need not blind individual citizens to reason and knowledge of what is good or harmful for their country. If anything, patriotism increases the concern citizens have

towards their country, and citizens are less likely to be swayed by populist politicians into deceptive and harmful actions. Hence patriotism is not a vice in practical terms.

In conclusion, patriotism is a virtue. Although arguments for patriotism as a moral duty are inadequate, patriotism brings a plethora of important practical benefits. It promotes public sacrifice that is crucial to the functioning of a state, decreases the likelihood of conflict, reduces corruption, and is extremely inclusive as an identity. Hence, nation-states should encourage "national feeling", as it improves the wellbeing of the country and its citizens.

Bibliography

Anderson, Benedict, 1991, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London.

Baron, Marcia, 1989, "Patriotism and 'Liberal' Morality," in D. Weissbord (ed.), *Mind, Value, and Culture: Essays in Honor of E.M. Adams*, Atascadero

Dagger, Richard, 1985, *Rights, Boundaries, and the Bonds of Community: A Qualified Defense of Moral Parochialism*, American Political Science Review.

Kateb, George, 2000, *Is Patriotism a Mistake?*

Keller, Simon, 2005, *Patriotism as Bad Faith*, Ethics.

Mason, Andrew, 1997, *Special Obligations to Compatriots*, Ethics.

Nathanson, Stephen, 1989, *In Defense of 'Moderate Patriotism'*, Ethics.

Primoratz, Igor, 2007, *Patriotism: Philosophical and Political Perspectives*, Aldershot.

Scruton, Roger, 1990, *In Defence of the Nation*, The Philosopher on Dover Beach, Manchester.

Tolstoy, Leo, 1987, *On Patriotism and Patriotism, or Peace? Writings on Civil Disobedience and Nonviolence*, Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Viroli, Maurizio, 1995, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism*, OUP.

Hobsbawm, Eric, 1992, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, CUP.

Can we Return to a Civilised Political Discourse?

Hamish Kennedy looks at the effects of populism and social media on the increasingly intolerant nature of political opinion. He laments the lack of statesmen and nuanced analysis, and looks to how comment in the public domain may regain our respect

It is now a common view on both sides of the political aisle that we in the UK are more divided than ever. This country fractured primarily by the Brexit question, among other similarly polarising issues, has now entered what many pundits believe to be a completely new era of public discourse; an unregulated sweaty bar fight of people who would rather be seen to beat someone down with insults than engage in a semi-polite conversation. This problem is not confined to just a few countries. A cursory look at world events reveals at hostility and conflict on the increase.

However, it is in the UK and America that have are aware of hate and anger channeled transferred onto a whole new battlefield, social media. It is here that I believe that serious changes have to be made if we are to have any hope of returning to a (relatively) civilised political discourse.

The journalist Matt Taibbi stated in his book *Griftopia* that "in a society governed passively by free markets and free elections, organised greed always defeats disorganised democracy." Taibbi was skewering the ravaging effects of undue influence in financial markets, yet the analysis is just as valid with regard to the social media giants which wield enormous power. However, this principle is indeed fitting when describing the practice of the majority of journalistic businesses on the internet today; this is the so-called 'click-baiting'. Some ten years or so ago, news websites realized the revenue stream afforded by clickbaiting, in other words, it was advantageous for them to create the most attention grabbing headlines possible. Inevitably, 'attention-grabbing' became 'outlandish', which in turn became 'misleading' and in some cases has turned into just 'plain wrong.' Thus, today we have a media complex that is dominated by people

Bryan, Judge magazine, 1896

1896 Judge cartoon shows William Jennings Bryan/Populism as a snake swallowing up the mule representing the Democratic party.



whose intentions are not to create good quality work, but instead produce whatever will satisfy a pre-determined viewership quota.

The effect this has had on political conversation in general has been nothing short of disastrous. Extremist groups on either side of the political spectrum are periodically angered by the heavily polarised and ideological preachings of their respective chosen media sources, which is not helped by the design of social media platforms in general. Constant notifications, anonymous profiles and (in the case of Twitter) a limited word count, which degrades and over-simplifies complicated issues, makes for a toxic public forum in which the majority of discussions take place. This forces radicals on certain issues to further extremes and simultaneously discourages other, more reasonable points of view. On social media,

this manifests itself as band-wagon action, in which a user is criticised, slandered, threatened and ostracised for beliefs, mistakes and apparent shortcomings in an environment where loyalty to an extremist tribe is paramount.

This brings us to the second problem with the 'bandwagon' mentality which is the dilution of terms. This is most prominently seen in the cases of the words 'nazi', 'racist' and 'bigot', the first a manifestation of Godwin's theorem (i.e. as an argument progresses, the chances of the Nazis being mentioned increases exponentially.) Such dilution is actually very counterproductive, as it not only allows the real Nazis, xenophobes and racists to hide in a sea of normal people slandered with such terms, but it again promotes the use of name-calling and intellectual-thuggery to 'win' an argument, rather than the use of

sound, logical processes of thought.

Given the case-study of social media, I would be very skeptical that we could ever return to a point where political discussion was civil or even not mostly dominated by trolls or radical ideologues and their followers. The prominence of social-media and the use of the broader internet to do everything means the ideological bare-knuckle fistfights we have been accustomed to in comments' sections and on twitter threads are unlikely to cease. I would wager that Twitter users would not consider giving up using it as a method

of conversation, even though they would admit that it was detrimental to political and social debate.

The sad thing is that the real world is not much better. Universities, far from being bastions of debate and free speech, display increasing intolerance to certain viewpoints. Dr Lilliana Mason of the University of Maryland, concludes in her article on the division present in America today being that '[Collectively, these results indicate] that it is the social identifying role of ideological affiliation that is paramount in guiding our negative emotional responses to those on the other side of the political fence.' In other words, the construction of the so-called identity politics as a framework, which prioritises an individual's identity over their beliefs in everyday interactions, facilitates and enables people to reduce their ideological counterparts to their characteristics, which thus makes them easier to deconstruct in a debate and misconstrue their views.

Educational institutions have a crucial role to play in addressing the problem, if society wants to return to a world of civil discourse. Here are the people who will lead industry, make policies and change the world will form their political and social views. At times, sadly, they constitute a breeding ground for people who feel like they need to be allowed to make their immediate environment an echo chamber in which no views that run at odds to their own. The prominence of safe-space and 'cancel-culture' in the world of young people means that a lot of students go into the world feeling they can't express their views for fear of being reprimanded. Either that or they leave expecting that everyone else must conform to their own beliefs about how the world should or must work; which again contributes to a political climate that not just creates conflict, but such an extreme juxtaposition of opinions that we lose sight of what the issues are and descend to insults and slanders in order to remove people from the conversation. When we attach ourselves to our ideals and morals so much so that any challenge to our ideas becomes a perceived attack on our identity, then the breakdown of

I am not suggesting the return to an environment where large swathes of society feel like they have no voice. I vehemently support the deconstruction and pressuring of those with racist, sexist or other discriminatory viewpoints. I am more confident in society's ability to put aside its differences within its sub-groups, as I genuinely believe there is a large section of society who would be truly ready to dissociate themselves from the monolithic, radicals which we find dominating almost every important political discussion on social media and in open debates. According to the most recent statistics, 5% of all Twitter users produce 75% of all traffic on the platform, with many of these users being accounts of major corporations like Fox News or MSNBC (both bastions of the polarising biased coverage). Alongside these media juggernauts, there are a myriad of journalists, activists

Western society that has forgotten the importance of integrity, humility and respect



Trump signs the Pledge. Photo by Michael Vadon
New York, 3 September 2015 (CNN). The Republican presidential front-runner met privately with Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus and signed a loyalty pledge.

and trolls from the militant left and the equally vindictive and ugly 'Alt-Right' who battle it out periodically on the issue of the day. The result is a majority of centrist users on social media platforms who are forced either to keep quiet about their views or agree with their radical counterparts. It is here that lies the sect of society that really has the power to stand up and say they will not take the climate of hate, anger and general confusion anymore, and ideally quit the platform altogether.

Now, throughout 20th century history musical and pop culture figures have dabbled in or pushing their own political agenda. Woody Guthrie admirably proclaimed on his guitar that '[his] machine kills fascists', not to mention the advocacy for African-American rights by Public Enemy or the Jason Momoa's stand against construction on Hawaiian natives' protected land. But in recent years it appears that everyone, including non-descript celebrities, needs to have a political agenda as part of their image. Given the usually left-leaning skew of the Hollywood establishment, we see more and more cultural figures promoting Presidential candidates (ie. Clinton's election campaign) or calling out their fans who have the wrong opinions (Eminem, Jay-Z, Kendrick Lamar etc.) or generally pushing their own views, while being supported by legions of unquestioning supporters (i.e. any number of late-night talk show hosts.) The talk show host is an interesting case study, as it epitomises the swing that has been set in motion very recently which, due to the now obvious political views of the hosts themselves, viewers with sensibilities with which the host's opinions contradict feel like they have nothing to relate to them about. Thus, when other actors, singers and celebrities do the same thing, the gap between groups in society (which in this case almost exclusively is focused on the people who either identify as 'left' or 'right') widens as there is less that they have in common with their ideological counterparts than ever before.

The Washington Post, New York Times and others have stated that Senator John McCain was the last true stalwart of non-partisan politics and bi-partisan. Recent attacks in US politics confirm this. Joe Biden was recently criticised by his more radical Democratic Party peers over his comments about the Forced Busing policies of the 1950s and 60s, where because he openly admitted to working with racist Republican congressmen in order to make policies, he was deemed racist himself by Kamala Harris in particular. Though he made it clear he hated the individuals with every fibre of his being, he was merely stating the importance of working with people with whom you don't necessarily agree. This example is one of many very poignant cases which illustrate why America (and indeed the UK, with its Brexit debates overshadowed by partisan issues) both seem fractured and unable to hold a conversation for more than 10 minutes without calling someone a Nazi, a Communist or something worse. People have been indoctrinated into believing that anyone who is not with you is against you and, in times with such pressing problems as Climate Change, war, Brexit, US federal collapse etc, this highly-tribal doctrine is very attractive. It is this almost romanticised notion of 'fighting the enemy' that is so prominent in both, ironically, the

Che Guevara T-shirt-wearing Antifascist-members and the ultra-nationalistic Right-Wing 'militiamen', who swear to protect the good people of the US from a tyrannical government.

It is only when we can really start see each other eye-to-eye again, and actually bother talking/not berating anyone with whom we don't agree that real, productive discussions and arguments can become the norm. And yes, I am most confident that this issue can be resolved, more than any other obstacle to civil discourse.

Just as we have seen the rise in short, punchy opinion pieces on sites like Breitbart, Vox, Quillette and others, there has also been a rapid increase in the appetite for long-form, predominantly 1-on-1 discussions, usually on podcasts or small-scale debate forums. The popularity of the Joe Rogan Experience and other uninterrupted podcasts, in conjunction with the subculture that has been built around the figures comprising the so-called 'intellectual dark web' (which includes the 'shamed professors' Bert Weinstein and Jordan Peterson) accentuates the demands of the average citizen; they do not want to be told what they can and can't think and say. I am confident that, in this respect, civil political discourse can be restored.

We live in a western society that has apparently forgotten the importance of integrity, humility and respect, and thus the intensity of the differences of peoples' opinions that naturally occur in the field of subjective issues is magnified. There are those who both expressly and secretly desire for this atmosphere of anger and conflict, that has plagued social media discussion in particular, to continue, either because it helps them generate revenue or because they prefer to dominate political opponents in this manner. Or perhaps because they are simply driven to do and say things by rage first and foremost.

However, I still reserve hope for the return to a civilised political discourse in the relatively near future. Although the current situation may seem dire, that ideals such as humility, politeness and the striving for intellectual honesty are being lost, I believe that (ironically), though the latter statement is true in some cases, it is also equally a hyperbolic news story from the media that propagates such division in their economic practices. It seems clear that the majority of the population, if they were to simply take off the tinted spectacles of social media (or at least stop having serious arguments through the medium of it) as well as seeking to find similarities with their political opponents rather than jumping to differences, the state of political discourse would be infinitely better off. The influence of misinformation and disinformation have led to the cynical exploitation of free speech. We need regulation so that

individuals are respected and judged not for their identity but for the quality of their argument and views and where there the rights of non-libelous free speech will be protected. As Plato said, "When the tyrant has disposed of foreign enemies by conquest or treaty, and there is nothing more to fear from them, then he is always stirring up some war or other, in order that the people may require a leader."

The Legacy of the Enlightenment: Culture and Politics

Olivia Saunders assesses the legacy of the Enlightenment. The 18th century in particular saw the birth of remarkable figures whose intellectual engagement continue to colour the political and cultural spheres of the modern world. Her comments on law and absolutism have a special resonance for our contemporary society

The term 'Enlightenment' may be attributed to both a particular historical era and a more general process of acquiring revelatory knowledge. Some define the era as an intellectual event linked to contemporary advancements in "print technologies, association and communicative practices and institutional structures", when new sciences attained a distinctive influence. Others adopt the approach that it was more a time when the challenge to political absolutism gathered momentum. In this respect, the Enlightenment can be viewed as a cultural and political movement, so its legacy is double-pronged.

Enlightenment ideas were derived from a revolution in scientific thought, allied to an intellectual and philosophical movement in Europe, notably driven by Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot. Critically, this rationalism questioned the notion of God as responsible for physical behaviour. Natural explanation challenged the concept of divine intervention, and with it arose the ability to question the social hierarchy; it became an increasingly popular belief that the social order could be altered.

The ideals of the period encourage confidence in the adoption of reason as the test of the morally acceptable, as a mode of scientific discovery and as the way of resolving conflicting opinions about what

cannot be determined by science. Reason refers explicitly to the power of the individual in comprehending and improving their own condition. The Enlightenment is commonly seen to fall into two categories- faith in reason and its endorsement in human rights or the natural rights of man. The period is widely considered responsible for the conception of Western modernity. It has generated the underpinning for the principles of primacy of reason,

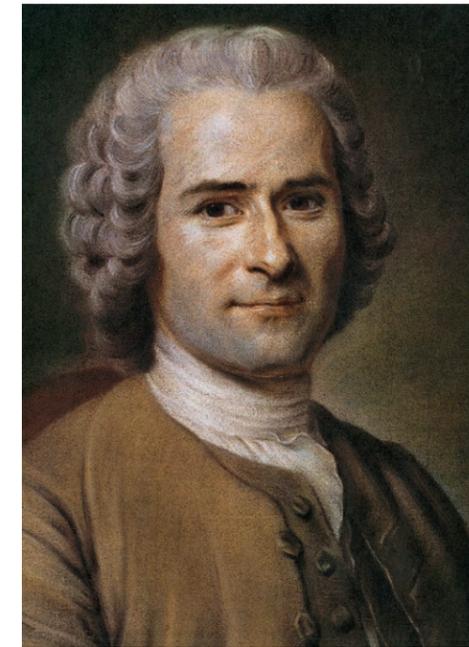
racial equality, toleration and feminism.

Rousseau's 'Social Contract' of 1762 is a clear justification of why the Enlightenment has provoked an immense cultural shift and has such a distinct cultural legacy. Within his thesis, he contends that laws are only

effective and binding when supported by the general will of the people and endorses the sentiment that "man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains". It challenged the traditional order of society. The fundamental concept is that no one has absolute political authority and that governments do not necessarily possess the right to command their subjects. Rousseau comments that "good social institutions are those which are best suited to denature man". He became such a keen advocate of this principle after being disillusioned by the social order in which he spent his life, and he viewed history as the story of the disintegration of equality. It was this rebellion against existing structure that began the popularisation of defying social and cultural norms, giving the Enlightenment such a clear cultural legacy.

Revisionist arguments may also be viewed as clear evidence of the current cultural significance of the Enlightenment, as we endeavour to alter and improve our interpretation of the period. Some modern revisionists go as

far as to suggest that nothing was more mistaken than the argument that the Enlightenment was in essence 'Newtonian'. In the 1970s and 80s, the concept of a 'family' of enlightenments became increasingly popular, as well as the plea for a 'social' rather than 'intellectual' approach. Many historians treat the renewed emphasis on the fundamental concepts as demonstrative of social circulation. In this respect, the social and cultural



Rousseau
Portrait of Jean-Jacques Rousseau by Maurice Quentin de La Tour

The period is widely considered responsible for the conception of Western modernity



Montesquieu
Portrait of Montesquieu, After Jacques-Antoine Dassier

legacy of the Enlightenment is undeniable.

Revisionist interpretation has allowed modern writers to challenge the Eurocentric view of the enlightenment. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century writers had balanced the universality of values and the abundance of cultures with the Eurocentric perspective of the growth of civilisation. The common interpretation of the Enlightenment is one of a Eurocentric 'mythology': it was energised by Europe alone. As evidence of the significant impact of its cultural legacy, critics such as William Max Nelson discuss the Enlightenment origins of Eurocentric racism and question how responsible it is for exclusionary western notions of 'civilisation'. The common assumption that it was a specifically European movement had been a basis of the premise of Western modernity, now leading to a critical re-evaluation of the nature of Western modernity.

Whilst the cultural legacy of the Enlightenment is indisputably compelling, in some respects it is the political legacy that can be seen to be more consequential in the

manner it has shaped modern society. For example, Montesquieu's thesis "The Spirit of Law" can be perceived to be the reason for the current nature of the United States Constitution. He contended that in order for political institutions to serve successfully, they must reflect the social and geographical characteristics of those people. Therefore, to contend that the political legacy of the Enlightenment is virtually negligible would require a total abandon of all of the foundations of not only American, but global politics. Montesquieu's advocations of a government with separation of powers, cessation of enslavement and the protection of the rule of law and civil liberties are concepts most explicitly evident in our modern judiciary. He was motivated by a desire to split radically from the writers of natural law who affirmed the premise of standard features of human nature present in each person, and who judged social and political circumstances by their conformity to human nature. Montesquieu broke from this and diverted his attention

Some Historians adopt the perspective that the Enlightenment gave rise to political carnage

towards irreducible societal facts. The UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 possesses obvious parallels to the beliefs of the Enlightened thinkers. Article three comments that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person", a statement somewhat reminiscent of the notions of *liberté, égalité fraternité*. If we also look to the short-term political legacy of the enlightenment and its role in the emergence of the American Revolution, then its political legacy has not only been continuously present but has wider implications for our interpretation of democracy.

The cultural legacy of the Enlightenment is perhaps most noticeable in its continuing social application. It is seen to be back in popular thought and circulation, whilst generating new historiography. Former political strategist Matthew Taylor addresses the issue of defining the terms 'progressive' and 'liberal' by examining the legacy of the Enlightenment. He draws on three key principles of its legacy – the 'revolution of the mind', the autonomy of the individual and universalism. The Enlightenment can be principally viewed as a revolution of the mind, and a paradigm shift in the consciousness of humanity, altering our cultural behaviour and identification. The impetus of Enlightenment not only led to the rise of science and technology, but also the expansion of social tolerance and personal freedom. In a sense, it sparked the notion of the Big Society, which, taking the individualistic conception of autonomy, aimed to give communities more powers (through localism and devolution) and encourage people to take an active role in their communities.

We should address the question of the extent to which the Enlightenment influenced the industrial revolution, the production of modern rights and the birth of 'modern democracy'. If we are to accept the enlightened intellectuals as the true progenitors of the industrialisation of knowledge and production of capitalism, then the political legacy is perhaps the most obvious measure of the movement's true effect. Figures such as Adam Smith, a driving force of the Scottish Enlightenment, established the foundations for a free market economic theory. His work in *The Wealth of Nations* has entirely shaped our comprehension of the functioning and behaviour of the economy. His work is perceived to be seminal and is a precursor to the academic discipline of economics. The endorsement of free trade that he encourages has also drastically shaped the attitude of modern politics and is ultimately responsible for much of the attitude towards international relations of Britain and other nations. His Enlightenment principles have left a distinct political legacy.

After revolutions in 1688, 1766 and 1789, it is recognised that criticism of existing models of authority gave rise to theories of how the model of institutions ought to be: political theory was born. Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Lois*, for example, expressed views on government which were integral in providing the framework for the separation of powers in the United States Constitution. Marxist

socialists were seen to adopt the Enlightened ideals and 'boast' of their position not simply as socialists but as 'scientific socialists'. Enlightened thoughts are also sometimes considered to have developed into the premise of modern democracy. Emphasis of the authority of the individual and reduced control of the divine has shaped the belief of democratic governments that are willing to accept the voice of the people. Conversely, some Historians adopt the perspective that the Enlightenment gave rise to political carnage. Marxist, post-war critiques of it regard it as the precursor of the murderously technocratic states. Moreover, critics from all areas of political life in Europe have considered the Enlightenment to have been the cause of all of the evils of the modern age. Most commonly these are viewed as the political extremities of fascism, communism and imperialism.

A more negative aspect of its political legacy may be further considered in the rise of Enlightened absolutism. This refers to the manner in which monarchs exploited the enlightenment principles to advocate the enhancement of their personal authority. Distinguished in their claim to be concerned for their subjects' prosperity, they professed to be followers of enlightened thought. However, many have questioned the extent to which enlightened ideals can adhere to an authoritarian government, and as such there is no unanimous agreement on the existence of enlightened despotism as distinct from other form of absolutism. Yet, if we are to accept the principle of these enlightened despots, then their manipulation of these principles is evocative of the fact that the Enlightenment permeates every aspect of political behaviour.

The emergence of radical political behaviour throughout the world may likewise be recognised as a product of enlightened ideals. Some Historians aver that the movement of the Enlightenment remains the most appropriate foundation for any motion of genuinely progressive politics. Among the broader notion of political impact, the period was a defining characteristic of modern constitutions and political determinations. The movement did not simply touch politics, it has entirely defined our modern perception of the concept.

One may even view the Enlightenment itself as an originally cultural movement that became politicised. The history of middle-class hostility to the principles of equality, civility and freedom, and their reluctance to embrace modernity depended on how they wished to respond to circumstance. It was this resistance that may have given the Enlightenment an identity as a political movement, enabling it to form a political legacy. Political change can invoke a cultural acclimatisation by consequence of that shift, and culture can be influenced by political orientation. If we must distinguish the legacy of one as more prevalent than the other, then in this respect, the legacy of the Enlightenment is more political than cultural. Politics dominates individual autonomy, society and ultimately culture.

Ancient China and Ancient Rome: The Clash That Never Came?

Liberty Osborne investigates the relationship between two empires of the ancient world. At a time when people – and disease – can travel to the other side of the world overnight, it is remarkable that China and Rome should have traded only indirectly, if extant clues are to be believed

In recent decades, the clash between the West and an increasingly formidable China feels like an inevitable consequence of two great power blocs attempting to coexist on this earth. On one side are the 'liberal' Europeans and Americans, threatened by the rise of a so-called-Communist other and, in an attempt by both to be *the* global superpower, conflict has manifested itself through trade wars, battling foreign investment and even military tension. In fact, all throughout history, where two powers exist, dispute seems like the natural course of things, particularly on a global level.

The idea that China and America could just ignore each other... seems impossible

The idea that China and America could just ignore each other, let alone cohabit in a state of mutual respect, seems impossible; where there is an 'other', there is an enemy. And this sort of opinion seemed particularly potent in ancient times; whereas, now, we at the very least seek harmony through complex diplomacy and bureaucracy, Ancient Rome, a military society, is represented in history as the emblem of constant conquest where everyone else, labelled 'barbarians', were considered inferior and needing to be destroyed. Yet, for China, the treatment seems to have been different. As the Roman

harmony through complex diplomacy and bureaucracy, Ancient Rome, a military society, is represented in history as the emblem of constant conquest where everyone else, labelled 'barbarians', were considered inferior and needing to be destroyed. Yet, for China, the treatment seems to have been different. As the Roman

Terracotta Warriors
The terracotta warriors were originally painted in beautiful colours. Unfortunately, fire damage, water damage and more than 2,000 years of natural erosion caused the paint to peel off.



Empire thrived and expanded through the last century BC and first AD, so did ancient China under the Han; both powers lasted hundreds of years, were ruled by Emperors and spanned vast expanses of the globe. However, despite common enemies and great might, the two barely clashed; the interactions there were consisted mainly of admiration, myth and subtle cultural tropes, with even this being rare. They traded silk, cloth, glass and coins, but indirectly as the Silk Road, as it came to be known centuries later, was blocked by a variety of groups situated in Central Asia.

Ascertaining the extent of concrete links is difficult, due to muddled Latin terminology and poor tracking of records in China. However, using the evidence available, this essay will look at the nature of the contact and perceptions between these two classical worlds at a point when they knew of but didn't speak to each other, and why it was so limited. It will also examine new archaeological discoveries surrounding the Terracotta Army and the Lost Legion of Carrhae, where direct interactions are said to potentially have existed, through cooperation at the heart of China or misfortune on the fringes. Ultimately, in a modern world of West versus East, it will look at the ancient clash that never came.

One of the most bizarre characteristics of ancient Sino-Roman relations is that they were barely there. Thousands of years earlier, in the Bronze Age, 'the nomadic Indo-European world maintained fairly close relations with China'¹, yet, by the Roman times, an era of more obvious expansion, whilst the two empires indirectly intertwined through their mutual enemies, common perception is that records of direct contact between two very different worlds are limited. Both knew each other existed but they rarely met. Some put this lack of connection down to a Chinese mentality of isolation and self-preservation, yet this does not explain why the Romans did not venture to meet this mystical other. Chinese curiosity clearly existed to some extent as historian Florus describes the 'Seres' (silk-makers) as being present at the court of first Roman Emperor Augustus (r.27BC – 14AD).² Despite no Chinese accounts of the same event, most take this to reference the Chinese here due to references of all other potential groups in the same text under different names. Accounts of envoys eventually become clear from the Chinese perspective in 97 AD when 'Han Dynasty Western Regions Frontier Ban Chao sent Gan Ying [as a diplomatic envoy to the West]³. Unfortunately, this connection failed as 'he was discouraged by the prospect of a two-year sea journey'⁴, rendering the curiosity in this great other power insufficient. This demonstrates the difficulty of transport between the two Empires; not only was the distance

1 https://www.academia.edu/29668214/The_Images_of_China_in_the_Western_Literature_Greco-Roman_Antiquity
2 Florus, as quoted in Yule (1915), p. 18
3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sino-Roman_relations
4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sino-Roman_relations

great, but also the groups in between, (in particular the Xiongnu), were both hostile and incentivised to limit direct East-West contact in order to maintain vital control of trade. Attempts were few and far between and those that did occur were usually quickly stopped by violent terrain and tribes. Instead, both Empires seemed satisfied, be it due to no other choice, to connect only through trade of silk and stories.

Perhaps an exception to this can be found in the, once merely myth, now scientifically reinforced, story of the Lost Legion of Carrhae. Rome's Eastern borders and China's Western ones were occasionally only separated by one or two other powers, and in 53 BC, this is said to have led to an unusual historical encounter. After a humiliating defeat of the Romans at the hands of the Parthians in Carrhae in 53 BC, 10,000 Roman Legionaries disappeared. Horace wrote that they 'married native

The influence of these two worlds on each other's cultures is not a one way matter

women and entered the service of the Parthians'⁵, but some are reported to have fled eastwards and served the Xiongnu instead. Homer H. Dubs suggested that these soldiers then eventually founded the city Liqian in China, a place pronounced as 'legion' and unique in its being a Chinese city in possession of a western

name. In his essay, *A Roman City in Ancient China*, H.H. Dubs argues that the lost legion fought against Chinese forces on behalf of the Xiongnu at the battle of Zhizhi 17 years later, in 34 BC. He references Chinese historian Ban Gu, who reported the Xiongnu soldiers to have been fighting in 'fish scale formation'⁶, a unique term in Chinese that matches Roman military techniques of the time. After this battle, H.H. Dubs claims the soldiers settled in Western China. For many years, this theory was ignored as a historian merely attempting too hard to try and find a battle between Rome and China, yet recent archaeological discoveries have added weight to his argument. DNA testing of villagers in Liqian found some to be 56% Caucasian, with many possessing blue eyes for generations in an area rarely visited by westerners. Regardless of its veracity, Dubs' theory is interesting; be it as an example of a historian desperately searching for a clash that never came or real evidence to show how, despite no huge war, Ancient China and Ancient Romans did interact directly, just in peculiar and unlikely ways.

Recent scientific developments have also shed light on another potential face to face contact between the ancient Chinese and ancient westerners; the possibility that the Terracotta Army, a symbol of the heart of the foundation of the Chinese Empire, was in fact designed and influenced by ancient Greek sculptures. For a while, historians have noted that the life-size statues of the Terracotta Army look nothing like other ancient Chinese art of the time and instead heavily resemble contemporary Greek works. In the past few years, a study discovering European specific mitochondrial DNA in China shows

5 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/deportations>
6 Ban Gu, referenced in H. H. Dubs, *A Roman city in Ancient China*

that Europeans lived and interbred in the country at the time of the first emperor Qin, or even beforehand. This suggests that Greek sculptors not only inspired but may have directly worked on this magnificent feat, opening the possibility of there having been far more direct relations between the ancient East and West than we had previously thought. This new theory caused uproar in China, with archaeologists working on the discoveries being forced to retract their statements because, for the Chinese government, the idea that westerners were behind one of their greatest national treasures was a threat to a distinct, ancient Chinese pride and identity. Yet, arguably, there is something quite beautiful about how this symbolises the globally interactive nature of culture and how we may all be far more interconnected through history than we think.

The influence of these two worlds on each other's

cultures is not a one way matter; by the time of Horace, the concept of a far flung people of 'Serica', was a powerful motif in Roman literature and, interestingly, despite the limited nature of Sino-Roman relations, their perceptions of each other were remarkably respectful. For almost every other group of people was seen by the Romans as barbaric, uncivilised and in need of subjugation. Yet, to the Romans, the Chinese were a mystical Empire far away from which silk came and hence they were called 'Seres', or the silk-makers. Originally, this term referred to either Chinese or Indians, but, over time, distinctions between the 'Seres' and Indians in literature led 'Seres' to likely mainly refer to the people of what is now northern China, particularly in the Xinjiang province. By the era of Augustan poetry, 'Seres' became a powerful motif with connotations of luxury; in Horace's Epodes, he writes 'They like to

throw Stoic books among their silken pillows'⁷. From the Roman point of view, China inextricable links with silk brought associations of excess and grandeur; something that starkly contrasts the uncivilised perception of other 'barbaric' groups. At times this was seen as negative, with Pliny writing that they 'take one hundred million sesterces from our empire per annum at a conservative estimate; that is what our luxuries and women cost us.'⁸ However, even this disapproving comment has a teasing tone, still showing how the 'Seres' or Chinese were a mysterious, civilised trading partner rather than a detested inferior. The distinct nature of the Romans' perception of the 'Seres' becomes overt in the writing of Pomponius Mela, around 43AD, who called them a 'race eminent for integrity'⁹, noticing the comparison to their 'Cannibal'¹⁰ neighbours. This trope of the 'Seres' is an example of how, despite the Roman agenda to conquer as much land as possible, the concept of an unknown, developed other will always be enthralling in literature, a role fulfilled for the

the place. In those Chinese records that are accessible, Gan Ying is commonly accepted as the first imperially-sanctioned messenger from China to uncover information surrounding the Romans. Gan Ying's description of Roman governance is romanticised as he writes 'They select and appoint the most worthy man' as well as 'The one who has been dismissed quietly accepts his demotion, and is not angry'¹¹. Clearly, this is an incredibly idealistic view of Roman power and, being one of the only sources for contemporary Chinese, shows the respect shown towards this great western empire. In fact, Rome was referred to by the Chinese as 大秦 (Da Qin), meaning the 'Great' Qin. Qin was the founding Chinese dynasty, so this shows the reverence with which Chinese saw Rome. Once again, fabric plays a role, with Gan Ying writing about a 'cloth washed-in-the-fire'¹² with deep admiration. It is surprising how much awe surrounds the Chinese view of Romans; an essential part of the classical Chinese culture was seeing their own country as the seat of the Mandate

of Heaven and centre of earthly greatness, yet they assign Rome a title that could be perceived as higher. For both Rome and China, each other was an anomaly; a civilised and admired trading partner in a world of lesser

From the Chinese perspective, there is a tone of utter admiration in the first writings about Rome

Romans by China in a remarkably amicable manner. However, it is important to note the poor understanding the Romans had of the geography of the area that now mainly surrounds the Ferghana valley and Xinjiang; back then was a melting pot of tribes. This has meant that 'Seres' at times may also refer to other groups in the area. Still, they certainly saw the Chinese as part of the same collective and, there are potent moments where the 'Seres' likely means Chinese peoples from even further into the country, rather than just on the fringes.

From the more explicitly laid out Chinese perspective, there is a tone of utter admiration in the first writings about Rome. These are mainly found in the work of Gan Ying, the envoy who did not make it to Rome in 97 AD but did make it to the Persian Gulf, where he heard tales about

enemies.

Overall, it is difficult to fully determine the extent of ancient Sino-Roman relations, but it is this obscurity that fuels an interesting relationship of mutual, distant respect between two of the greatest empires ever, that arguably seemed bound to clash, yet never did. On either side of a gulf of unstable hostility that made up Central Asia, particularly around the turn of the millennia, Ancient China and Ancient Rome had a romanticised perception of each other, potentially due to their limited interactions, which allowed each to play the role of a mystical, yet not quite tangible, greatness in both cultures. Recently, with new archaeological discoveries, particularly in China, the murky links between East and West are becoming both clearer, yet simultaneously more bemusing, all adding to the picture of a relationship between two superpowers that would appear alien in our world today and two ancient cultures that are perhaps more intertwined than some originally thought. However, it is important to remember that, whilst increasing numbers of discoveries may soon uncover more exciting secrets about the era, evidence is not provided from multiple sources and all must be taken with a hint of mystery. For ancient Sino-Roman relations were indeed enigmatic; both in the extent of references and, where links do exist, in their bizarre, distinctly respectful nature.

⁷ https://www.academia.edu/29668214/The_Images_of_China_in_the_Western_Literature_Greco-Roman_Antiquity

⁸ Pliny, *Historia Naturae* 12.41

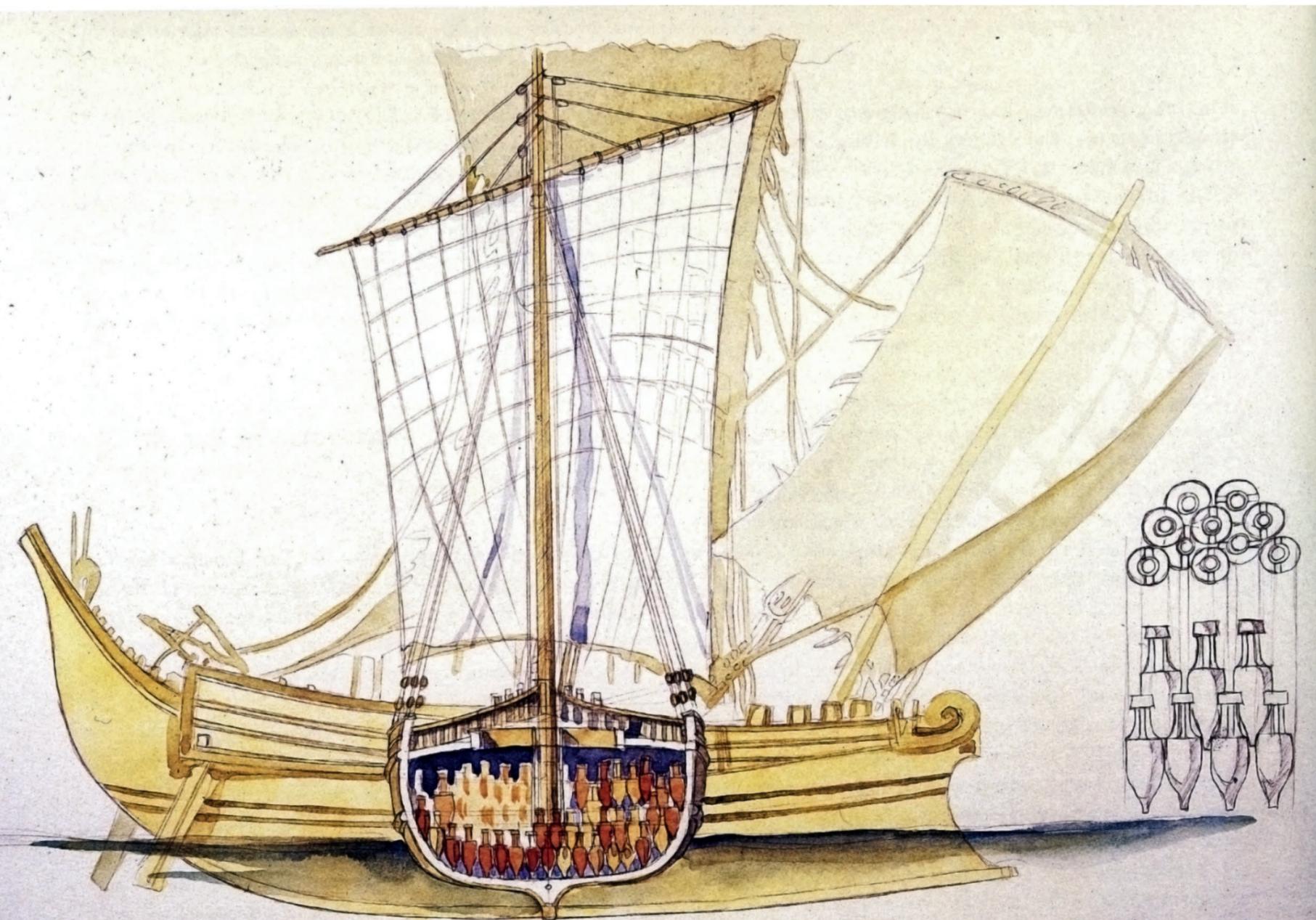
⁹ P. Mela, *De Situ Orbis*, Bk. III, Ch. vii

¹⁰ P. Mela, *De Situ Orbis*, Bk. III, Ch. vii

¹¹ Gan Ying's work, translation from Wikipedia

¹² Gan Ying's work, translation from Wikipedia

Roman ship
Roman ship showing stowed amphoras, after the Madrague de Giens shipwreck, dated 75 to 60 BC, estimated dimensions 40 x 9 m and 3.5 m draught for 375 ton of cargo
(by Jean-Marie Gassend, 2005)



Muslim Reaction to the First Crusade

Tom de Csilléry examines sources in Arabic to establish how Muslim troops were rallied by *atabeg* Zengi and his son Nur al-Din to drive the Franks out of their territory

The First Crusade hit the Muslim world like a bolt from the blue,¹ Carole Hillenbrand writes in her book, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*. Indeed, it took little more than two years for the Frankish² invaders to subdue the Near East and capture Jerusalem; in a state of apparent disunity verging on anarchy, there was little that the Muslim world, made up mainly of city states, could do to stop them. Although there was some enthusiasm for the pursuit of *jihād*³ in the early twelfth century, it was limited mainly to the circles of religious scholars; any successful operations against the Franks remained isolated and insignificant, especially without the support of a unified Muslim community, meaning that the initial reaction of the Arab world was largely ineffective. It was not until military leadership was combined with Islamic fervour in the last few years of Imad ad-Din Zengi's life, and especially during the career of his son, Nur al-Din, that Muslim resistance to Frankish occupation became consistently potent.

Although there are few sources detailing the initial reactions of the Arab populace, undoubtedly there was some enthusiasm for *jihād* in the wake of the First Crusade, especially in the circles of religious scholars and poets. *The Book of the Jihad*, written by Damascus legal scholar and preacher 'Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami (d. 1106), supposedly completed around 1105, provides some evidence of the immediate reaction of at least some Muslims to the Frankish conquests. As its translator Niall Christie points out, the text also emphasises 'the obligation of rulers to defend their subjects and expresses outrage at rulers who do not take military action in the face of the Crusaders' activities.⁴ Al-Sulami seems to suggest that the initial reaction to the First Crusade was ineffective by remonstrating against the lacklustre attitude held by many of his coreligionists: *Their [the Franks'] desires are multiplying all the time because of what appears to them of the Muslims' abstinence from opposing them, and their hopes are invigorated by virtue of what they see of their enemies' contentedness with being unharmed by them, until they have become convinced that the whole country will become theirs and all its people will be prisoners in their hands.*⁵

These fears of the enemies' strength and future conquests are also echoed in the verses of Ibn al-Khayyat

1 Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999) (31)

2 In keeping with many of the medieval Islamic sources, I am using the words 'Franks' and 'Crusaders' interchangeably, although of course in reality, other peoples such as the Normans also went on Crusade.

3 any struggle waged on behalf of the faith, taking various forms, both in the mind and physical, but especially in this instance, holy war against unbelievers.

4 'Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami, *The Book of the Jihad*, trans. Christie (Abingdon, Routledge, 2016) [Introductory Study] (13)

5 al-Sulami, *Jihad* (207)

(d. in the 1120s): *The polytheists have swelled in a torrent of terrifying extent. How long will this continue? / Armies like mountains, coming again and again, have ranged forth from the lands of the Franks.*⁶

Moreover, Al-Sulami highlights the necessity of 'bringing together everyone and arranging the unity of the Muslim community'⁷, demonstrating his comprehensive understanding and far-sightedness; it would not be until the leadership of Imad ad-Din Zengi, after the fall of Edessa in 1144, that any unity of the *dar al-Islam*⁸ would be achieved. Al-Sulami also berates the *de facto* rulers of the Arab world, the Seljuk sultans, for their quiescence towards the attempts of the Franks to consolidate their power: *The most astonishment is [what one feels] at a sultan who takes pleasure in life or remains where he is despite the appearance of this calamity, of which the outcome is conquest by these blasphemers, expulsion from the country by force and subjugation, or staying with them in degradation and servility, with the killing, capture, torture and torment by night and day that this involves.*⁹

Primarily, *The Book of the Jihad* served as 'above all a call to al-Sulami's listeners to undertake the military *jihād* against the crusaders'¹⁰ in order to drive them out

of Arab lands. The author suggests that only a universal response could address the 'universal'¹¹ fear provoked by the Frankish advances, as he writes: *if the enemy were to make for one of its cities and there were not enough people in it to fight and defeat them, it would be obligatory for all the cities of al-Sham¹² to send people to it to fight until there were sufficient numbers to oppose the enemy.*¹³

He also commands his listeners: *By God, you community of sultans of this country, and those aides, soldiers and others from the local militia, stalwart auxiliaries and lords recently acquired with wealth and passed as inheritance among yourselves, families and close friends [Mamluks], who follow them, go out, lightly or heavily armed, and fight the jihad with your wealth and your selves.*¹⁴

It is clear from the *sam'at*¹⁵ that Part 2 of Al-Sulami's work was indeed repeated in public at least twice, once before and once after the author's death, and, according

6 as quoted in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (70)

7 al-Sulami, *Jihad* (207)

8 the 'abode of Islam', the part of the world where Islam is the ruling religion.

9 al-Sulami, *Jihad* (211)

10 al-Sulami, *Jihad* [Introductory Study] (9)

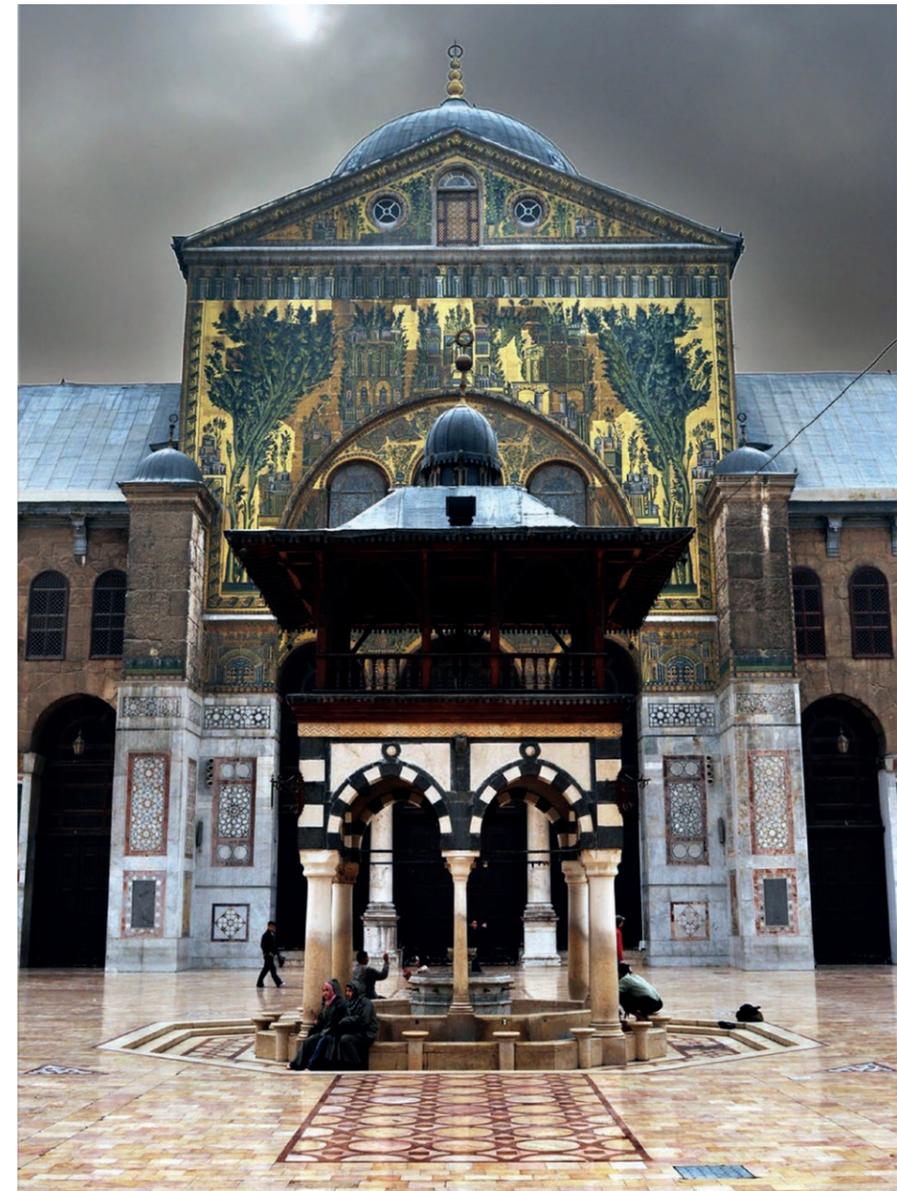
11 al-Sulami, *Jihad* (234)

12 *al-Sham*, or *Bilad al-Sham* is a term used by medieval Muslim writers referring to the region roughly corresponding to the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian autonomous areas and the edge of south-east Turkey.

13 al-Sulami, *Jihad* (208)

14 al-Sulami, *Jihad* (211)

15 certificate on a manuscript indicating who has read a text, where and when.



The Umayyad Mosque, also known as the Great Mosque of Damascus (Gām' Bani 'Umayya al-Kabir) Photo by James Gordon.

to Christie, it may also have been the basis for *khutbas*, or addresses given from the *minbar* (pulpit).¹⁶ The poet al-Abiwardi (d. 1113) also seems to share al-Sulami's anger at the sultans' inertia, calling people to drive out the crusaders: *How can the eye sleep between the lids at a time of disasters that would waken any sleeper? / While your Syrian brothers can only sleep on the backs of their chargers, or in vultures' bellies!... / This is war, and the infidel's sword is naked in his hand, ready to be sheathed again in men's necks and skulls. / This is war, and he who lies in the tomb at Medina seems to raise his voice and cry: "O sons of Hashim!"*¹⁷

Despite this apparent Islamic fervour within the religious classes, Hillenbrand argues that the concept of *jihād* 'had yet to be harnessed to full-scale military activity

16 al-Sulami, *Jihad* [Introductory Study] (10)

17 as quoted in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (70)

under vigorous Muslim leadership: the alliance between the religious classes and the military had yet to be forged.¹⁸ Indeed, following one of the 'many calls to go out and fight against the Franks'¹⁹ from an Aleppo delegation in Baghdad in February 1111, the failure of the campaign sponsored by the sultan Muhammad highlighted the difference in priorities between the populace and the rulers of the Levant: the Seljuk prince Ridwan closed the gates of Aleppo in the faces of the sultan's army, perhaps afraid more of the erosion of his own authority than of the threat of the Crusaders, only serving to weaken the cause of the Syrians against the Franks. This view is also held by historian Paul M. Cobb, who writes, 'in such a

18 Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (108)

19 Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200), as quoted in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (78)

setting, expelling the Franks could never be a priority,²⁰ thus rendering the Muslim response at most partially effective. Furthermore, in some cases, Muslim rulers were more comfortable making ephemeral alliances with the invading Franks in order to engage in small territorial struggles than uniting with their coreligionists to oust the crusading warriors.²¹ For example, German scholar Michael Köhler argues that Fatimid Egypt preferred that the Franks acted as a buffer, as their direct neighbours, against the Sunni Turkish rulers of Syria – perhaps their seeming lack of effort against the Franks, which both medieval and modern scholarship often blame for the Arabs' inability to drive the Franks out of the Near East in the early part of the twelfth century, was in fact intentional, allowing the Franks to establish themselves between the two religious factions. Some medieval chroniclers, such as Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233), even go as far as to suggest that 'when the masters of Egypt saw the expansion of the Seljuk empire, they took fright and asked the Franj to march on Syria and to establish a buffer zone between them and the Muslims. God alone knows the truth.'²² This is perhaps influenced by the religious schism between Ibn al-Athir's audience and the 'heretical' Fatimid caliphate – he even differentiates between 'Fatimids' and 'Muslims' in his chronicle²³, highlighting the disunity in the *dar al-Islam*. Similarly, Ridwan of Aleppo formed an alliance with the Frankish Tancred of Antioch against what they perceived as military interference in their affairs by the ruler of Mosul, Jawali Sagao, while (according to the chronicler Ibn al-Athir) even after King Baldwin of Jerusalem had defeated the *atabeg*²⁴ Tughtegin in battle in March 1108, he supposedly said, 'Do not think that I am breaking the truce which has been concluded with you because of this defeat.'²⁵ Religious ideology clearly played little or no part in these treaties; both the Crusaders and the Muslim rulers were willing to co-operate and develop a *modus vivendi*, thus undermining the possibility of an effective and united initial Muslim response to the success of the First Crusade.

However, in some cases, the Muslims achieved more success in combatting the Crusaders in the early twelfth century than they are usually given credit for. Although Hillenbrand argues that only 'a supra-sectarian Muslim alliance... could have contained and eradicated the Crusader threat before it was too late'²⁶ and in fact the majority of the concerted attempts at resistance by the Muslims were largely unsuccessful – such as from Fatimid

²⁰ Paul M. Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014) (105)

²¹ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (47)

²² as quoted in Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, trans. Rothschild (London, Al Saqi Books, 1984) (44)

²³ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (46)

²⁴ a Turkish title literally meaning 'prince-father'. Originally the atabegs were guardians appointed for minor princes of the Seljuk clan, but eventually they became *de facto* rulers.

²⁵ as quoted in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (83)

²⁶ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (47-8)

Egypt in 1099, 1104-5, 1105-6, 1109, 1111-2 and 1112-3, and from the Seljuks in the east in 1110 (which was abortive) and 1111-2 (where Ridwan closed the gates of Aleppo as mentioned above) – Muslim troops did indeed defeat Frankish forces on several occasions. For example, in August 1100, Turkish troops under Danishmend 'the Wise' defeated and captured Bohemond of Antioch at Malatya, and in May 1104, Jikirmish of Mosul achieved victory at the battle of Harran, capturing both Baldwin II of Edessa and Joscelin of Courtenay. In both these instances, Muslim forces failed to capitalise on these victories: Bohemond was released in 1103 without any political recompense, while a fresh dispute in May 1104 stopped them from

advancing to Edessa, only two days' march away. Moreover, in some cases, religious scholars did play a role in military leadership, such as *qadi*²⁷ Ibn al-Khashshab (d. 1133-4), who was present among troops before the battle of Balat, or the Field of Blood, in 1119, in which Roger of Antioch was killed. Again, this success

turned out to be isolated; Il-Ghazi of Mardin was unable to follow up his victory by advancing onto the now leaderless Antioch due to a prolonged alcoholic celebration that lasted a week. Consistently effective resistance coming from unity among Muslims as well as fervour for *jihad* among military leaders would not come until after Zengi regained the Crusader State of Edessa in 1144.

Ultimately, it was the *atabeg* Zengi, and especially his son, Nur al-Din, who succeeded in galvanising the Muslim community into action against the Franks. According to Ibn al-Athir, Zengi was 'the gift of divine providence to the Muslims'²⁸; indeed, it was his reconquest of Edessa in 1144 – the first Crusader state to be reconquered by the Muslims – that prompted the second Crusade, and according to Maalouf, was the 'beginning of the long march to victory.'²⁹ Moreover, he was perhaps one of the first Muslim leaders of the twelfth century whose role as a *mujahid*³⁰ was stressed not only by the accolades of medieval chroniclers, such as Ibn al-Athir³¹, but also in Islamic monumental inscriptions, such as that in Aleppo (dated August 1142) where Zengi is described as 'tamer of the infidels and polytheists, leader of those who fight the Holy War, helper of the armies, protector of the territory of the Muslims'³², as well as by the titles given to him by the caliph in Baghdad, including 'the adornment of Islam, the king helped by God, the helper of the believers.'³³ These perhaps suggest that in Zengi the Muslims had found 'the combination of military success and ideological certainty...needed to make a lasting impact against the Franks.'³⁴ However, it is difficult to judge the extent to which Zengi was motivated by *jihad*, rather than being

²⁷ a judge administering religious law (and therefore civil law as well).

²⁸ as quoted in Maalouf, *Crusades* (112)

²⁹ Maalouf, *Crusades* (133)

³⁰ fighter in the military jihad.

³¹ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (112)

³² as quoted in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (111)

³³ as quoted in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (115)

³⁴ Cobb, *Race for Paradise* (127)

merely an 'opportunistic and ruthless military commander who ruled his territories with a rod of iron,'³⁵ especially as he was killed only two years after his great victory at Edessa. According to Maalouf, 'Zengi often combatted the Muslims with greater obstinacy than he did the Franj'³⁶; as well as making truces with the Franks in 1127 and 1130, after the siege of Baalbek that ended in October 1139, he even crucified 37 Muslim fighters and burnt their commander alive. This also serves as further evidence of Muslim disunity, meaning that resistance to the Crusaders could not be entirely effective. Nevertheless, Zengi's recapture of Edessa of 1144 was something of a 'turning-point for the Muslims'³⁷ that paved the way for his son Nur al-Din's success as the leader of an eventually united *dar al-Islam* and reputation as the chief architect of the Muslim counter-crusade. Although a significant portion of his 28-year military career was spent fighting fellow Muslims instead of the Franks – he even concluded peace treaties with Byzantium and the Frankish ruler of Jerusalem in 1159 and 1161 respectively – there is little doubt that Nur al-Din was able to unify the Muslim community (by 1157 he had united all of Syria, while in 1171 Saladin abolished the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt in the name of Nur al-Din) enabling him to resist the Franks both effectively and consistently; according to Hillenbrand, 'it was through the career of Nur al-Din that the foundations of a fully-fledged jihad programme were established.'³⁸ Nur al-Din was able to use this perceived Islamic fervour (perhaps to him it was merely an instrument of power, as Köhler suggests) – the lack of which among military leaders al-Sulami had bemoaned in 1105 – as a weapon of propaganda to stir up anti-Frankish sentiment in the course of the counter-crusade, especially because the Second Crusade had seen Frankish men attacking for the first time the major cities of Syria, such as Damascus (although with little success), rendering the Muslim troops a force to be reckoned with. For example, Nur al-Din patronised the religious classes, building several religious monuments such as the Jami' al-Nuri in Hama (built in 1162-3), Sufi cloisters, the Bimaristan Nur al-Din hospital (built in 1154-5), the Dar al-Hadith, in which he regularly attended sessions, as well as over 40 teaching colleges. This conscious Sunni revival seemed to demonstrate that Nur al-Din was more than a mere military opportunist, but a fighter of *jihad* whose reputation as a prototype for a *mujahid* would last until the Muslim rediscovery of Saladin in the 19th and 20th centuries.³⁹ Furthermore, two Hanbalite jurists, Muwaffaq al-Din Qudama and his cousin 'Abd al-Ghani became important propagandists for him, making comparisons to the Islam of Muhammad, while religious lawyers, mystics, prayer leaders, Qur'an readers, preachers and judges filled the ranks of his armies, assuring the motivations of

³⁵ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (112)

³⁶ Maalouf, *Crusades* (113)

³⁷ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (111)

³⁸ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (195)

³⁹ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (118)

the troops. Inscriptions on buildings promoted *jihad* and popular piety, as well as reflecting a close relationship with the Sunni caliph in Baghdad, thus legitimising Nur al-Din's authority, despite his status as a military chief with no Islamic right to rule. As a result, Nur al-Din was able to present a united front to begin to drive out the Franks, over half a century after the First Crusade, even trusting one of his lieutenants, Shirkuh (the uncle of Saladin) with overseeing the conquest of Fatimid Egypt, until his death in 1169.

Hillenbrand writes, 'the Muslim response to the Franks, which involved skilful use of the weapons of *jihad* propaganda, may be seen as gradual and cumulative, each generation building on and developing the experiences of the previous one.'⁴⁰ Indeed, it was not until 1187, nearly a century after it was captured by the Crusaders, that Jerusalem was taken back by Muslim hands under

Saladin, while the *dar al-Islam* was not purged of Frankish presence until 1291. Although some among the religious classes in the early twelfth century, chiefly the legal scholar al-Sulami, already recognised the importance of jihad in combatting the Franks, the initial reaction of the Arab world to the success of the First Crusade was largely ineffective, despite some isolated successful operations, not only because of the disunity and seemingly anarchical state of the Near East, but also because of the Muslim rulers' prioritisation of conflicts with their coreligionists over war with the Franks. It was not until Nur al-Din, and to a lesser extent, his father, Zengi, that the Muslims were set firmly on the path towards driving the Franks out of their lands, although admittedly the journey would outlast the lifetimes of Zengi, Nur al-Din, Saladin and all their troops and followers.

Bibliography

Paul M. Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014)

Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999)

Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, trans. Rothschild (London, Al Saqi Books, 1984)

Tim Mackintosh-Smith, *Arabs: a 3000-year History of Peoples, Tribes and Empires* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2019)

'Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami, *The Book of the Jihad*, trans. Christie (Abingdon, Routledge, 2016)

⁴⁰ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades* (116)

Letter from Shanghai

Sahil Shah OW is currently reading Chinese. He was in the middle of his year abroad, when the COVID 19 epidemic struck and he was obliged to return to the UK. Here, he records his impressions of the country

12th November 2019

I write this sat on a train to Shanghai... Last Friday, I was on my way to Chengdu so this will end up being a rather busy ten days.

That trip as well as Alibaba's 'Singles Day' shopping festival – China's answer to Black Friday, known in Chinese as double eleven' – seem to have marked a watershed in my first term here on exchange at Peking University.

I'm beginning to feel more comfortable in assuming my role as a spectator to all things 'China' as I develop more tried and tested criteria to look at the country with. These criteria are of course not those we use to examine the West, but also not the ones I was armed with when I arrived in China. My personal theory now is that China must be seen in the language that its central government promotes.

From the outside, this language seems rather propagandist – and it undoubtedly is – however it has also turned out to ring more true than even the Chinese government itself might realise. That is to say – China is not a 'Chinese' country in the image of our Western orientalist fantasies, i.e. a land of dragons, temples and calligraphy with old men whispering 'Confucius he say'; nor is it a 'Westernised' country, as suggested by the endless images of Chinese cities and their skyscrapers plastered all over our media. Rather, its modernity is

exactly what its great leader claims ... a modernity of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics for the modern age 新时代中国特色社会主义' (possibly one of my favourite examples of linguistic masochism ever). This does not imply the images of Lenin and Marx that such a term conjures up for many Western ears, and which Chairman Xi might be seeking to convey. In reality it is a byword for unbridled capitalism where the richest are wildly rich by any Western standards but the ordinary (let alone the poorest) live lives far below any developed country's norm, and are ruled by an iron-fisted, power-crazed highly centralised government ... This phenomenon has been much commented on and I will just add that Beijing has seemed an exceptionally expensive city to me, when factoring in how much lower the average wage here is compared to places like London and NYC.

Taking the term more at face value hasn't simply enlightened me about China's central government's attempts to use the word 'socialism' draw attention away from the effectively 'capitalist' exploitation at the heart of its oligarchic system. It has also helped me decode the mores and values of Chinese society. So much that struck me as 'odd' during my first few months here no longer seem as inexplicable. I'm no longer trying to explain Chinese society through the lens of 'ancient China' we learn all about in Oxford (aka the world of 'Confucius he say' – '子曰: zi yue' in Classical Chinese), and also certainly not through the lens of a 'Western' economically prosperous society. I feel as though there's a big disconnect between the way much of the Western press reports on China, with a focus on economic figures and the supposed challenge many of the country's industries pose to their Western counterparts, and how China really feels 'on the ground'. At least for me, China's modernity has felt totally in a category of its own.

I hope an example will help to colour what exactly I think a 'socialist with Chinese characteristics' modernity looks like. On our trip to Sichuan, which was fully organised by Peking University, the hotels we were put up in were extremely comfortable – spacious bathrooms and soft mattresses, where many of us had our best sleep in weeks – however there was also something oppressively tacky about them. I will let the photos speak for themselves. My interactions with many mainland Chinese make me believe that they find these sorts of overly glossy spaces rather congenial and they are precisely what they wish to spend their money on. From their perspective, these hotels provide the perfect backdrop for group meetings and group photos which can be posted straight onto Wechat (one of the social media platforms). The hotel spaces combine supposed 'luxury', blandness and convenience, while facilitating group gatherings. This is surely all a 'socialist' society with 'Chinese' characteristics

The author feeding a panda, Chengdu



Hangzhou station

Hangzhou station with banner reading: 'Strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new age'

needs. As an economic system it is capitalist (clearly one of the aspects giving 'socialism' 'Chinese' characteristics...), consumers have money to spend on luxury as well as a need to flaunt their wealth. Crucially however, as it 'Chinese' and 'socialist', the hotels are also very conducive to 'unpretentious', forthright gatherings, harking back to the culture of camaraderie from the country's communist origins – atmospheres evoking the tales of Mao and his comrades camping out in Yan'an, imprinted in Communist China's creation story. This is what I feel makes mainland Chinese mores differ from another country with a nouveau riche stratum, like Russia or India.

Hong Kong is a useful counterpoint to show what another 'Chinese' modernity might look like, as opposed to a 'Chinese socialist' modernity. In Hong Kong, 'Chinese' in the sense of our Western-imagined traditional China seems to have fused with the 'Modern' for real. An anecdotal example is the incorporation of the traditional fengshui principles into its skyline – notice the holes in some of its skyline's skyscrapers. This makes for a big contrast with a 'Chinese socialist skyline', for which you ought to look no further than the architectural atrocity of Beijing's monolithic, grey apartment blocks. I also feel Hong Kong's atmosphere has more of the decorum I imagine there would be if you dined with Emperor Puyi. The mainland, on the other hand, has swapped decorum for the rustic camaraderie of Mao.

Epilogue

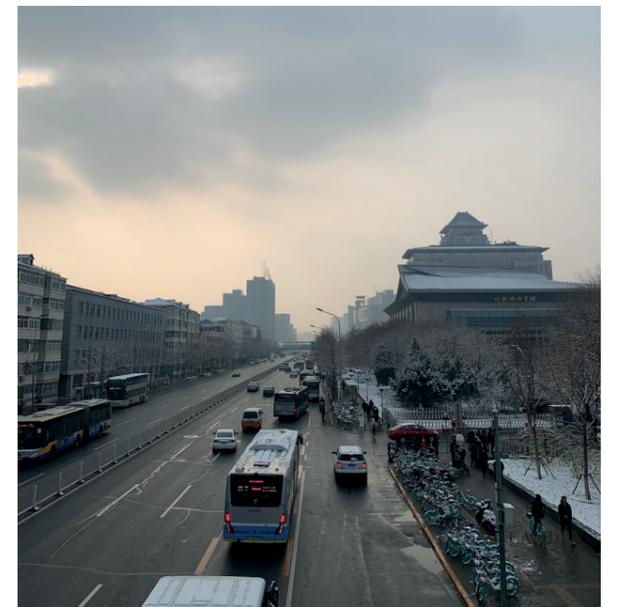
I am now sadly, but safely, back in London as my year abroad was brought to an abrupt end by the outbreak of coronavirus in Wuhan, an epidemic which seems to have followed me back home... The outbreak has given me further pause for thought about how important it is that we understand the mainland in unvarnished terms. Throughout my time in Beijing and China, I kept noticing how far away mainland life made my 'oriental' studies of Ancient China feel, which was in some ways demoralising. However, I now realise how invaluable an experience living and breathing mainland life was for alerting me to the reality of modern China and, as a result, to the naivety of many Western governments and individuals, especially in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

In reporting on Covid-19, it seems increasingly fashionable to laud the response of the Chinese authorities

and to appeal to Western governments to take the same steps. I think such a view is only possible if one starts with a relatively benign view of the Chinese state. Unfortunately, any amount of time living in China makes you realise the extent to which the Chinese state draws its authority above all by propagandising to its citizens and not through being benign. Beijing's metro is plastered with posters proclaiming 'the outstanding beauty of Beijing', accompanied by photos of its supposed beautiful sights; these always struck me as a desperate effort by the authorities to induce Beijingers to forget the reality of their dreary grey capital which they would be hit with again once they left the underground. If you stop thinking of the Chinese state as remotely benign, what stands out is not their decisive action in late January, but rather their decision to suppress information about the virus from November. This means there was a near three-month delay before the authorities acted 'decisively' – a delay doubtless strongly connected to the straitened conditions we find ourselves in today in the West.

I am fully aware that the extent of my skepticism has only come about after my personal experience of living within Chinese borders. For Western commentators and policy makers who have never personally visited China, it is but another behemoth economy flecked with economic opportunities. The first step towards realising that it is in fact probably a far more sinister state rather superficially came from discovering just how grotty and unpleasant Beijing was. This is, of course, despite being endlessly lauded as one of China's most exquisite cities alongside Shanghai by the central government. How to square that circle?

Beijing, View from campus accommodation





Georges Braque, 1909-10, Georges Braque, Violon et palette, Dans l'atelier, 1909 (Photo Guggenheim Museum)

Objectivity in 20th Century Culture

A novel approach to representing reality

Caspar Griffin considers how the twentieth century gave rise to a range of ways of representing experience. In contrasting two novelists and Cubist painting, he probes the interplay of meaning, understanding, empathy and emotion in the portrayal of reality

There is an inherent weakness in photorealism. In paintings, sculpture or literature, the attempt to manifest photo-realistically an object, person or place tends to be deeply unsettling, and often undermines the very thing the artist or writer is trying to achieve. Instead of a compelling recreation of a subject, hyper-realism leads to a sense of insincerity: in the act of creating a work that strives to be accurate in every detail, the artist or writer has removed the audience from the subject matter. There is no way in - with every aspect described, there is little space for imaginative consideration, any sort of empathetic response, and consequently an emotional reaction to the work is denied. Photorealism isolates the onlooker. Nevertheless, this does not render the meaningful, or even accurate relation of an experience impossible.

For the most part, there is a recognition that an exhaustive description might be avoided by hinting at a subject, deftly suggesting forms in a painting or depths of character on the page. The reading of such work is therefore unique to the viewer, as their involvement is involuntary: one is compelled to fill in the blanks, to engage with the material. However, with this necessitated complicity of the observer comes an inevitable subjectivity, arising from an individuality of interpretation. Reality, to the modern philosopher, was "constituted in the way in which one appropriates the things of the world for oneself". The writers Italo Calvino and Jorge Luis Borges, as well as the Cubist Pablo Picasso, all experimented

with the idea of individualised perception in their work through the process of presenting multiple discrete, flawed perspectives, each concerning the same material, and in doing so reached an undeniably 'real' portrayal of that subject.

Although Italo Calvino frequently concerned himself with the metaphysical and the bizarre, such as in his 1965 volume *Cosmicomics*, his presentation of the city of Venice in his 1972 novel *Invisible Cities* is indisputably entrenched in reality. *Invisible Cities* takes the form of a fictional conversation between the explorer Marco Polo and Kublai Khan, in which Polo describes fifty-five 'Cities' that he

Kublai Khan remains incredulous, yet it becomes apparent that Venice is implicit in every chapter

has supposedly seen throughout his journeys in Khan's kingdom. Dialogue between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo is interspersed with individual descriptions of the cities, each of which are given a woman's name, numerated, and arranged categorically, into *Cities and Memory*, *Cities and Desire*, *Thin Cities*, and *Cities and the Dead*². Ranging from the fantastical to the absurd, they each hold their own idiosyncrasies. The City of Armilla (*Thin Cities* 3) "has no walls, no ceilings, no floors... nothing that makes it seem a city, except the water pipes that rise vertically where the houses should be"; the City of Octavia (*Thin Cities* 5) rests on "slender stilts that rise from the ground at a great distance from one another... lost above the clouds support"; the inhabitants of Eusapia (*Cities and the Dead* 3) "have constructed an identical copy of their city, underground." Very quickly, however, comes the

¹ DeLio, Thomas. "Circumscribing the Open Universe." *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 20, no. 1/2, 1981, pp. 357-362. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/942417.

² Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovic 1974)

The book is a space into which the reader must enter, roam around, maybe lose direction

revelation that in each presentation of a city, Polo is saying something about a unique aspect of Venice. During one of the many philosophical conversations between the emperor and Marco Polo which break up the explorer's stories of cities, he states that "every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice". Kublai Khan remains incredulous, yet it very quickly becomes apparent that Venice is implicit in every chapter, and indeed that the true nature of the city might only be conveyed in such an indeterminate way. For example, the physical matter of Venice is clear in "all the bridges over the canals, each different from the others: cambered, covered, on pillars, on barges, suspended" of Phyliss (*Cities and Eyes* 4), while to one even casually acquainted with the city the idea that in Esmeralda (*Trading Cities* 5) "the shortest distance between two points... is not a straight line but a zigzag that ramifies in tortuous optional routes" is laughably quintessentially Venetian.

Even the supposedly more abstract depictions of cities are indelibly, yet not explicitly, linked to Venice. The inhabitants of Octavia live in a "spider-web city" suspended over "a precipice between two steep mountains", distant from what one might expect of a description of Venice, and yet Calvino concludes the piece by stating that "the life of Octavia's inhabitants is less uncertain than in other cities... they know the net will last only so long", depicting what is to Calvino an important aspect of the Venetian mentality. Marco Polo's stories of far-away cities are inextricable: although self-consciously subjective, the compilation of the many perspectives gives a truthfulness to the narrative. Calvino himself overtly states the importance of recognising the uniqueness of perspective in the various descriptions of the cities, writing that "the city must never be confused with the words that describe it... and yet between the one and the other there is a connection." This method of storytelling can be seen in part as a "mechanism to provoke the thought of Venice in the mind of the readers"³ as Psarra writes in her *Venice Variations: Tracing the Architectural Imagination*, yet this suggests a passivity of their reader in their perception of Venice. Rather, the role of Italo Calvino throughout *Invisible Cities* might be seen instead as that of a guide, enabling the reader to perceive Venice subjectively as one might in real life; that the "stress [is] upon the participation of the reader in the production of meaning".

In *Invisible Cities*, Calvino notes that "the listener retains only the words he is expecting", that "it is the mood of the beholder which gives the city... its form", and in doing so he recognises the inherent individualism in perceiving anything. Indeed, in a later speech he went so far as to say that the book should be interpreted as a "space into which the reader must enter, roam around, maybe lose

direction"⁴. This freedom of interpretation is brought about by the sheer number of cities described, yet also by the lack of any real narrative or structural progression throughout the novel that almost allows the reader to pick and choose how they might read the book. Importantly, the figure of Polo recognises the dangers of attempting to exhaustively describe a city in overwhelming detail.



Borges' The Library of Babel by Erik Desmazieres

Responding to Kublai Khan's request for more information of a city, Polo responds that "I cannot force my operation beyond a certain limit: I would achieve a city too probable to be real": by deliberately making his descriptions of Venice obtuse, he might more accurately depict the city. In short, this novel evokes a real-life Venice through its absurdities. Through a series of seemingly conflicting passages the subjectivity of any experience of Venice is conveyed, thereby creating a particularly pertinent portrayal of the city that should be seen as a touchstone of how one might attempt to truly describe a subject.

Throughout *Invisible Cities* we are encouraged to "to

orient ourselves and to challenge the labyrinth"⁵, as though the reader might be expected to get lost in an array of "Venices". This somewhat perplexing element to the novel was greatly influenced by the works of Jorge Luis Borges, the culturally iconic Argentinian writer of the mid 20th Century. Indeed, Lucia Re writes that *Invisible Cities* "has grown into the postmodern equivalent of Borges' *Library of Babel*"⁶ in its self-aware complexity of description. First released in *Ficciones* in 1945, yet written in 1941, Borges' short story *The Library of Babel* is premised upon a "universe (which others call the library" comprised "an indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal

randomly arranged texts.

The tale of this "Universe" bears more than a passing resemblance to Calvino's world of *Invisible Cities*. Beyond the extraordinary emphasis on esoterically numerating the text, both *Invisible Cities* and *The Library of Babel* are concerned with the derivation of meaning from a seemingly overwhelming array of sources. In *Invisible Cities*, the reader is actively encouraged to form his own perceptions from the series of descriptions of Venice. Borges' *Library of Babel*, on the other hand, reflects a darker struggle for the development of understanding: the protagonist is "preparing to die", having lived all of his without discovering anything he can be sure is meaningful in the pages of the books in the library. Rather than the abundance of interpretation and text elucidating meaning, the narrator finds that "for every rational line or forthright statement there are leagues of senseless cacophony, verbal nonsense, and incoherence." While in *Invisible Cities*, Kublai Khan understands what Marco Polo is describing through what is essentially a series of extended metaphors, some of which are incredibly surreal, in Borges' Universe the inhabitants find that "what is obvious might be its opposite; what appears nonsense may be allegory." Like the inhabitants, the reader becomes lost in the wealth of nonsensical information in the Library.

From the name ascribed to the Universe itself, *The Library of Babel*, comes the idea that failure of comprehension is inevitable; like the Biblical Tower of Babel in the Book of Genesis, the weaknesses of language and failure of communication blights the inhabitants of the Library. However, this idea does hold some similarity to Calvino's stated aim for the reader to "lose direction"⁸ in his world of *Invisible Cities*, before emerging with an idea of underlying purpose in the narrative which describes (in the case of *Invisible Cities*) Venice. Indeed, despite the fatalistic overtones of the narrator's struggle in the *Library of Babel*, there is nevertheless the understanding that signification is there to be discovered amidst the piles and piles of books. The nameless protagonist rejects the "uncouth region whose librarians repudiate the vain and superstitious custom of finding a meaning in books", and in doing so acknowledges the possibility of understanding.

Perhaps the fundamental differentiator of the two novels, in terms of the search for information amidst an abundance of material, is the presence of a guide in *Invisible Cities*. Marco Polo takes up an almost omniscient role in *Invisible Cities*, verging on fulfilling the position of Calvino himself in his ability to decipher the hidden meaning of the allegorical descriptions of cities on behalf of Kublai Khan. In Borges' *Tower of Babel*, there is no such character. By this measure, in many ways Borges can be seen to have embodied the transition from the Modernism that developed in the early parts of the 20th Century to the typically unreliable narrative style of Post-Modernism. The narrator of Borges' fictional Library confesses to a lack of perceptiveness, embodied in the statement that "my eyes can hardly make out what I myself have written". Borges himself might have been able to fulfil a role as an

3 "Story-Craft: The Imagination as Combinatorial Machine in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*." *Venice Variations: Tracing the Architectural Imagination*, by Sophia Psarra, UCL Press, London, 2018, pp. 139-173. [JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvqhspn.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvqhspn.8).

4 Calvino, Italo. "Italo Calvino on 'Invisible Cities.'" *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art*, no. 8, 1983, pp. 37-42. [JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41806854](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806854).

5 Re, Lucia. "Calvino and the Value of Literature." *MLN*, vol. 113, no. 1, 1998, pp. 121-137. [JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3251070](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3251070).

6 Re, Lucia. "Calvino and the Value of Literature." *MLN*, vol. 113, no. 1, 1998, pp. 121-137. [JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3251070](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3251070).

7 Borges, Jorge Luis et al. *Labyrinths*. New Directions Publishing, 1962. Print.

8 Calvino, Italo. "Italo Calvino on 'Invisible Cities.'" *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art*, no. 8, 1983, pp. 37-42. [JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41806854](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806854).

To be an artist is not a matter of making paintings at all. What we are really dealing with is... the shape of our perception

omniscient guide to the *Library of Babel*; in his own work as the Director of the Argentine National Library he is said to have “navigated its labyrinthine ladders and passageways with uncanny skill”⁹, as though he might have been able to traverse the parabolic corridors of the *Library of Babel* in a way comparable to the Polo of Calvino’s writing.

However, Borges leaves his Library uncharted, and in doing so evokes both a disconsolate idea of the unfathomable nature of the information contained within the books of the Library, yet perhaps also the way in which the search for meaning within the texts on the shelves of each one of the hexagonal rooms within the Library is decidedly up to the reader, and cannot be guided. In this way, Borges can be said to be encouraging the reader to take part in the “process of striving, which leads to discovery and insight”¹⁰, that meaning concerning a subject can only be formed in an individual way. Through the depiction of a flawed, human, narrator searching for an objective meaning amidst many flawed texts and passages Borges explores the possibilities and consequences of this undertaking when performed by the reader themselves. The metafictional depiction of a hunt for truthfulness amidst an unreliable narrative is at the heart of the *Library of Babel*. Although the search is not satisfied by the narrator, the hope of finding a meaning persists in the act of looking through the distorted sources of the Library. In this allegory, Borges suggests, the undertaking of the mere process of looking for a definite message amidst one’s inevitably flawed perceptions is of central importance to the reading of literature, and to life itself.

The followers of the Cubist movement that had its roots in the beginning of the 20th century were also occupied with the idea of finding a truth in their work. Although the beginnings of the fractured, highly abstracted art of the early pioneers of the movement has been described as “the birth and development of non-representational art”¹¹, in many ways Cubism can be seen to have aimed to convey a subject through an objective lens by simultaneously conveying the various perspectives that one might take on a subject. This attempt at reality is evident firstly in the muted palette and emphasis on geometrical forms present throughout the early Cubist paintings of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Picasso’s *Still Life with a Bottle of Rum* (1911), or Braque’s *Mandora* (1909-10) can be considered to be a reaction against the often brazen colours of the Fauvist movement or the spontaneity of

the Impressionists, in their monochromatic treatment of the subject material as well as their focus on defined lines and forms. This is indicative of the way in which the early Cubists aimed to differentiate themselves from their predecessors by presenting a more clarified state of reality: Cubism “required an objective, scientific eye”¹².

However, the most distinguishable feature of the Cubist movement is the way in which the artists “aimed to show different viewpoints at the same time and within the same space”¹³, resulting in bizarre paintings of objects with multiple perspectives and overlapping planes. Although seemingly removed from the objective world, this style of painting commanded a strong sense of reality. Most blatantly, the presentation of multiple aspects of the subject on the same canvas “conveys more information than can be contained in a single limited illusionistic view”¹⁴, helping to form a more complete idea of the content. Indeed, among the early proponents of Cubist philosophy was Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who published *The Rise of Cubism* in 1920. In it, he claims that “cubism started in a mood of objectivity”¹⁵: that Picasso and Braque, among others, were indeed attempting to arrive at a sort of authenticity through this new style of art. As he puts it, the observer is able to obtain “fuller comprehension” through looking at an object “from several sides, and from above and below”¹⁶, all at the same time.

This idea of presenting multiple perspectives of the same subject mirrors the many descriptions of Venice in Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, or the wealth of information available in Borges’ *Library of Babel*. Furthermore, in the Cubist method of dividing an object into multiple viewpoints comes fundamentally the idea of the subjectivity of one’s perception of the subject, and that these various differing viewpoints should all be presented on the same canvas in order to arrive at a truthful depiction of the object. Equally essential to the process of Cubist art-making was the modernist idea concerning the limitations of the art form itself. The disparity between the two-dimensionality of the canvas and the three-dimensionality of the contents of the painting was drawn attention to by the depiction of many sides of the subject, marking a “revolutionary break with the European tradition of creating the illusion of real space from a fixed viewpoint”¹⁷. This personalises the experience of observing the canvas: rather than being governed in

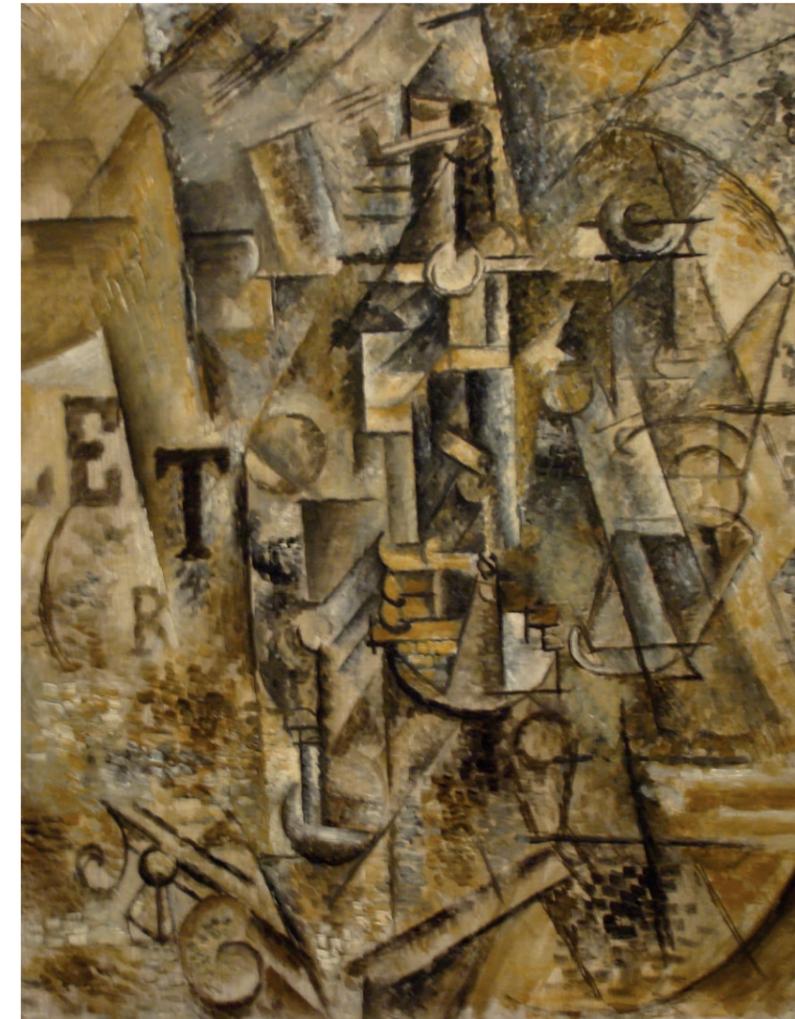
how to look at the painting, the artist frees the viewer to choose the planes with which to observe the subject material, setting the onlooker loose within the work as the protagonist is in Borges’ *Library of Babel* or as the reader of *Invisible Cities* might find themselves.

As Robert Irwin describes the role of the painter in relation to the observer’s engagement with the canvas: “To be an artist is not a matter of making paintings at all. What we are really dealing with is... the shape of our perception.”¹⁸ As well as this, the inherent inadequacies of describing a subject, as expressed by Calvino when he writes that “the city must never be confused with the words that describe it”, were recognised in the work of Picasso and Braque. Rather than being seen as the final portrayal of the subject material, a painting done in a Cubist style might instead be thought of as a vehicle for the onlooker to form their own opinions of the subject, forcing their engagement with the artwork to arrive at a truthful conclusion. In this way, Cubism can be said to be more “real” than preceding and perhaps closer to photo-realistic styles of art; in necessitating the observer’s own subjective occupation with the material, the artist is bringing true-life

authenticity to the experience of engaging with the subject.

The works of Borges, Calvino, and the early Cubists can therefore all be seen as concerned with the question of the best method with which to depict the real world. Perceiving the immutable flaws within the act of attempting to describe a subject accurately in its entirety on the page, these writers and artists of the early to mid 20th century chose instead to emphasise the inherent flawed subjectivity of experience by presenting many possibilities through which the reader or observer might engage with the work. Apparent in the multiple stories of Marco Polo in Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, the multiple planes and views of the early-Cubist style of art, or the labyrinthine corridors of Borges’ *Library of Babel*, the emphasis on individual experience of the subject and the recognition of the fallibilities of the art form frees the observer to perceive the form or idea that the work is depicting for themselves. However, rather than detracting from the objective viewership of the subject, the emphasis on individual perspective and perception makes the experience of engaging with the work all the more life-like, and therefore all the more valuable.

¹⁸ Irwin, Robert, in an interview with Jan Butterfield in “The State of the Real”, *Arts Magazine*, (Summer, 1972), p. 48.



Picasso, Still Life With A Bottle Of Rum, Metropolitan Museum, New York. Photo: Ben Sutherland

⁹ For Jorge Luis Borges, Paradise Was Not a Garden but a Library Author(s): Paul S. Piper

Source: *American Libraries*, Vol. 32, No. 7 (Aug., 2001), pp. 56-58 Published by: American Library Association Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25645997>

¹⁰ Borges, Jorge Luis et al. *Labyrinths*. New Directions Publishing, 1962. Print.

¹¹ Kolokytha, Chara. "Cubism [REVISED AND EXPANDED]." *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*. : Taylor and Francis, 2016. Date Accessed 22 Dec. 2019 <https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/overview/cubism-revised-and-expanded>. doi:10.4324/9781135000356-REMO20-2

¹² Pultz, John. "Cubism and American Photography." *Aperture*, no. 89, 1982, pp. 48–61. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24472144.

¹³ "Cubism – Art Term | Tate." *Tate*. N.p., 2019. Web. 23 Dec. 2019.

¹⁴ Kolokytha, Chara. "Cubism [REVISED AND EXPANDED]." *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*. : Taylor and Francis, 2016. Date Accessed 22 Dec. 2019 <https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/overview/cubism-revised-and-expanded>. doi:10.4324/9781135000356-REMO20-2

¹⁵ Kahnweiler, Daniel-Henry. *The Rise Of Cubism*. New York: N.p., 1949. Print.

¹⁶ Kahnweiler, Daniel-Henry. *The Rise Of Cubism*. New York: N.p., 1949. Print.

¹⁷ "Cubism – Art Term | Tate." *Tate*. N.p., 2019. Web. 23 Dec. 2019.

An Education in Rome

Gloria Marmion writes about a very personal Education. In 2019, after graduating in Social Anthropology from LSE, then postponing a Master's programme in Paris, she travelled to Rome on a volunteering mission. Her goal was one of centring and reflection and being of help to persons with special needs

The concept of L'Arche, founded in 1964, is for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities to live together in the same home and share a common daily life. The core members are assisted by local staff, as well as volunteers who stay for a certain period of time. There are such communities all over the world who strive to emulate their founder's words, 'We are not called by God to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things with extraordinary love.'

L'Arche Rome is found deep within the suburbs of the metropolis. Upon entering, you feel as though you have left the real world behind and stepped into one where your social background, education and work experience do not matter at all. Stripped from all the accomplishments I thought had made me 'me', I felt extremely vulnerable. I thus spent the first 48 hours hiding in my room and avoiding all meals. Hearing loud outbursts from downstairs was deeply unnerving and I had a panic attack. On the third day, I rose again and like a furtive but curious creature I made my way downstairs and realised it was not so bad after all. It was a home, it had a hearth, just with very different occupants than what I had been used to my entire life.

I wept copiously the first time I sat down for a meal with the community, so much so that I had to excuse myself and hide in the bathroom. I didn't know that this experience would draw out so many repressed feelings, nor that the severity and range of disabilities in the community would make for an uneasy and foreign first encounter. I had set such high expectations for myself being completely fine and a model volunteer from the moment I set foot in L'Arche. But this was obviously not the case. Instead, this would be a great opportunity for me to take a deep breath and stop being such a perfectionist. It was about taking my first steps all over again, unlearning and unwiring all expectations and slowly but surely getting to know everyone.

I was scared to death when I first met Maria. Unable to formulate speech, she had a wild look in her eyes and loved to grab people's bags to take a peek inside. She was just like a probing child, but because I didn't know her yet, I feared her seemingly erratic behaviour. I would never have imagined that only a few weeks later I would be going on solo walks with her to visit the other houses. I didn't know that my fear would turn into amazement at her unabashed way of eating with her head held back high, gurgling down entire glasses of water at a time, or how she was able to deftly swivel a piece of yellow Lego

between the tip of her fingers all day long. She didn't care to be liked or whether she was being a 'good' person (if there is such a thing). Of course, she struggled with not being understood when pointing out at things, and she had numerous health issues and a nervous tic that would break out spontaneously with no warning. But she was happy, well-surrounded and loved (or appreciated, in my case) by those around her.

Every day was one filled with new discoveries. It was only two weeks after my arrival that I realised Fabio, a member of my household, was a deaf-mute. I had been talking to him all this time. Previously, a tale of a deaf-mute orphan who had spent his entire life in a home for the disabled would have evoked pity in me. One recalls Stefan Zweig's novel *Ungehduld des Herzens* (translated as 'Beware of pity'). With the help of other volunteers, I learnt that Fabio loved looking at animal picture books, twirling a piece of string in his hand and watching nature documentaries. Doing these activities would put a huge grin on his face and elicit a hissing sound which was his way of saying he was happy. I think. At times he would just sit on the sofa, especially in the evenings.

Upon being offered a picture book to look at, he would shake his head and refuse, as he was awaiting his turn to be changed into his pyjamas and tucked into bed. This was something important I realised – to respect the desires of the members of my community. When put in a position of care towards persons with special needs, it is tempting to want to do everything for them and not give them the space to try for themselves. Even with little to no speech and limited mobility, a person can still express themselves and have their wishes respected by others. Most of the time, my role as a volunteer was to just leave the core members alone and simply sit next to or near them. My sheer presence was enough.

Not that my role wasn't also very strenuous and physical. My morning shifts would consist of a 7:00 am start to prepare breakfast for the household, wash up and clean the kitchen, as well as doing core members' laundry (not for the faint of heart). This represented a lot of responsibility for the volunteers, but it was a great source of pride to know that we were actively contributing to the running of the household. It was also very rewarding watching the breakfast I had prepared vanish in a flurry of scraping spoons and concentrated faces. They tried not to spill anything, but almost always did. When it was the other volunteers' turn to clean the house, I would participate in workshops at the day centre. It was

challenging speaking in a foreign language, let alone ensuring that everyone was participating and not running off elsewhere. On top of it all, the constant exposure to noise, chaos and general hubbub of communal life made for an intense experience.

However, connecting on a deeper level with each individual – which was more than just accompanying them to the bathroom or telling them to wait for a meal – was profoundly moving and healing for the soul. The first time I met Alessandro was during those Indian summer days when the workshops had not yet started, and we would play games outside by the pool. Alessandro, a very sensitive and expressive person, would often be overwhelmed with emotions of joy and sadness at the simplest touch or smile. He swayed left and right when he walked and lacked balance and coordination. Yet during one of our first walks he stooped down to pluck a daisy which he offered to me with a smile. It was the greatest gift I could receive, especially as it had only been my third day there and I was still highly sensitive, having only stopped crying that morning. In that moment I felt loved and appreciated thanks to a seemingly small gesture. But I knew that Alessandro had given me what he could and that in itself was a gesture of monumental proportions.

Over the weeks I saw that special needs persons have great freedom – maybe not the conventional freedom to move around freely, or to string enough words to form a coherent sentence, but the freedom to just *be*. To laugh for no reason, cry, shout, dance, sing, whenever, wherever. To stand up in the middle of Sunday mass and walk about, to sit alone being content doing nothing, to watch the same film every single day, and speak or shout what's on their mind right then and there. To affirm what they want without the fear of being judged. To not feel the need to justify their actions. With that freedom comes a lot of limitations too, but having known the same way of life since birth, the members unabashedly loved life and had so much joy and love to give. From my daily interactions and observations, no one felt as though they had a 'condition' holding them back. Rather, I was stupefied at myself for having been so hesitant towards living life as an imperfect person.

What moved me the most was seeing the members help each other out with what they could. When you have 'nothing' you have everything to give. I spent most mealtimes observing each individual, with his or her unique traits and quirks. I watched as Vittorio, who appeared emotionless at times, would gently wipe the perpetually drooling mouth of a younger woman, smiling at her as he did so. Seeing her look up from her plate and smile back at him, only to resume eating as messily as before, touched something deep within my heart. Such small and almost banal scenes revealed glimpses of tenderness, affection and generosity. Vittorio didn't do it for acknowledgement; it was a paternal instinct of care and he did it with what he

could. Unable to speak like most of the members of the community, he communicated so much through this small gesture.

My time at L'Arche brought out my childlike, playful self. Little by little I found myself singing and dancing during chores around the house or humming mindlessly on my train rides to Rome. I was finally enjoying and appreciating the present moment. When things didn't go my way and I was frustrated by the residents' inability to learn or remember basic instructions and felt useless, I learnt to cheer myself up, either by belting out songs in my room or going for walks. Growing up being dependent on others to regulate my mood, it was in this animated and bubbling community where I learnt calmness already resided within me to begin with and that it was up to me to draw it out during stressful situations.

Not everything was all rosy though. There were difficult moments of tension and frustration not only between core members but also between the staff, who, compared to volunteers, had greater tasks of care to perform. Ultimately, I left the community following a violent outburst from a core member that was not properly contained by the auxiliary staff, and over the course of which I felt unsafe. Italy does not have the same health and safety regulations as the UK. Nor does it have the same state funding than that available to France, where the French government fully subsidises such places. Despite working hard in a job they clearly loved, the local staff and nurses were paid neither sufficiently nor punctually. Without commensurate compensation one runs out of steam and motivation no matter how much love one has for a job. I therefore urge you to donate to L'Arche Rome, and I am very grateful for having been able to share my volunteering experience with you.

Connecting on a deeper level with each individual... was profoundly moving and healing for the soul

L'Arche: scene in the garden



Buddhism and Religious Art in Laos

Last summer, Peter Rusafov visited Laos and was struck by the role of Buddhist art within the country's society. In this article, he traces the development of a remarkable culture which has developed an idiosyncratic Lao theology and, throughout a turbulent history, has been committed to the guardianship of religious art

Buddhism's foundations lie in the asceticism of the śramaṇa tradition, arising between the 6th and 4th centuries BC in accordance with the teachings of the Gautama Buddha.¹ Despite significant disparities between the religion's extant schools – most notably Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism – the goal of overcoming suffering unites Buddhist denominations, and is a defining incentive in the spiritual practices of its 520 million global adherents.² Moreover, as is the case with other Indian religions, saṃsāra (the endless cycle of birth and rebirth) is a central tenet of the Buddhist faith, and must be escaped through the attainment of nirvana or progression down the path of Buddhahood.³ As such, Buddhist images exude unbroken serenity and facilitate the transcendence over mortal cravings required of those seeking salvation. In fulfilling this function, Buddhist art presents a harmonious blend of symbolism and narrative, supplementing the dogmatic emphasis of Abrahamic religion with a meditative appeal to personal growth. It must also be noted that Buddhist art conveys a promise of sanctuary, inviting the viewer into the Buddha's life while providing insulation from evil and a pathway to fulfilment.

Laos fosters one of the most complex and idiosyncratic Buddhist cultures in Southeast Asia. This is expressed through the country's religious art as well as its societal practices, and has developed along a distinct trajectory unparalleled within Indochina. Crucially, Lao Buddhism is rooted in animism, and has been moulded by folklore throughout its history. Indeed, ancestor worship and mythological reverence are deeply ingrained, coalescing with mainstream Theravada principles to produce uniquely localised rituals and visual culture.⁵ These origins contribute to the sense of protective cloistering in Lao Buddhism, with the residue of a more primitive society heightening the need for a force of guardianship. Similarly, Laos' artistic customs are evocative of its Indianized past, with its markedly Hindu iconography belying centuries in the Indian sphere of influence. This is part of a larger phenomenon within Southeast Asia, which

saw the rise of Indianized kingdoms bound by their use Sanskrit and the Hindu religion; in the words of Robert E. Fisher, "seldom in history has one culture been so thoroughly transferred to another region."^{6,7} Once again, this context increases the need for preservation, with a historic vulnerability to foreign powers giving rise to a need for spiritual insulation.

The complexity of Lao Buddhism is furthered by its strikingly ambiguous origins. Unlike neighbouring Thailand – which adopted the religion as early as the 2nd century BC – Laos likely resisted its encroachment for centuries, instead absorbing external influences into its thriving spiritual practices.⁸ However, the exact period of Buddhism's introduction remains unknown, as Lao historiographic records lack written codification prior to the 16th century; as such, earlier accounts are resigned to mythology, and are largely dependent on oral tradition.⁹ According to these accounts, Laos' first Buddhist shrine was erected in ancient times under the orders of the Indian

Emperor Ashoka, while other chronicles suggest a Chinese introduction of the Mahayana sect in 69AD.¹⁰ It has also been conjectured that Buddhism reached Laos via the Dvaravati Kingdom in the 7th–8th centuries, while tantric elements from Yunnan are speculated to have been an influence around the same time.¹¹ However, due to the unreliability of these sources, modern scholarship agrees on a 14th century origin, with Fa Ngum – founder of the Lan Xang Empire, the first Lao kingdom – largely credited with launching Laos' Buddhization.¹² Returning from exile at Angkor in 1353, he is thought to have been under pressure from his bride – the Khmer princess Kaeo Keng Nya, a devout Buddhist – to promote her religion; her disgust at local animism is said to have been so great, that she threatened to return to Angkor if her husband did not subdue it.¹³ Accordingly, he launched Lan Xang as a Buddhist kingdom with its capital at Luang Prabang, strengthening it with a delegation of abbots and monks

provided by his father-in-law.¹⁴ He also procured the Phra Bang: a standing Buddha image of silver, gold, and bronze, which is today regarded as Laos' palladium.¹⁵ Historian Michel Lorrillard, however, rebukes this story's "artificial nature", maintaining that Buddhism's introduction to Laos cannot be pinpointed due to "the long duration of the process."¹⁶

As the site of the first Lao kingdom, Luang Prabang most clearly conveys the country's Buddhist history. Its background as an animist mecca provides invaluable insight into Lao Buddhism's survivalist roots. The region's pre-Buddhist inhabitants worshipped riverain deities known as *ngeuak*, which can be described as "snake-like water dragons"; due to their temperamental dispositions, they were regarded with fearful reverence.¹⁷ *Ngeuak* worship entirely dictated the public's perception of their homeland, with locals viewing the *ngeuak*'s scaly bodies as responsible for carving out the meandering Mekong. Luang Prabang's very topography was thought to resemble a sleeping *ngeuak*, with each part of the serpent's body representing a vertex on the city's peninsular shape.¹⁸ The diminished role of human society in this worldview is apparent, with early Lao people perceiving themselves at the complete mercy of the *ngeuak*. Upon contact with Buddhized Mon peoples, however, the inhabitants of Luang Prabang adapted the *ngeuak* legend into that of the *naga*, which represented the taming of the water-spirit

by the Buddhist faith. In other words, *naga* serpents were not regarded with the terror of their animist predecessors, instead assuming the role of societal protector in line with the eight precepts of Buddhist morality.¹⁹ This phenomenon is crucial, as it represents the shift away from fear-induced worship to the active embrace of a protective force. Indeed, *naga* provided early Lao society with pivotal leverage, enabling it to grow in pride and confidence in the knowledge that it was being looked out for.

The artistic implications of *naga* in Laos are apparent. They are particularly prominent in textile design, in which they are frequently reduced to motifs intended to

protect the wearer. For example, *naga* feature prominently on the attire of animist shamans, due to the deep-seated belief in their healing properties; similarly, they are a recurring pattern on women's headscarves, particularly in rural areas where they are thought to offer fortune and protection during hunting trips.²⁰ Martin Stuart-Fox – an expert on Lao civilisation – has written extensively on the subject; in particular, he has praised the diversity of *naga* textile design, describing the motifs as "highly variable and imaginative, stylised forms, often with rearing heads and raised crests."²¹ The practice is so firmly ingrained in Lao craftsmanship that it is often synonymous with weaving itself, as is evidenced by the common Lao

expression "weaving cloth, weaving *naga*." In fact, it has been suggested that many Lao no longer wear *naga* designs due to spiritual convictions, but rather out of the sense of national prosperity and security with which they are associated.²² What is clear, however, is that *naga* are an indelible symbol of Lao resilience, and are clung to by society for their guardianship.

The persistence of mythical serpents in Lao Buddhism is far from its only idiosyncrasy. Laos' Buddha images themselves pay tribute to animist traditions, once again incorporating local oddities into conventional depictions. This is perhaps best reflected by the plethora of distinctly Lao *mudras*, which refer to the ritual, symbolic gestures of the Buddha that are routinely conveyed

in sculpture and painting. Certain universal *mudras* are shared by the Mahayana, Theravada, and esoteric schools, and are thus viewed as defining features of the Gautama Buddha. These include gestures of teaching (*dharmacakramudra*), meditation (*dhyanamudra*), reassurance (*abhayamudra*), and enlightenment (*bhumisparshamudra*).²³ However, in addition to these, Laos' offers unique interpretations, with the "calling for rain" *mudra* being the most striking example.²⁴ This posture is said to originate from a remote forest temple in the Lao Highlands, where it was synthesised into the Buddhist faith from local folklore.²⁵ Moreover, its symbolism has



Miniature Buddha images in the grottos around Mount Phousi, Luang Prabang

1 Rupert Gethin: *Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 7.

2 Pew Research Center: *The Global Religious Landscape* (2012)

3 Robert E. Fisher: *Buddhist Art and Architecture* (Thames & Hudson, 1993), 14.

4 John Powers: *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion Publications, 2007), 392.

5 Andrea Matles Savada: *Laos: A Country Study* (GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994)

6 Patit Paban Mishra: *Cultural Contribution of India to South-East Asia: A Case Study of Laos* (Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 56, 1995), 870.

7 Fisher, 233.

8 Upendra Thakur: *Some Aspects of Asian History and Culture* (Abhinav Publications, 1988), 157.

9 Michel Lorrillard: *Insights on the Diffusion of Buddhism* (Buddhist Legacies in Mainland Southeast Asia, Paris E.F.E.O., 2006), 140.

10 Mishra, Patit Paban, 870–871.

11 Matles: *Laos: A Country Study*

12 Noble Ross Reat: *Buddhism: A History* (Jain Publishing Company, 1994)

13 Martin Stuart-Fox: *Naga Cities of the Mekong* (Media Masters, 2006), 16.

14 Ibid, 18.

15 Ibid, 23.

16 Lorrillard, 144.

17 Stuart-Fox, 7.

18 Stuart-Fox, 7.

19 Ibid

20 Ibid

21 Ibid

22 *Animals in Asian Tradition* (Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)), 27.

23 Fisher, 22.

24 Henri Parmentier: *L'Art du Laos* (Paris E.F.E.O., 1988)

25 Lao Rain Mudra Buddha (Richard Gervais Collection, 2016)

been deftly tied in with Buddhist scripture; Lao Buddhists identify the *mudra* with a moment in the Gautama Buddha's life, when he summoned the skies to rain and thus brought an end to drought. The pose depicts the Gautama Buddha standing with his hands at his sides, palms facing inwards towards his body, while his fingers point towards the ground and one foot extends slightly forward. Typically, images in this *mudra* are adorned with complementary ornaments, such as a golden flame robe, black lacquer embellishments, and a large *unisa* top-knot. More generally, it is estimated that over 40 *mudras* exist in Laos – far more than in other parts of the Buddhist world; this reflects the Lao's uniquely strong desire for spiritual protection, with the Buddha depicted in almost every conceivable context.

It is also worth noting that Lao Buddha images can be anatomically differentiated from those of neighbouring states. In particular, they are renowned for their elongated

Laos' temples are also a testament to the centrality of the Buddhist faith throughout its history

ears, crisp beaked noses, and exaggeratedly slender waists, all of which reinforce the Buddha's nature as gentle and refined.²⁶ It must also be said that the sheer density of Buddha images in the country is staggering; in addition to thronging the insides of temples, monasteries, and caves, they can also be found throughout public spaces and atop hills, and are even clustered along busy roadsides. This can partially be explained through the tenets of Theravada custom, which glorify the Gautama Buddha and crown his portrayals as epitomes of spiritual expression. More importantly, however, it can be interpreted as a shield, or a screen against the outside world; through their ubiquitous presence, the Buddha images provide a constancy of spiritual strength that fortifies communities and the country as a whole. For comparison, the Mahayana sect boasts an ever-growing pantheon of bodhisattvas, resulting in schematic iconography and an abstract celestial element that contrasts greatly against the sheltering of the Lao tradition.²⁷ Unsurprisingly, most Mahayana states – such as India and Japan – have historically been formidable empires, with little need for the support of divine custody.

As mentioned earlier, the Phra Bang is widely regarded as Laos' most sacred Buddha image. Its reverence transcends religious significance: it is symbolic of the right to rule Laos, and is considered the ultimate custodian of the Lao people.²⁸ This belief is rooted in the sculpture's origins; it was gifted to Fa Ngum by his Khmer father-in-law upon his foundation of the first Lao kingdom, and eventually lent its name to Luang Prabang, that kingdom's

²⁶ Stephen Mansfield; Magdalene Koh; Debbie Nevins: *Cultures of the World: Laos* (Cavendish Square Publishing, 2018), 83.

²⁷ Fisher, 28.

²⁸ George Coedès: *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 225.



Gold-plated monuments in rural Luang Prabang Province

capital.²⁹ The image equally represents the resilience of the Lao people, having been seized by foreign powers numerous times throughout its history. Indeed, the Phra Bang's ultimate survival and return to Luang Prabang has been interpreted as a victory for Laos, showcasing the strength of the country's identity in the face of centuries of turbulence. For example, the statue withstood two forceful Siamese relocations to Bangkok, and was unscathed in the United States' aggressive bombing campaign of 1964–1973, in which over 2 million tons of bombs decimated local art and architecture.³⁰ The image itself stands at a mere 83cm, with its gold, bronze and silver makeup weighing 43.4kg. Lao folklore maintains that it was cast in Ceylon between the 1st and 9th centuries, but its sculptural features suggest later Khmer provenance; this would provide a more plausible explanation, given the statue's earliest known residence at the court of the Khmer king.³¹ However, the Phra Bang's cult status is mainly attributed to its *mudra*: with both palms facing forward, it conveys a double gesture of protection and freedom from fear.³² This cements its status as palladium of Lao society, and – when considering its small stature and prosaic appearance – makes it a crowning tribute to the strength of the everyman.

Laos' temples are also a testament to the centrality of the Buddhist faith throughout its history. In Luang Prabang, they are particularly majestic, mirroring the city's prolific past as a royal capital. Strikingly, Luang Prabang's grandest and best-known temple complexes were constructed during troubled eras, with the masterpieces of the city's skyline rooted in times of war or annexation. This reveals a flourishing of patronage – both royal and civilian – at seemingly inopportune times, and is indicative of the Lao mentality towards religious art and architecture: it is there for worship, but also for defence.

Notable examples can be found during the rule of Setthathirat, who led the Lan Xang Empire during the mid-16th century.³³ During his reign, the Lao people were subject to constant aggression from the Burmese, whose military campaigns had successfully overpowered the Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya Kingdoms in recent years.³⁴ Lan Xang – less potent than both of these defeated powers – was permanently on the defensive, intercepting and foiling attacks against a larger and better-organised foreign battalion. A devout Buddhist, Setthathirat was the man to personally christen Luang Prabang with its modern name, due to his conviction in the Phra Bang's protective qualities; in fact, he saw this move as an instrumental part of his military strategy, and was adamant in its role in averting Burmese ambush.³⁵ Setthathirat extended this idea through his rich architectural patronage, which produced dozens of ambitious projects. Of these, three

²⁹ W. Vivian De Thabrew: *Buddhist Monuments and Temples of Cambodia and Laos* (AuthorHouse UK, 2014), 67.

³⁰ Ben Kiernan; Taylor Owen: *Making More Enemies than We Kill? Calculating US Bomb Tonnes Dropped on Laos and Cambodia, and Weighing their Implications* (Asia-Pacific Journal, 2015)

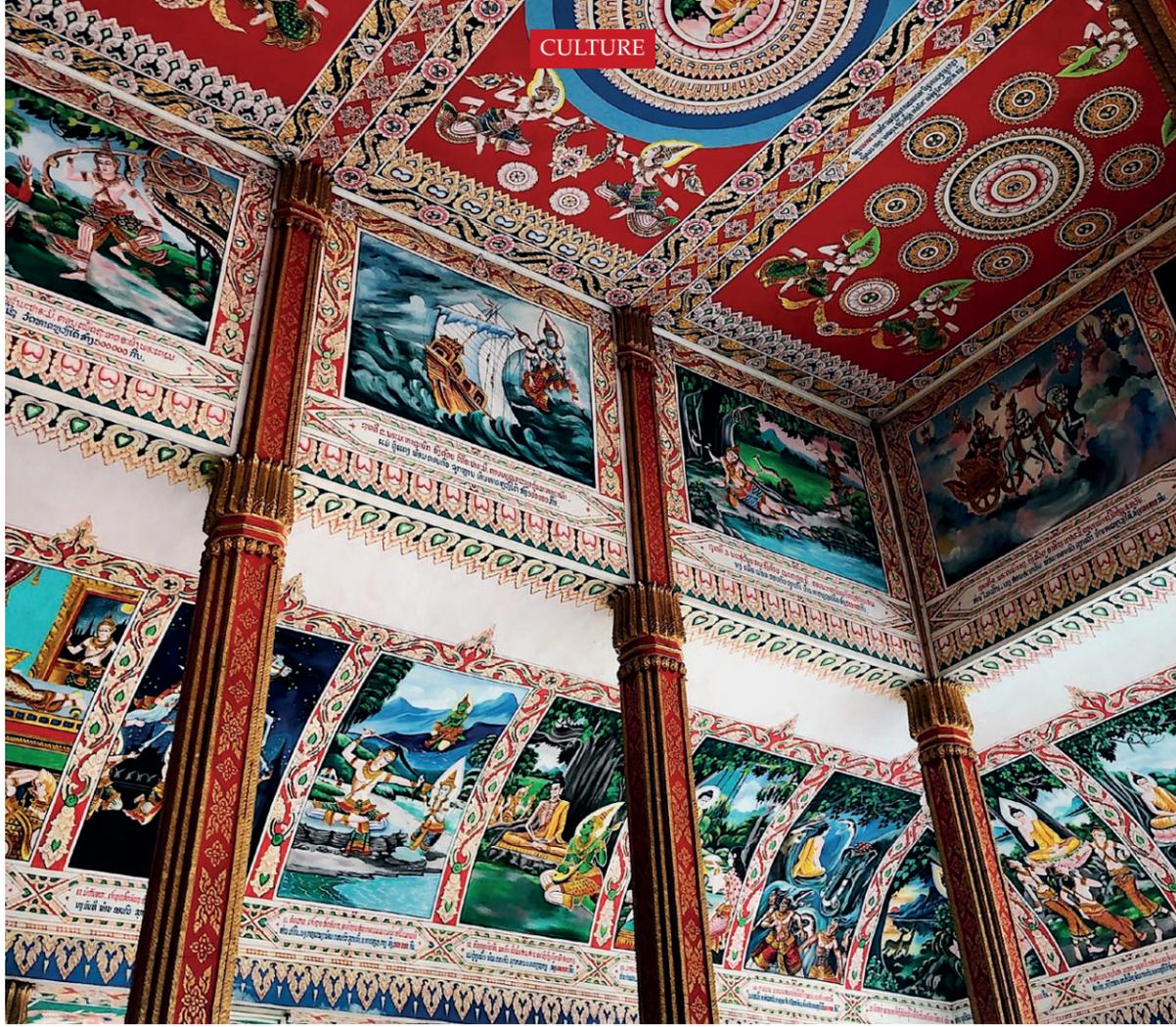
³¹ Stuart-Fox, 18.

³² Ibid, 23.

³³ Ibid, 27.

³⁴ David K. Wyatt; Wichienkeo, Aroonrut, eds. (The Chiang Mai Chronicle, Silkworm Books, 1995), 121.

³⁵ Ibid



Ornamental painting depicting scenes from the Buddha's life in Wat Si Saket, Vientiane

monasteries have survived, and are widely recognised as defining features of Luang Prabang's architectural legacy.³⁶

Wat Xieng Thong is the crown of this trifecta, with Martin Stuart-Fox epitomising it as "the pure Luang Prabang style of Buddhist architecture".³⁷ Constructed in 1560, the complex encompasses every aspect of Lao temple design: its expansive *vihan* (sanctuary) is the central feature, and is flanked by small chapels, stupas, a drum tower, monk's quarters, and lodging for pilgrims, all of which are contained within a surrounding wall pierced by fine gateways. The roof of the *vihan* is triple-layered, sweeping in a wide and low curve towards the ground; its lowest part shelters the front porch, while the highest extends upwards and overlaps the other two. A distinctive feature of the roof is its ornamentation, which is heavily animist in influence. For example, there is a *dok so fa* (bouquet of heavenly flowers) engraved at its apex, promising to ward off evil spirits and maintain peace within the community. The *vihan's* plan is also unusual, incorporating a combination of square and round columns, creating two deep bays at the front porch and

³⁶ Ibid
³⁷ Ibid

three additional ones around the nave. Black and gold wrought iron railings frame the porch itself, which stands atop a flight of whitewashed steps beneath an elaborately carved pediment. Quintessentially Lao compositions

dominate the interior, marked out as gold, stencilled silhouettes against black or red lacquered backgrounds, complementing the vibrant red and gold of the roof's bracket and beam system. A central, gilded Buddha image stands on the altar pedestal,

touching the earth in a *mudra* that bears witness to the Buddha's merit. This is flanked by two smaller bronze images, which are themselves situated in a sea of miniatures – both seated and standing – in a plethora of distinctly Lao poses and gestures.

Twelve entrances connect the *vihan* to the wider complex, which contains a series of stupas and chapels. The Chapel of the Funerary Car is certainly the most peculiar, embodying a synthesis of cultural and historic influences that showcase the mosaic of Lao identity. It houses the funerary car that carried the body of King Sisavang Vong in 1959, and was constructed in the 1960s by his successor, Sisavang Vatthana – Laos' final monarch before the onset of Communist rule.³⁸ Distinctly Lao

³⁸ Stuart-Fox, 29.



Outer porch of a temple in Vientiane

features comprise the chapel's ornamentation, with the car itself assuming the form of five exquisitely gilded *naga*. As discussed earlier, the *naga* are synonymous with security, and are thought to hasten the transition to *nirvana* that one hopes to embark on upon death. Moreover, the car is flanked by a collection of gilded Buddha images in the "calling for rain" *mudra*; these are set against a backdrop of Hindu Ramayana carvings, creating a juxtaposition that puts on full display the richness of contribution underpinning Lao Buddhism.³⁹ Older chapels can also be found on site, such as the Red Chapel, which lends its name to the translucent red mosaic of its exterior walls. This structure is known for housing a rare 16th century bronze, which depicts the Buddha in a reclining pose and exceeds 2 metres in length.⁴⁰ The survival of this sculpture represents Wat Xieng Thong more broadly; like the Phra Bang, the complex has borne the brunt of Laos' troubles, enduring sieges, arson and bombings throughout its existence. Notably, it was the only monastery in Luang Prabang to survive the Siamese attacks of 1887, in which the city was razed to the ground and faced both physical and spiritual obliteration.⁴¹ Therefore, in addition to its designation as the "the finest remaining example of northern Lao Buddhist architecture", Wat Xieng Thong is a relic of greatness, providing evidence of a thriving culture that is often overshadowed by its tragic misfortunes.⁴²

Laos is home to a Buddhist culture unlike any other in Asia. This appropriately informs its art and architecture, which have a uniquely localised brand that pays homage to the country's distinctive past. Most impressively, Lao society has been moulded by its response to hardship, leading to the construction of a visual culture that dispels danger and safeguards its people. It is for this reason that Laos remains a deeply spiritual land, with its luxuriantly crafted artefacts serving as a reminder of shared heritage and collective resilience.

³⁹ Ibid
⁴⁰ Ibid
⁴¹ Ibid

Bibliography

- Gethin, R. (1998). *Foundations of Buddhism*. 1998: Oxford University Press.
- Pew Research Center: *The Global Religious Landscape* (2012)
- Fisher, Robert E: *Buddhist Art and Architecture* (Thames & Hudson, 1993)
- Powers, John: *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion Publications, 2007)
- Savada, Andrea Matles: *Laos: A Country Study* (GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994)
- Mishra, Patit Paban: *Cultural Contribution of India to South-East Asia: A Case Study of Laos* (Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 56, 1995)
- Thakur, Upendra: *Some Aspects of Asian History and Culture* (Abhinav Publications, 1988)
- Lorrillard, Michel: *Insights on the Diffusion of Buddhism* (Buddhist Legacies in Mainland Southeast Asia, Paris E.F.E.O., 2006)
- Mishra, Patit Paban: *Cultural Contribution of India to South-East Asia: A Case Study of Laos* (Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 56, 1995)
- Reat, Noble Ross: *Buddhism: A History* (Jain Publishing Company, 1994)
- Stuart-Fox, Martin: *Naga Cities of the Mekong* (Media Masters, 2006)
- Animals in Asian Tradition* (Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU))
- Parmentier, Henri: *L'Art du Laos* (Paris E.F.E.O., 1988)
- Lao Rain Mudra Buddha* (Richard Gervais Collection, 2016)
- Mansfield Stephen; Koh, Magdalene; Nevins, Debbie: *Cultures of the World: Laos* (Cavendish Square Publishing, 2018)
- Coedès, George: *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 1968)
- De Thabrew, W. Vivian: *Buddhist Monuments and Temples of Cambodia and Laos* (AuthorHouse UK, 2014)
- Kiernan, Ben; Owen, Taylor: *Making More Enemies than We Kill? Calculating US Bomb Tonnages Dropped on Laos and Cambodia, and Weighing their Implications* (Asia-Pacific Journal, 2015)
- Wyatt, David K: *Wichienkeo, Aroonrut, eds.* (The Chiang Mai Chronicle, Silksworm Books, 1995)

“Are we the Baddies?” Guilt and Responsibility in Post-war German Literature

Rachel Zerdin considers different literary responses to Germany's Nazi past. The shifts in the political and cultural landscape reflect contrasting presentations of collective responsibility. She discerns a progressive willingness to confront responsibility for WW2 and the Holocaust

“Are we the baddies?”, asks the sheepish German soldier in Mitchell and Webb's iconic World War Two sketch. Perturbed by the skulls on the S.S. uniform caps, David Mitchell's character begins to worry that perhaps they, the S.S., are the bad guys after all. Although this sketch is satire first and foremost, the veil of humour occludes a more profound message. The sketch shows, in a very human (if exaggerated) way, the galling humiliation of realising that not merely oneself – but rather one's entire country – is on the wrong side of history. The German cultural concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (often inadequately translated as “coming to terms with the past”) is a vague and

nebulous one, encompassing an eclectic range of artistic, literary, political, religious and personal responses to the atrocities of the Second World War, specifically the Holocaust. Most often, research in this area focuses on the experience of those whom we consider “victims” of the Holocaust – German-Jewish writing, for example, is a well-established field of research for those interested in 20th century German literature. However, the vast majority of Germans who survived the war and wrote in the years afterwards were not “victims” in the sense that we might ordinarily understand it. At best they can be described as by-standers; at worst perpetrators of the worst genocide in human history. As unpalatable as it may seem, however, the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* cannot exclude those whom we consider culpable. The recognition of personal and collective guilt is an essential part of coming to terms



Stolpersteine

The artist Gunter Demnig remembers the victims of National Socialism by installing commemorative brass plaques (Stolpersteine) in the pavement in front of their last address. They now number over 1200 throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. The project is the world's largest decentralized memorial.

Investigation), based on the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials. Through a discussion of the texts in chronological order,

I will argue that the literature of these three decades reflects an increasing awareness of collective German guilt. The texts that I will discuss resist neutrality, opting instead to inculcate: the author, the reader, and the German public as a whole.

Trümmerliteratur (rubble literature) was a short-lived literary movement in Germany, beginning shortly after the end of the Second World War and continuing until around 1950. Wolfgang Borchert's 1947 short story *Die Küchenuhr* is a paradigm of this literary period, both in content and style. In simple, prosaic language Borchert tells the story of a young man who approaches a group of strangers to tell them about the kitchen clock he is holding – the only item to survive the bomb that destroyed his home and killed his parents. This young man has no name, and details of his

involvement in the war are conspicuously absent. In many respects, it is clear that Borchert is encouraging the reader to sympathise with this character: he has lost his home and family, and the trauma he experienced during the war has left him with “ein ganz altes Gesicht” (a very old face), although he is only twenty years old. However, Borchert's characterisation of the young man is freighted with careful allusions to his complicity in the very regime that has caused him such pain. Reflecting on childhood memories of his simple, orderly life with his mother, the young man thinks to himself: “Jetzt, jetzt weiß ich, dass es das Paradies war.” (Now I know that *that* was paradise.) Although the italics in the translation are my own, it is hard to read this sentence aloud without this emphasis. The implication of this is clear: if the young man now realises that *that* was paradise, presumably he once thought that something else was paradise instead. Although he does not state this explicitly, Borchert implies that the young man once regarded the Nazi regime as a utopia – only to be bitterly disappointed by the reality. In 1947, Borchert was writing with some sense of collective German culpability, as well as an understanding that the ordinary German citizen could be both victim and perpetrator of the atrocities of World War Two. However, Borchert's allusions to German guilt are extremely subtle in comparison to the inculpatory work of later writers. It would appear that, in the

For German writers in the 1950s, confronting Germany's responsibility for the war itself was the final taboo

immediate aftermath of the war, the German public was not ready to confront the reality of shared responsibility. In fact, I would argue that the *Trümmerliteratur* movement as a whole was driven by a subconscious desire to exculpate the ordinary German citizen. One of the key stylistic features of *Trümmerliteratur* is a simple, prosaic writing style. Writers considered themselves to be reacting against the Nazis' manipulation and corruption of the German language by returning to the bare bones of language, deliberately avoiding a writing style that could be seen as contrived or rhetorical. Implicit in this idea, however, is the characterisation of the German public as passive victims of Nazi propaganda and manipulation. Whilst the Nazis certainly used propaganda to influence the public, there is a level of nuance missing from this vision of German victimhood. *Trümmerliteratur*

views the German language (and, by extension, German national identity) as a passive victim, corrupted by Nazism. No attempt is made, however, to address the fact that the Nazis were democratically elected in 1933, much less to examine the factors in Germany specifically that made the rise of such an ideology possible. The idea that the German language was “stolen” and manipulated by the Nazis is an enticing one – but does not allow for the full burden of national responsibility to be felt. Perhaps this is why, moving into the 1950s, *Trümmerliteratur* was



Günter Grass
Günter Grass in conversation with Wolfgang Herles at a book launch
Photo by Blaues Sofa

At best they can be described as by-standers; at worst perpetrators of the worst genocide in human history

discarded in favour of a more radical appraisal of German culpability.

Throughout his career, Günter Grass's work was consistently radical in more ways than one. Grass took a particular interest in the effects of World War Two on Germany and the German people – his work conceives of the war as a distinctly German event. His 1956 poem *Hochwasser* uses the allegory of a flood followed by a period of intense sunshine to explore the German people's reluctance to grapple with the past. In the poem, people gradually get used to the ongoing flood and build their lives around it. When the flood ends, they are shocked and frightened by the new sunlight which threatens to expose them to the world, and they long to return to the flood. The most powerful line of the poem is one of the most understated: "Wie peinlich des Nachbarn verbrauchte Betten zu sehen" ("How embarrassing to see your neighbours' worn-out mattresses.") Grass uses the unglamorous, universal feeling of embarrassment to acknowledge that the desperation to ignore the past is fundamentally human. It is mortifying to see the private sins of your neighbours exposed to the world – this embarrassment does not diminish when these sins amount to genocide. Grass's poem urges the reader to engage with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, but does so from a place of compassion and understanding. Grass's tone is gentler than the later inculpatory writings of Peter Weiss. Grass addresses the reader as an equal – like you, he knows how humiliating it is to confront the past, but knows that it has to be done. Like Borchert, Grass does not explicitly address the idea of German guilt. However, his poem is an advancement on Borchert's work in its refusal to prioritise comfort over truth. Grass acknowledges the German public's reluctance to confront the past but, in the very act of writing the poem, asserts that the nation's unpalatable history must be addressed if Germany is to move forward. I identify a metapoetic element in Grass's work: *Hochwasser*, itself a poem about Nazism and the aftermath thereof, also asserts the necessity of writing about and confronting such topics. Grass uses his poem to justify the very act of writing poetry about Nazi Germany. However, Grass's poem, although an advancement on Borchert's short story, still does not complete the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Although Grass encourages the German public to acknowledge the events of the Second World War, *Hochwasser* (rather paradoxically) does not itself address these atrocities. The poem implicitly criticises the instinct to hide from the past, but does not actually tackle the question of German culpability for the atrocities committed in Nazi Germany. Despite Grass's radicalism, it seems that, for German writers in the 1950s, confronting Germany's responsibility for the war itself was the final taboo.

Any remaining efforts to ignore Germany's Nazi past became completely untenable in 1963, when the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials began. Unlike the Nuremberg trials, conducted by the Allied Forces under international law

almost 20 years previously, the Frankfurt trials were the first to charge defendants under German criminal law for their role in the Holocaust. For the first time, the atrocities of the Second World War were being recognised as German crimes, for which Germany had to take ultimate responsibility. The trials lasted for two years and were widely documented and reported. German playwright Peter Weiss attended the trials, which formed the basis for his 1965 play *Die Ermittlung*. The play itself mimics the format of a trial, with lines spoken only by unnamed witnesses, defendants, prosecutors, defence lawyers and a judge. Much of the play is based directly on the testimony Weiss heard in court; Weiss also drew on the writings of journalist Bernd Naumann, who also attended the trials. The play is by no means a perfect response to the horrors of the Holocaust: a separate essay could be written, for



Holocaust Memorial, Berlin
Photo by Kate Nevens

The German population had to accept collective responsibility for what they had witnessed – not just what they had done

instance, on the inadequate portrayal of Jewish victims and survivors. However, Weiss's play is the harrowing culmination of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* project that began with the *Trümmerliteratur* writers in the late 1940s. The brilliance of Weiss's play lies in its bleakness: rather than offering an optimistic vision of how Germany can move forward, Weiss presents an excoriating indictment of the German individual, and of the nation as a whole. The labels of innocent and guilty are not fixed in the play: the fluidity with which Weiss applies and removes them forces the audience to reconsider their own understanding of the difference between victim and perpetrator. Weiss's twelve anonymous witnesses range from Jewish survivors to concentration camp officials who worked alongside the defendants. In many cases, the audience is left infuriated that the witness himself is not on trial: for example, when

the prosecutor presents the court with a list of prisoners shot at Auschwitz, signed by so-called Witness 2. In this way, Weiss forces us to reconsider our preconceptions about witnesses as opposed to perpetrators. For Weiss, witnesses can be just as culpable as those accused of ordering or perpetrating atrocities: a striking reference to the guilt of "bystanders" that inculcates not just the witnesses on stage, but also a significant proportion of the play's early audiences. This, then, was the ultimate challenge of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In order to come fully to terms with the past, the German population had to accept collective responsibility for what they had witnessed – not just what they had done.

The works discussed above are just three examples taken from one of the most rapidly evolving periods of literature in German history. Although less than twenty years elapsed between the publications of Borchert's *Die Küchenuhr* and Weiss's *Die Ermittlung*, the seismic shifts in the political and cultural landscape are reflected in the texts' vastly different approaches to Germany's Nazi past. It is also no coincidence that I have chosen to discuss a prose, poetry and drama text, respectively. It seems to me that these three different literary forms support the writers' different presentations of collective responsibility. Narrative writing does not necessitate introspection, as the author is carefully detached from the narrator, who is in turn (at least in Borchert's story) detached from the story he relates. Poetry can be confessional to a greater extent but need not involve the reader to the same extent as drama – a poem could yield an acknowledgement of personal guilt, but is unlikely to inculcate an entire nation. Drama, on the other hand, is all-encompassing. A play takes for its subject every character on stage, as well as the entire audience. Weiss's play makes use of the so-called *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect) popularised by his predecessor Bertolt Brecht, and contemporary Max Frisch. Brechtian drama seeks to keep the audience aware of the fact that they are watching a play: by preventing immersion in the narrative, the playwright ensures that the moral/political/social message can be understood. In this way, the medium used by each of the three writers is an essential element of their appraisal of German guilt. As we move from Borchert's prose to Grass's verse to Weiss's drama, we notice a striking evolution, as writers become progressively more willing to confront the reality of German responsibility for World War II and the Holocaust. I do not wish to imply any sort of qualitative hierarchy between the three texts I have chosen to discuss here. Post-war German literature did not "improve" between 1945 and 1970, nor did the ultimate aim (coming to terms with a horrific collective past) change. Mapping the evolutions in *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* literature over three decades shows the way in which approaches to this task have changed over time: a phenomenon that says far more about the cultural and political landscape, and about the attitudes of the readership, than about the writers themselves.

The Problem of the 'Nasty Woman' in Literature

Coco Kemp-Welch is unimpressed by dismissive interpretations of female characters in literature and film. She considers changing social views and use of language; she argues for a more positive appreciation of empowered women

The term 'Nasty Woman' (here used as a replacement for 'bitch') was for many years used as a pejorative description for females, with its definition stating a 'treacherous and malicious woman'. More recently it has been appropriated by feminists as a satirically empowering title for the 'strong, independent woman': President Trump called his 2016 presidential campaign opponent, former-First Lady Hillary Clinton a 'Nasty Woman', and as a result, it became the focus of a feminist, retaliatory movement. It has been coined as the new, liberating term for an assertive, wilful woman. Some women even went so far as to proclaim that Clinton ought to 'own her inner bitch', condoning the political and public use of this term. This controversial word has been twisted from its previous derogatory usage and, politically, is now a stronghold of feminine power; such as Grammy-nominated singer Lizzo's continual self-categorisation as a 'bad bitch'.

The 'Nasty Woman' has served as a controversial problem throughout history and literature – because she has been judged in such a one dimensional manner, and

Beryl Markham is an inadvertent pioneer for feminism

for that reason, this article will review the portrayal of certain female literary characters originally perceived as 'Nasty Women' (or, as *my* opposing term, the 'Kindly Maiden') with a specific focus on English literature set/written in the 19th and set them within a modern re-reading arguing that the nasty women of literature in fact have much to teach us. My aim is to present the formerly negative reading of certain characters differently, much as the feminists have adopted the 'B' word for their own uses and made it a positive.

These female stereotypes have existed throughout literary history. From Penelope ('Kindly') in 'The Odyssey' and Dido in 'The Aeneid' ('Nasty'), to Mary and Martha in the Bible (representing different values of women - education versus domestic prowess); from 'Natalie, a paragon of feminine virtue to Mariane, the fallen woman, and the feckless Philine' (Showalter, 1997); from Snow White and her evil stepmother to 'Game of Thrones' and other TV shows of the present, these binary – rather than multifaceted - caricatures of women are everywhere.

It will be argued that Jane Eyre is a perfect feminist role model because she combines the two flawed labels

into one ideal, she is not perfect, but embraces both types through her individual agency. She speaks her mind, but is not overly flamboyant in her rebellion, marrying the 'knight in shining armour', because she wants to. She is truly the definition of a 'strong, independent woman'.

Yet, Scarlett O'Hara from 'Gone With The Wind' by Margaret Mitchell is an obvious example to better comprehend the qualities of a 'Nasty Woman'. Her conduct throughout the book, though sometimes beneficial to others is never motivated by kindness or selflessness, she seems the embodiment of self-centredness. Julie M. Spanbauer in an article for University Wollongong Australia stated that she is "narcissistic, shallow, dishonest, manipulative, amoral, and completely lacking in any capacity for self-reflection and for analysis of the emotional and psychological responses of others" (Spanbauer, 2001). An example of this is not only her potent dislike of her own children but also her distasteful behaviour around Melanie Hamilton, whom she dislikes for the sole reason that Ashley Wilkes, Scarlett's childhood crush chose to marry her and not Scarlett. This is a pertinent example of the 'malevolence' of her character. Indeed, Mitchell agreed herself, notoriously making "disparaging remarks about Scarlett" (Jones, 1981). However, there are a few moments when one can't help but admire this oftentimes unpleasant woman. After all, Mitchell "claimed that she set out to write about Melanie as the protagonist and that Scarlett just took over the story." (Jones, 1981). A particularly well-known moment is her "With God as my witness, I shall never be hungry again"¹ speech when all her pain and desperation is portrayed through a single, determined statement. This is enough to dismiss any preformed images of this character's nastiness and create a strong sympathy towards her, instead.

The reason contemporary readers might label Scarlett O'Hara as a 'Nasty Woman' would not only be because of her general assertiveness, but also her lack of maternal spirit. She seems so uncaring for her children, unlike the 'Kindly Maiden' that Melanie represents. However, is this lack of maternal instinct a bad thing? Certainly in the novel it is not one of her particularly admirable traits. Yet, why must women be defined by their offspring? Or their partners? Or their love lives, in general? In a way, Scarlett's fleeing from stereotypes of motherhood, through absent maternal values, could be seen as a form of liberation from patriarchal literature and the label of a 'Nasty Woman', with all that follows it.

Similarly, Becky Sharp from 'Vanity Fair' is another

¹ Gone With The Wind, 1939, Margaret Mitchell

Jane Eyre is a role model and 'messiah' for all women

prime example of a character judged as 'Nasty' in English Literature who one arguably can't help but admire. Despite Thackeray's presentation of her as scheming, materialistic and cruel underneath her demure, naive appearance, nevertheless, he emphasises her laudable intelligence since she reaches her materialistic goal of wealth and high social status, which he also suggests she deserves because of her general diligence and determination, as well as her impoverished childhood. To this effect, one can name Amelia Sedley as the 'Kindly Maiden' figure, since she is certainly presented as the docile, timid and kind-hearted girl. Yet, 'Vanity Fair' is a somewhat ambiguous and difficult novel in which to categorise the characters, since it is, after all, notoriously 'a novel without a hero'. Both Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp are portrayed as flawed women, which is my point: that neither a 'Kindly Maiden' nor a 'Nasty Woman' can be the paragon of femininity.

With reference to the 'Nasty Woman' or 'Kindly Maiden' figures, they both seem to come off badly in the end: Scarlett O'Hara is left alone and unhappy; Becky Sharp is poor and broken and Bertha Mason commits suicide. Similarly, Melanie Hamilton dies; Amelia Sedley only realises that her allegiance was to the wrong man too late and Helen Burns dies from the epidemic at Lowood. Yet, Jane Eyre, arguably the mixture of these two binary concepts, is left in control of herself and Rochester; financially and mentally independent and able to make her own choices (to marry whom she pleases).

Thus, it could be argued that Charlotte Brontë's 'Jane Eyre' is highly avant-garde for its subversive and non-binary presentation of women. Although Charlotte Brontë was not the first writer to create this revolutionary type of woman, she is certainly one of the most well-known, and arguably one of the best. One could say that Jane Eyre is not a sole, individual, unique character in a novel, but rather a role model and 'messiah' for all women, as Brontë is able to dismantle female stereotypes and conquer Rochester through her. Jane Eyre is neither a 'Nasty Woman' nor a 'Kindly Maiden'; she expresses her distaste at poor treatment, bravely, and she calmly asserts her power over Rochester. She is neither overtly assertive nor passive; neither 'Nasty' nor 'Kindly'.

It could even be argued that the two binary literary representations of womanhood in 'Jane Eyre' died so that the 'messiah' of womankind could flourish. After all, if one thinks of Bertha as the 'Nasty Woman' (which is rather a controversial and debated topic in itself after 'Wide Sargasso Sea') and of Helen as the 'Kindly Maiden', they both represent the flawed characters of women in nineteenth century literature

and die - notably Helen dies first because she represents the passive and secluded woman, who has absolutely no power, whereas Bertha/Antoinette has at least got some power through her induced insanity. Although neither the 'Nasty Woman' nor the 'Kindly Maiden' are opportune, Brontë argues that the former is better off than the latter.

For clarification, "Brontë gives us... three faces of Jane... [she, both] literally and metaphorically, destroy[s] the two polar personalities to make way for the full strength and development of the central consciousness (Showalter, 1997)". Indeed, she "formulates the deadly combat between the Angel in the House and the devil in the flesh (Bronfen, 1997). It is particularly interesting to note that there were three types of femininity presiding over the literary imagination of the nineteenth century: "the diabolic outcast, the destructive, fatal demon woman, secondly, the domestic 'angel of the house', the saintly, self-sacrificing frail vessel, and thirdly a particular version of Mary Magdalene, as the penitent and redeemed sexually vain and dangerous woman, the fallen woman" (Bronfen, 1997). The fact that Jane Eyre fits into none of these categories, wholly and completely, is very telling of the ground-breaking character that Brontë introduced into the world.

Assertive women have posed problems throughout history and literature, and Jane Eyre is most certainly an assertive woman. She is neither the 'Kindly Maiden', as she is not afraid to speak her mind ("I am not an automaton"²), nor is she quite the extreme of a 'Nasty Woman'. She represents hope for women through her contradiction of the passive, secluded presentation of the female.

² Jane Eyre, 1847, Charlotte Brontë



Adam and Eve, by Jacob Jordaens (1593 – 1678)

Moreover, since “sexual appetite was considered one of the chief symptoms of moral insanity in women” (Bronfen, 1997), it is because Jane becomes fully sexually liberated in the novel that she was judged a ‘Nasty Woman’ by contemporary critics and readers. The judgement was used to condemn female characters in novels for sexual exploits, where most modern readers would see them as liberated and powerful. Indeed, as Lucasta Miller for *The Independent* stated, “the most notoriously vituperative criticism that the character received... was published in the conservative *Quarterly Review* (Miller, 2016)” which stated that “for some sufficient reason... [Jane Eyre must have] forfeited the society of her own sex’, ie that she must be a fallen woman whose loose sexual behaviour had made her a pariah in decent circles (Miller, 2016)”. This simply depicts how ostracised sexually liberated women were in those times. Bronte shows a duality to Jane’s sexuality - neither is she suppressed, nor does she exploit her liberation. She chooses not to become Rochester’s bigamous mistress, her reasons being “both principled and pragmatic” (Bronfen, 1997) but does indeed marry him in the end. Most importantly, the fact that Jane represents freedom of women from patriarchal stereotypes *and* is sexually liberated shows that Bronte implicitly suggests that sexual liberation is the way forward for women’s rights.

Jane Eyre is the perfect representation of ideal womanhood. Not only because of her assertiveness; her power over Rochester in the end; her calm and collected character, but because she is an example of the female bildungsroman. “In asserting the importance of Jane Eyre to the feminist imagination” (Showalter, 1997), this theme remains “powerfully associated with a new understanding of how women arrive at maturity and come to own their lives” (Showalter, 1997). The novel is based on and invested with a “realistic understanding of female need for agency and assertiveness” (Showalter, 1997). After all, Jane only returns to Rochester when she is seemingly no longer alone in the world and has acquired an unprecedented level of confidence or feminist imagination.

To cite an example from real life, Beryl Markham stands out as another ‘Nasty Woman’. Ernest Hemingway, when writing a review of her book ‘*West with the Night*’, described the author as a ‘bitch’ but complimented her literary skills profusely. Markham was notorious for sleeping around and not having many female friends. These two traits are notoriously those of the ‘Nasty Woman’, yet, Beryl Markham is an inadvertent pioneer for feminism (and aviation!). Throughout her life, she was financially independent and successful: she became a horse race trainer at the age of 17 and then proceeded to fly aeroplanes. She was the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean, East to West, without stopping. She had enormous achievements under her belt, and yet she was named a ‘bitch’ by Hemingway - demeaned to a single, pejorative term.

One needs to stop blurring the lines between a properly evil, villainous person and an assertive woman in literature and in life. The very fact that certain women, labelled as ‘malicious’ and ‘treacherous’, are named

‘Nasty Women’ is simply a sign of their strength, rather than their malevolence. Yet, notably the opposite (the fervent condoning and accepting of the term) should not be exploited either.

Contemporary readings of classics can render the formerly harshly judged heroines as strong and diverse, indeed admirable feminist role models, rather than the ‘Nasty Women’ they were once seen to be; a reverse turn that has been reflected linguistically in the new understood meaning of the term ‘Nasty Woman’. Yesteryear and today’s Nasty Women are in fact hugely admirable.

Martha and Mary Magdalene, by Caravaggio (c. 1598)



She is narcissistic, shallow, dishonest, manipulative, amoral, and completely lacking in any capacity for self-reflection

Bibliography/Works Cited

Bronfen, E., 1997. Femininity – Missing In Action. In: H. Glen, ed. *Jane Eyre: Contemporary Critical Essays*. London: Macmillan Press LTD, p. 196.

Jones, A., 1981. The Woman Writer in the South 1859-1936. In: *Tomorrow is Another Day*. s.l.:Louisiana State University Press Baton Rouge.

Jones, A., 1999. I Was Tellin’ It: Race, Gender, and the Puzzle of the Storyteller. In: *Southern Cultures* 5. s.l.:University of North Carolina Press, pp. 29-43.

Showalter, E., 1997. Charlotte Bronte: Feminine Hero. In: H. Glen, ed. *Jane Eyre: Contemporary Critical Essays*. London: Macmillan Press LTD, pp. 68-70.

Spanbauer, J. M., 2001. *Scarlett O’Hara as Feminist: The Contradictory Normalizing Force of Law and Culture*.

Born to be Wilde

Laetitia Hosie examines the works of Oscar Wilde and finds he not only contributed to the aesthetic movement, he also pushed an individualist agenda, especially in his characterisation of women

A witty, extravagant, irreverent and homosexual playwright is the typical perception of Oscar Wilde. We've seen or read *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and we recognise his clever epigrams. We've heard about *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and are perhaps familiar with the name of Lord Alfred Douglas – but is there more to this seemingly charming, bubbly and pompous persona whom we all think we know? It seems rather difficult to pin down any of Wilde's specific views; as a pioneer of the aesthetic movement (revolving around the creation of 'art for art's sake', as opposed to art with a particular moral or political message), it seems important to him that there be no consistency surrounding morality in his work. This is apparent in his fairy tales: in *The Selfish Giant*, the giant goes to heaven after dying peacefully, as a reward for his kindness; but in *The Nightingale and the Rose*, the nightingale sacrifices herself to help a man woo the woman he loves – this sacrifice, however, is fruitless, as the woman turns the man down: this suggests that kindness is not always worthwhile as it is not always rewarded.

Although Wilde seems rather elusive regarding his moral views, his firm belief in individualism, in the form of individuals' ability to act and think freely regardless of age, trends or other societal demands, is obvious.

The portrayal of women in his plays, as well as his role as editor of *The Women's World*, suggest strongly that Wilde valued women's agency and intellect, and even though it might be difficult to classify him as a feminist in the modern sense, it seems fair to say that he advocated equality from an individualist perspective. His situation as a closeted homosexual in Victorian England probably played an essential part in his unconventionality, as might have done his natural flamboyance and arrogance (one only has to read his letter written in Greece during term-time to his tutor in Oxford, where he studied Greats: "seeing Greece is really a great education for anyone and will benefit me greatly...it is quite as good as going to lectures", resulting in his year-long suspension¹). Wilde still forms a huge part of our literary fascination today: not only is his wit timeless, ("Nothing succeeds like excess"²), but there are also many unknown sides to him. Recent research suggests that he was a rather bad orator during his self-promotion tour in America, with the *New York Times* describing one of the lectures as "painful", contrary

to how Wilde wrote about it back to his friends back in England: "Great success here"³. However, what seems to draw our attention to Wilde on a deeper level is how unconventional, forward and fresh his ideas were.

In his plays, Wilde created female characters who could reject the roles expected by Victorian society. Whilst characters such as Gertrude Chiltern, Lady Windermere and Lady Hunstanton live domestic, unexciting lives, the conventional cliché of the Victorian woman. Wilde challenges these stereotypes by also writing female characters who have both intellect and power over men; Mrs Cheveley is active in politics and Lady Bracknell controls everyone around her. In *A Woman of No Importance*, Mrs Arbuthnot has raised an illegitimate son, Gerald, whose father left them shortly after Gerald was born. When she tells Gerald, "How could I repent of my

sin when you, my love, were its fruit! You are more to me than innocence. I would rather be your mother – oh, much rather! – than have always been pure", she is openly rejecting ideas of honour and chastity, which were especially important for women at the time. The

fact that she chooses to bring up an illegitimate son despite the suffering and social rejection it causes ("She suffered terribly – she suffers now") shows that Wilde was interested in women's ability to make decisions of their own, going against societal expectations. Via Mrs Arbuthnot's use of one ideal of the Victorian woman (maternal tenderness) in order to reject another (chastity), Wilde reveals the incoherence of the Victorian model, thereby challenging it.

Wilde goes on to challenge motherhood itself: Mrs Erlynne from *Lady Windermere's Fan*, a part originally intended for Oscar Wilde's close friend and famous beauty Lillie Langtry, rejects this notion, as well as the idea that women should be confined to the world of domestic duties. She views motherhood as a trivial subject when she says, "How on earth could I pose as a mother with a grown-up daughter? Margaret is twenty-one, and I have never admitted that I am more than twenty-nine, or thirty at the most". This line was apparently inspired by Langtry, who supposedly rejected the role, saying "am I old enough to have a grown-up daughter of any description?"⁴. This suggests that Wilde valued her quick wit and intelligence, and he incorporated it within the play. Although Mrs Erlynne feels obliged to conform to Victorian standards

1 Michele Mendelssohn, *Making Oscar Wilde* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018)

2 Ian Small, *Nothing...except my genius: the Wit and Wisdom of Oscar Wilde* (London, Penguin Classics, 2010)

3 Michele Mendelssohn, *Making Oscar Wilde* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018)

4 Eleanor Fitzsimons, *Wilde's Women: How Oscar Wilde was Shaped by the Women he Knew* (New York, ABRAMS Press, 2015)



Oscar Wilde statue, Merrion Square Photo by Rodhullandemu

of female beauty (one that refuses to acknowledge its ephemerality in the face of ageing), she rejects the more archetypal stereotype of motherhood in doing so. Her use of humour also portrays her as clever and witty, qualities more conventionally attributed to men. The fact that these women mock the roles expected of them presents them as unconventional women who escape contemporary societal constraints.

Wilde also gives some of his female creations power over men. In *An Ideal Husband*, Mrs Cheveley not only works in politics but also holds power over politician Sir Robert Chiltern. She tells him that if he refuses to support her Argentine Canal scheme, she will expose his involvement in selling a cabinet secret for money. Her commanding tone reverses the conventional gender roles when she says: "And it is not for you to make terms. It is for you to accept them". The fact that she feels powerful enough to blackmail Sir Robert Chiltern suggests that Wilde was interested in women having intelligence and authority. There may also be an allusion to the suffrage movement, which was beginning to blossom in the late 1800s. As well as using a patronising tone, Mrs Cheveley also uses wit to convey her authority. She refers to Sir Robert's secret as "a swindle", saying, "Let us call things by their proper name", this line having been used previously by Sir Robert Chiltern in this scene; by using his own words, she corners him and by doing so subverts the conventional power dynamic.

In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Lady Bracknell has absolute authority over everyone. She is the one who must be convinced to let Jack and Gwendolen be married.

Her tone is commanding, and she frequently uses imperatives, giving orders which the other characters obey immediately: "In the carriage, Gwendolen!", "Come here,

sit down. Sit down immediately". Both Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen not only step out of the boundaries set for them by having power as individuals, but also by having authority over men.

Wilde's decision to place women often at the centre of the drama, giving them brilliant scenes and witty lines, also plays a part in challenging norms. They are not just love interests or romantic foils, but when they do fall in love, Wilde often gives them power in the relationship. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Gwendolen will not be swayed by romantic emotion as she is more concerned with social status and appearance. When she learns that Jack isn't actually called Ernest, she decides to break off the engagement, saying, "Your Christian name is still an insuperable barrier. That is all." She controls the relationship and its future rests on her personal tastes. Wilde challenges the notion that women should please men – here Jack is the one trying to please Gwendolen, even changing his name in order to do so. In the scene between Gwendolen and Cecily, Wilde also creates one of his funniest dialogues and highlights the idea of sexual competition between women. By doing so he allows both of them to be funny and strong:

CECILY: When I see a spade, I call it a spade.

GWENDOLEN: I'm glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

As editor of *The Woman's World*, Wilde vowed to "deal not merely with what women wear, but with what they think, and what they feel"⁵. Although it appears odd for a man to be the editor of a magazine directed at women,

5 Eleanor Fitzsimons, *Wilde's Women: How Oscar Wilde was Shaped by the Women he Knew* (New York, ABRAMS Press, 2015)

Wilde used his position to promote women who he thought had talent. Amy Levy, for example, a graduate of Cambridge, sent a story to be published in the magazine, with Oscar describing her as “a mere girl, but a girl of genius”. Although the word “mere” could suggest that his rhetoric remained embedded in Victorian prejudice against female intellect, Wilde exploits gendered discourse to mark out individual talent, emphasising his fascination with individualism. He referred to her writing “as admirable as it [was] unique”, and later commissioned a second story and two poems from her; this shows that Wilde not only acknowledged and recognised intelligence in women, but actively tried to advance their careers and thinking. In addition, he didn’t shy away from the political aspects of what we now call “feminism”; he published a powerful article about women’s suffrage written by Millicent Fawcett, and a transcript of a speech delivered by Lady Margaret Sandhurst while she was campaigning for election to the London County Council. In terms of wanting equal rights and opportunities for men and women, it seems difficult to challenge Oscar Wilde’s status as a feminist, given his work for *The Woman’s World*.

In *A Woman of No Importance*, Hester Worsley voices an egalitarian stance when she says, “It is right that [women]

From Act III of Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, CHS Theatre

should be punished, but don’t let them be the only ones who suffer. If a man and a woman have sinned, ... Let them both be branded. Don’t have one law for men and another for women ... till you count what is a shame in a woman to be an infamy in a man you will always be unjust.” In an interview about *A Woman of No Importance*, Wilde’s response to Hester’s theory was: “It is indeed a burning shame that there should be one law for men and another law for women. I think that there should be no law for anybody.” Although he probably said this for comic effect, this does still imply that Wilde was more concerned with gender equality from an individualist perspective. Whilst he recognised and promoted intellect in women and wrote witty female characters, he seems to be

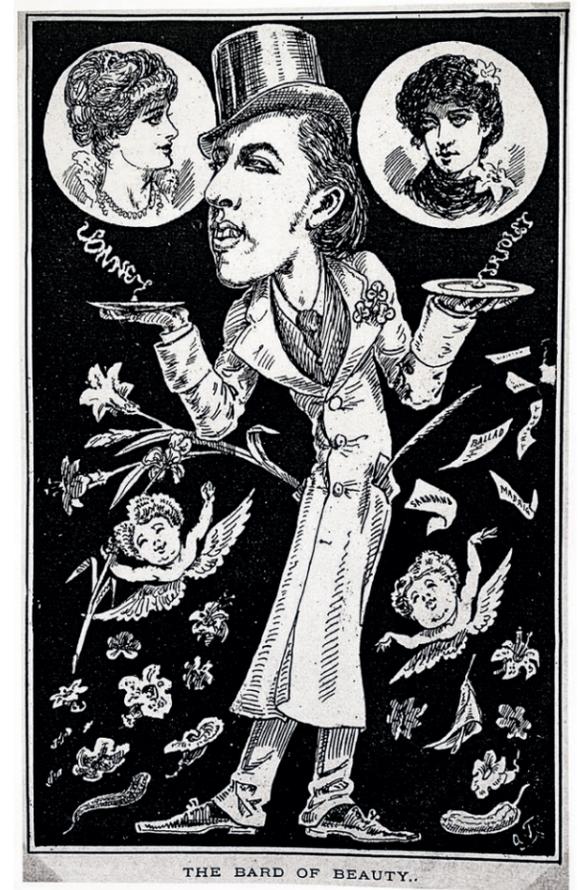
concerned with humans’ ability to think, not primarily as men or women, but as individuals with their own quirks and characteristics.

Wilde’s only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, touches on the fragmentation of the self and the importance of the soul: Dorian goes too far, “losing” his soul entirely as a result of his willingness to remain young at any cost. In doing so, the “real” part of him, represented by his soul, is separated from his outward presentation, his body, and hidden away, as part of a secret and somewhat shameful portrait kept in the attic. Given that the moment of this

Wilde’s decision to place women often at the centre of the drama plays a part in challenging norms

separation marks the start of Dorian’s downfall, and that, alongside his “soul”, Dorian also loses his morality and conscience, Wilde seems to be making the claim that a split between body and mind is a dangerous one. Through Dorian, he suggests that in trying to defeat nature, one is forced to compromise one’s principles and integrity. This split could also be interpreted as a blatant rejection of individualism: it involves valuing one part of one’s condition over another, as opposed to embracing one’s condition in its entirety.

Paradoxically, Wilde also implies that the multiplicity of the self is a way in which one can engage with individualism. For example, in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Algernon adopts the fake persona of “Ernest” without even noticing; when Cecily shows him the “bangle with the true lovers’ knot [she] promised him always to wear”, bearing in mind that both of them know that Algernon has not given her the bangle, “Ernest” just becomes part of Algernon’s self: “Did I give you this? It’s very pretty, isn’t it?” Here, Wilde seems to suggest that people’s performances are not a separate, unrelated person, but merely another part of oneself. The self-consciously playful quality of this scene introduces a kind of levity, even though it actually makes a serious point about the portrayal of multi-faceted people. Indeed, Algernon’s complete acceptance of his performativity in this scene contrasts with Dorian’s refusal to acknowledge the different aspects of his person, leading him to split them from each other and taking him down a dark path. Wilde challenges us with the idea that our response to



Caricature of Oscar Wilde as ‘The Bard of Beauty’ from *Time* magazine in April 1880

having multi-dimensional personalities has long-term consequences: a rejection of them would be synonymous with a denial of individuality. His work implies that people’s complexities are something to be cherished, and aiming for a simplified version of the self that cannot incorporate paradox, difficulty and humour, is dangerous.

Wilde is often remembered as a witty, clever and somewhat pompous writer; however, there seems to be something about his epigrammatic writing that can easily be misconstrued as superficiality and can veil a more serious possibility: that he values the individual and the individual’s rights to freedom of expression in their totality. From his writing feminist characters, and actively helping the feminist cause, to exploring the nature and importance of the complexity of the self in his works, it seems that, contrary to popular opinion, he did not just write fairy tales, poems and plays to entertain the upper classes, but also made serious suggestions about how daring, exciting and important it might be to live beyond social expectations. Today, with the steady rise of identity politics, it seems crucial to understand what Oscar Wilde may have valued. Is the Wildean notion of individualism under attack? If so, Wilde, a symbol of unconventionality and freedom, would be a useful writer to reread in order to help us reassess what it might mean to be an individual, and why this might be important for society at large.



Katsushika Hokusai and the One Hundred Poems collection

Zoe Turoff examines the effectiveness and imagination of Hokusai's woodblock prints. The illustrations for a well-known collection by one hundred poets are renowned for Hokusai's innovative techniques and range of interpretations



Fig. 1 Illustration of poem by Sarumaru Dayū, Katsushika Hokusai



Fig. 2 Illustration of poem by Abe no Nakamaro, Katsushika Hokusai

The city of Edo had a particular appetite for the arts after it became Japan's political and cultural centre under the Tokugawa family in 1615. Education and popular literature were becoming progressively widespread. The traditional school of Japanese painting, *yamato-e*, was seen as an exclusive art form, catering towards a wealthy elite. The development of woodblock prints in 17th-century Edo, however, provided a faster, cheaper method for the mass production of images which was rapidly adopted by the publishing industry. Literature had also traditionally been a privilege of the wealthier educated classes, but illustrated books soon became a focus of popular curiosity. Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) is considered a pioneer in this medium, both for the materials and techniques he employed and his meticulous style.

The *Hyakunin isshu uba ga etoki* (One Hundred Poems Explained by the Nurse, 1836) is a compilation of one hundred *tanka* poems by one hundred poets assembled by poet Fujiwara no Teika, originally intended for purposes of education and moral instruction. It remains today a key element of the Japanese literary canon. This article observes some of the techniques of Katsushika Hokusai's illustrations for this series and explores how pictures can accompany and enrich text. His approach varies between literal depictions of the poems, playful misinterpretations and complete parody.

While his One Hundred Poets series is a testament to the artist's idiosyncratic artistic vision, Hokusai was nonetheless a product of his time. His depictions of nature were rooted in Japanese landscape tradition. Prints in the pseudo-European style by artists such as Kōkan influenced

Hokusai's use of geometry and perspective in this series, while his work on *surimono*, privately commissioned prints, also likely informed his comical approach, as seen in this series through the use of visual puns. Hokusai was also heavily influenced by the *ukiyo-e* school, whose paintings and woodblocks took inspiration from the Buddhist concept of ephemerality and preoccupation with the present moment. Similarly, Hokusai's images, by contrast to the previous *yamato-e*, placed a focus on the everyday. The style is characterised as a "hybrid school of painting and print design", taking inspiration from both Japanese and Chinese artistic traditions.

His approach varies between
literal depictions of the poems,
playful misinterpretations
and complete parody

Hokusai's version of this anthology provides evidence of his creative storytelling abilities. The "uba" (old nurse) serves as the lens through which we see the poetry; Hokusai proposes his images to be products of her imagination. They are often comic; while some of the poems are depicted literally, Hokusai implies the nurse's entertaining misunderstanding of the poem through deliberate misinterpretation of the poet's meaning. Hers was "not a style of ignorance, but one of innocence." The use of visual puns corroborates this; Hokusai interprets the text through the eyes of the nurse who is unfamiliar with the subtleties of court literature, leading to endearingly "innocent" mistakes. Hokusai thus appeals to a wider audience, including those who may relate to the nurse's social station.

Many of Hokusai's renderings of the poems are, as described by Alfred Haft, "respectful illustrations of the classical past", often depicting the figures or geographical features exactly as stipulated in the text. An adherence to the original text is evident in Hokusai's design for the

fifth poem of the series (fig. 1). The poet's vision of a stag on a mountainside in autumn is visually realised. The composition itself directs the eye inevitably towards the mountaintop in the left-hand corner – the tallest point of the spiralling, serpentine forms of the topography. The stags' silhouettes are emphasised by their juxtaposition with the pastel-orange sky. The women in the foreground appear much larger and closer, emphasising the stags' distance. The isometric perspective of the buildings and the angularity of the lines with which they have been depicted contrasts with the meandering contours of the natural scene behind, widening the divide between the two environments, heightening the stags' isolation, and enhancing the poem's lonely register.

However, the central placement of the two women looking and pointing at the stags maintains the relationship between the two scenes. The mournful tone of the poem is perpetuated by the intense crimson of the leaves and the sunset, manifest in the phrase, "Sad, - how sad - the autumn is!" (poem 1). The autumnal red reflects the poet's distress in conjunction with the description of the stag's lonely cry. Hokusai's design directly engages with themes evoked in the text, creating a literal visualisation of the poem.

Hokusai also draws on cultural context to enhance his depiction of well-known stories from Japanese literature touched on within the poems. The author of the seventh poem (fig. 2) was an ambassador to China during a period of tense relations between the two empires, and was detained by Chinese troops. The poem expresses his longing for his homeland. Hokusai captures the poet's patriotism through the suggestion of a strong wind blowing from the east (indicated by the flags) and alludes to the poet's connection to Japan. But the wind blows away from his homeland, creating the ominous sense that he

can't return. These details were intended to be noticed by an audience well-versed in Japanese literature. Morse says of the tanka that it "can really be appreciated only by those who are already deeply familiar with traditional poetry". Here Hokusai taps into his own literary knowledge in order to convey a more detailed depiction of the limited information provided within the text. Hokusai's distinctive handling of the story is perceptible; the figure's isolation is augmented by the anonymity of the surrounding figures and the hierarchical composition of which he makes the pinnacle. His stark white facial profile is matched only by the reflection of the moon, a clear reference to the text.

The details of these images suggest Hokusai's faithfulness to the original poetry. His designs reveal his familiarity with the traditional literature and a desire to honour the poet's intentions. His unique compositions often extend beyond the specifications of the text, further suggesting his extensive knowledge of the stories, and allowing him to visually create his own distinct versions of the story.

The nurse's comical misunderstandings indicate Hokusai's often light-hearted interpretation of these poems. The use of visual puns is particularly common, such as for the second poem (fig. 3); the nurse's subtle mistake relates to the phrase "ama-no-kagu" meaning "heaven's perfume". "Ama" means "flax" as well as "heaven", and therefore to the nurse, the phrase signifies the stench of flax. The racks in the distance appear more like those used for drying flax than linen (as may be expected from the women in front who appear to carry linens). The pun is emphasised through the rigid vertical axes of the white 'linen' drying against the fluid, organic forms behind. Hokusai assumes the viewer's recognition of the various elements that make up the pun, appealing to an increasingly literate rural population.



Fig. 3 Illustration of poem by Jitō Tennō, Katsuhika Hokusai

Hokusai has also made an effort to visually unite the text and illustration; here the pale red streaks throughout the text box mimic the sky. The inclusion of the text within each composition shows it to be an integral part of his design process, but its partial concealment emphasises the artist's amusing reinterpretation of the traditional story.



Fig. 4 Illustration of poem by Sangi Takamura, Katsuhika Hokusai

Hokusai's sense of humour manifests itself in more obvious ways, as in his illustration for the poem by Ise no Tayū (Ise no Ōsuke). The poem's story, in which a courtier presents a cherry branch to the emperor, would have been well-known by contemporary readers, and Hokusai's illustration would easily be recognised as a parody. The word "Sakura", refers either to the blossom or the tree. Hokusai has amusingly chosen to depict the courtiers attempting to wrestle the entire cherry tree through the Imperial Palace gate as opposed to just one branch. Van Gogh once remarked that Japanese masters could "do a figure with a few confident strokes with the same ease as if it was as simple as buttoning your waistcoat." In the flowing lines of the men's bent backs and muscles, this skill is evident. Such a convincing depiction of the scene is entertaining, as the extreme effort the men put into their ludicrous task is laughable. Again, isometric perspective features, and the parallel lines of the architecture contrast with the unruly sakura branches. Hokusai uses a traditional technique, known as "blown-off roof

perspective", giving the viewer full visibility of the scene.

Through the affectionate handling of the poetry under the guise of the nurse, Hokusai appeals to his audience, celebrating Japanese language and culture. The physical, paper quality of the images gives the viewer a rather unimposing, and indeed intimate

experience of the images – the series was after all intended for domestic enjoyment, to be viewed in a book alongside the other illustrations, not for open display. The small, hand-held scale of just 10 x 15" highlights the intimacy of the images, suggesting the work's function as a private object for a private audience, corroborating a sense of the series' appeal to the individual, and possibly providing the motivation for Hokusai to depict such commonplace aspects of Japanese daily life.

While most of the images already investigated here bear reference to the poet's original intentions through language, in certain illustrations within the anthology, Hokusai's imagination takes over, resulting in compositions that seemingly bear little or no reference to the text at all. Jack Hillier suggests that these images "convey the spirit of the text rather than a literal word-for-word interpretation".

In the illustration for poem 4, the boat in the middle distance is the only indication as to the nautical adventures of the poet, banished to the "many distant isles" described



Fig. 5 Illustration of poem by Minamoto no Muneyuki Ason, Katsuhika Hokusai

in his poem. The women fishing for abalone in the foreground are the main focus; their commonplace task contrasts with the unknown, indistinct horizon to which the boat sails. The awkward fragmentation of the bodies in the water is the only indication of discord. Morse suggests that the mere “mention of fishing boats was enough to bring forth this subject” in Hokusai’s vision. This is particularly reminiscent of the *kyōka*-like approach that runs throughout Hokusai’s designs for the series. Hokusai himself had produced *kyōka*, and so would have been familiar with techniques used to illustrate this comic poetry (such as the visual puns). He uses one detail as a spring-board to visualize an entirely different scene to that envisioned by the poet, and in doing so challenge the reader’s perception of the poem.

Alfred Haft considers the illustration of poem 5 to best “reflect the artist’s customary exuberance”. Despite the poet’s bleak “winter loneliness”, Hokusai’s design is more hopeful; five hunters gather around a vigorous fire. Morse, however, references a more sinister interpretation, evident in the ghost-like tendrils of smoke and the apparent terror in the countenances of the figures as they spring back from the spectral apparition. The wooden ruins add to this haunted atmosphere, as do the dark sky and murky silhouette of the mountains in the background. The image compares to fig 2, whose bleak grey sky similarly casts an isolated atmosphere over the scene. The vibrant blood-red of the fire starkly contrasts with the subdued white and pale yellow tones of the scene. Hokusai once again creates a work which simultaneously accompanies and surpasses the poet’s meaning.

Basil Stewart suggests that Hokusai’s interpretations are “too subtly veiled for our understanding”, alluding to his exploitation of the nuance of the Japanese language and

cultural references. Hokusai in this sense was a product of his own society, and this again suggests a desire to celebrate this culture and touch his audience – the citizens of Edo beside which he lived and worked.

Hokusai’s inspired illustrations for these poems, then, are a tour de force in ekphrastic technique. He unifies image and text through pictorial devices such as the consistent integration of the text box, fluidity of line, vibrant colouring and geometrical relationships between objects. But Hokusai’s response to the text varies: in some of the images, he faithfully executes the poet’s vision. In others, he adds a slight comical twist, and in further examples, his designs connect with a text in an indirect way, challenging conventional interpretations.

His reinterpretation of the classical poetry into a contemporary setting through the lens of the nurse would have been accessible to an ever-increasingly literate rural audience, and his desire to cater towards this demographic may account for these changes. In a similar way to how the *ukiyo-e* artists strove to depict fleeting impressions of the present moment, Hokusai chose to portray the everyday lives of commoners in the series. His very use of the popular woodblock printing method as a platform for his work reflects the changing appetites of literary consumers; the work was intended to be affordable.

The series remains integral to Japanese culture today. Ewa Machotka asserts that Hokusai’s *Hyakunin Isshu* was essential in forming a sense of Japanese identity among a greater demographic, and cites Hokusai’s ability to transform the classical texts into a more widely accessible visual form as an explanation for this. The images are certainly iconic, and it is Hokusai’s humorous, yet sentimental handling of the poetry that make the series so potent.



Fig. 6 Illustration of poem by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, Katsuhika Hokusai

Poems

1. Poem by Sarumaru Dayū

*In the mountain depths,
Treading through the crimson leaves,
Cries the wandering stag.
When I hear the lonely cry,
Sad, –how sad–the autumn is!*

2. Poem by Abe no Nakamaro

*When I look abroad
O'er the wide-stretched "Plain of Heaven,"
Is the moon the same
That on mount Mikasa rose,
In the land of Kasuga?*

3. Poem by Jitō Tennō

*Spring, it seems, has passed,
And the summer come again:
For the silk-white robes,
So 'tis said, are spread to dry
On the "Mount of Heaven's Perfume."*

4. Poem by Sangi Takamura (Ono no Takamura)

*O'er the wide, wide sea,
Towards its many distant isles,
Rowing I set forth.
This, to all the world proclaim,
O ye boats of fisher-folk!*

5. Poem by Minamoto no Muneyuki Ason

*Winter loneliness
In a mountain hamlet grows
Only deeper, when
Guests are gone, and leaves and grass
Withered are; –so runs my thought.*

6. Poem by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro

*Ah! the foot-drawn trail
Of the mountain-pheasant's tail
Drooped like down-curved branch! –
Through this long, long-dragging night
Must I keep my couch alone?*

Bibliography

- Baatsch, H. (2016). *Hokusai, a Life in Drawing*. Thames and Hudson
- Hillier, J. (1995). *Hokusai: paintings, drawings, and woodcuts*. Phaidon Press
- Kobayashi, T. (1997). *Ukiyo-e: An introduction to Japanese Woodblock Prints*. Kodansha International Ltd
- Lane, R. (1962). *Masters of the Japanese Print*. Thames and Hudson
- Machotka, E. (2009). *Visual Genesis of Japanese National Identity*. Peter Lang.
- Morse, P. (1989). *Hokusai, One hundred Poets*. George Braziller, Inc. Publishers
- Stewart, B. (1979). *A Guide to Japanese Prints and Their Subject Matter*. Dover Publications, Inc.

Exhibition Catalogues

- Clark, T. (2017). *Hokusai: Beyond the Great Wave*. Thames and Hudson.

Articles

- Bowie, T. (1960). *Hokusai and the Comic Tradition in Japanese Painting*. *College Art Journal*, 19(3)
- Carpenter, J. (1998). 'Reviewed Work: Pictures of the Heart: The *Hyakunin Isshu* in Word and Image' in *Monumenta Nipponica*, 53(2)
- Hickman, M. (1978). *Views of the floating world*. *MFA Bulletin*.
- Keyes, R. (1983). *Hokusai's Illustrations for the "100 Poems."* *The Art Institute of Chicago Centennial Lectures*, 10
- Thompson, S. (1986). *The World of Japanese Prints*. *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, 82(349/350)

Are identities more often formed by a community and by a people's own culture, or in response to outside influences or forces?

In the beginning there was a word
In the beginning there was a word
and that word wasn't my word and then
that word was more
than a word when it came to mean more
than a word and it became my word
for that word meant
me

*Think of house, you think of home,
think of a mountain, think of stone
Think of fences, think divide
a gesture formed between two sides*

and I think of lines, green
long and wide
a deviation of a space
that straights and strides
from

A

to

B where A is a number
and B is a
word. Number
me blind and find a third of the
spot where the rusting chains fall
through-

call it a rupture, an end stop, a tear

or call it a chink

in the metal, what do I care?

I carry a distance
in my mouth that
softly tightens flat
sometimes I can forget

but sometimes it

crawls back

sometimes when a moment splits
at home or school, a lapse that hits
and spills out under swilling legs
and weathers breaks with words
that shift with uncertainty.

I let it stretch my eyes upward, up
and out above creased heads
of static doubt
who'd have thought

my two
brown slants
could be the
source for all these

chants

in a playground?

My face is a loose
reminder of my Mother

just as the difference between age is just a number

or the space between two people speaking
can be held in the width of two hands.
There's a distance inside

me, and it's

small, minus
number small
enough to deduct
nothing and get less
than nothing

*She's not really like us
though she tries to be*

but don't worry

it's a compliment, you're unique

and it makes you small

minus number small
enough to deduct
nothing and get less
than nothing

And so

you say

nothing.

A man is speaking to me he wants me to introduce
myself

today a man

a father

brother

stranger in an airport

friend's friend

with a filthy
smile

called me

my Mother

exotic

you're beautiful

so exotic

and a clump of bitter held so fast to my tongue
I was unable to answer.

Where are you from?

I was born here

that's funny

but what's so funny
about that

They give me a look

you know what I mean

what?

your face eyes hair all of it

and I do and I don't

and I fall back into the lapse
of the small
enough number

No, where are you really from?

that's small enough

less than
the minute I have to prove
I am who I say

I am

present my accent and face and dress
and hope
they speak louder to you
than any words I might
half-handle

myself and my friends
and their colours are evidence
too

are you too much of one or too little of the other?

tread at the spines
between one another

and it's still small,
minus number small
enough to deduct
nothing
and get less than nothing
and so I

say

nothing

* * * *

I carry a distance
in my mouth that
softly tightens flat
sometimes I can forget
but sometimes it

crawls back.

* * * *

I'm sorry I can't help you

I'm sorry I can't bridge
the gap
between my face
and my name
I tried to learn
once when I was young but it never stuck
to me the same way
the distance sticks
there's no excuse
for being foreign to your home
outside

the station I have let down a family
two families three four
five countless repetitions of

They're your family?

No, we're not related, we're not with them

my mistake, sorry

it's okay

it happens

* * * *

Time happens
glancing off the old
words and faces

learnt more
seen more
then I've seen on the TV

and I've never seen me in the TV

but I've lived some
through my Mother who lived
it and she tells me
of her distance
and how she stamped
it out
she tells me to run the distance inside

instead of my mouth

because

*it's in the pause
your quick mouth fills*

*inside the teeth, a gap that spills
forward over in-between*

*beneath your voice
and scoured caffeine*

*to speak with hands
that aren't your own*

*blanched bare with shortened
breath, and blown*

*from running concrete filming sweat
that thickens slick down throats grey-wet,*

*a slipping stumbling
alphabet.*

And it's

*in the eyes
and half-plied hand,*

*a mark that reddens and
expands*

*to speak in falling movements
thin*

*and bright as artificial sin,
that colours earth and bones within*

and I'm

staring up
with tilted teeth

to trace the milk-worn edge
beneath

the bite of contact. Vacant line
of swallowed emptied muddied shine

to say a name,

organic,

mine.

Zoe Smith

Bells

Cascaded tugs
 coerce the bells to fall
 and soar
 held tight in their paths
 and the confinement of the frame.
 The shrill cry
 of the treble hides
 the bass drone resounding
 and the tower reels
 to the bells that, passing,
 mark ends
 and strike tolls of unions
 newly solemnised.
 Swaying beneath the obscured heavens
 trembling bricks house the indifferent band
 who count and hunt to force
 the tune of artifice pure,
 who weave and mix
 lines upon a sheet to a melodious
 peal, ignorant of the moment.

Whispers

What silent whispers pass between the eyes,
 From curled lips dart to linger on the tongue,
 With angry phosphorescence charge the air,
 Intoxicate and swallow whole the mind?
 I feel the throb of pressure strike from forks
 Of lightning bright. And all the while we watch
 Spectators of this strange charade, and play
 Poor espionage to break their arcane code.
 But spies for nations great guard lives and spell
 The next few pages in the history books
 Whilst our great conquest is to bide the time
 Before something worth telling has arrived
 They think we cannot see; they think it will
 Remain in mind beyond the dawn and dusk.

Lugworms

It is a yearly rite
 To take a walk
 Resembling brisk march;
 Soon we fall victim to shivers
 Caused by the vicious air.
 Along the expanse of sand
 Long and plane,
 Often we would find
 Exquisite patterns
 Laid out on the land and the sheen
 Of the lingering sea water;
 A scribble, a child's art
 Become sculpture
 Frozen on the beach.
 These are the signs of
 A worm's nocturnal labours
 Heaving and lugging out the grains
 The plain and earthly crystals
 Remembered by the ground
 And slowly the waves will wash
 With sting and smart
 And smooth over these fossils
 To burial mound in miniature;
 Melt the jewels of saline memories
 Replace them with a haze.

Fourteen

Approaching midnight, we stumbled down to the beach
 to bid the year goodbye with unsure footing
 (we left the torch behind).
 The grey sand and sea, which washed
 unerringly in metre,
 were our company
 And hastily brewed hot chocolate
 or mud coloured water
 which was at least tepid
 Provided little respite from the bitter North wind
 that began to sluice as the countdown drew near
 and flung at us fine droplets of brine.
 The flat lands of Suffolk gave
 an unchallenged view of the fireworks
 Emitted in great numbers and clumsily
 A discordant symphony of muffled thunder inundated
 the senses
 and compelled our gaze to veer and pivot
 this way and that
 in rapid succession
 to see the glow and smoke left from what preceded.
 A group nearby had a different clock
 (as we cheered, they only counted five)
 and how ridiculous this effort is
 shivering on a pitch-black shore
 to mark the changing of a digit
 (or two)
 which Gregory and Caesar before him
 saw fit to impose;
 The explosions we add to life in artifice
 To fill our time.

Photos

In idle moments photos catch my gaze
 Framed on the walls, arrayed in rigid rank
 Collecting dust as years count up to break
 The children of decades which are no more.

Some faces feint from moments gone recalled
 And how I used to worship them (still do)
 As they surveyed, deep voiced and adultlike
 Their pride and manifest dominions
 But now it is my turn to take their seat
 And large, it seems, to me unchanged since then
 Inside and out I am no deity;
 The gowns they wore, ill-fitting folds, hang loose
 Upon the shoulders of a devotee.

When will I feel that I have grown enough
 That birthdays taunting numerals unknown
 No more appal me than to take a stroll
 Without waiting for the inheritance
 From others of the world which I am owed?

Joe Bell

How Deeply Ingrained is your Cultural Identity?

This is a personal account of a childhood memory which helped Suzie Huang retrieve her own cultural identity during the time of being an overseas student in the UK. This essay is dedicated to her beloved grandmother, who lived her entire life in an infamously bleak village near MoHe, China

Growing up in one of the northern corners of the world, I witnessed my hometown turn into a wild purgatory every winter. Any last exquisite ounce of tranquility would be extracted by ferocious gusts of wind, which unfailingly portended hail and ice. It never took long for blizzards to rule the world – roaring, mangling, unbosoming the magic incantation of nature that remained an unsolved misery for six-year-old me; the deciduous fragments that wavered to the ground were soon covered by blankets of alabaster snow, moonlit in the night, which paled the stars with its brilliance.

“Look at the dancing fairies! The fairies in the sky!”

There were of course no such thing, but NaiNai¹ never abided editorial tampering with her words. The snow “fairies”, as she called them, “were dancing a melodious waltz: a waltz for the most graceful duet between NaMo², and us. The NaMo leading, we follow; the NaMo flourishing, we applaud.”

Usually at this point, I could not help but lapse into a sacrilegious peal of laughter. Pathetic as it might sound, my despite for religious culture at such a tender age was already proven insurmountable. Born to two parents whose devotion in scientific research subjugated to the absolute rules of nature – and young enough to not yet be in the throes of any existential dilemma-I, ignorant to the point of nonsensicality at the time, was somehow an unyielding believer in the repudiation of superstitious doctrines. NaiNai, on the other hand, insisted “Namo exists within us all.” Any protest on my side would falter as sparks flew from NaiNai’s eyes, her solemn face lending her a formidable beauty.

The wintry havoc lingered for a further few months. No dazzling flashes of bright sunlight at dawn, no hint of cerulean sky streaked with crimson at dusk. How often I have lain beneath storm on the house’s roof craving summertime, I do not recall – but deeply imprinted upon my memory, was the figure of NaiNai constantly gazing across the window, towards the greyish nothingness that infinitely expanded across the sky. She allowed not even the slightest shadow of concern in her eyes, however, declaring that she was just listening to “the God intimating that The Day is coming.”

“The Day” that grandma referred to, was Chinese Spring Festival. Everyone looked forward to Spring Festival – the collective exuberance on the exact date when the last page of lunisolar calendar was torn apart, seemed

to whisper a unifying bewitchment across this vast land that reached as far as the white poplars on Gobi Desert. The masses of dingy clouds lightened by sprays and showers of firework sparkles, were indisputably worth a whole season of desolation.

The celebration often started from six in twilight. A myriad of blazing stars, red and blue, delicate or fiery, first leaped out of firecrackers to shine with delight up the frosty branches of sycamore trees. Then came the chuckles of exhilarated youngsters each holding a slim, carmine string of bangers, whose hearts seemed to soar too when huge tongues of flame exploded in sparks of bliss. My cousin and I developed a particular intoxication in HongDengLong: bright red lanterns, incandescent at their core, were symbolic of zeal and prosperity in Chinese culture. But I had no proclivity for flashy resplendence – it was the lantern’s cerise lambency, gently dissolved into the dim night sky, that somewhat consoled a little girl who’d just survived through the winter storms.

The New Year Parade marked the highlight of the party – by one bugle blast people streamed out of their houses, multiplying into thousands, ardently saluting to the “dragon” that swaggered in the front of the array. The “dragon” was dressed in extravagant finery – glittering velvet coloured in auspicious red, sometimes even adorned with mystic, convoluted spirals that signified venerability and blessings. “Hail for him!” NaiNai exclaimed, eyes lit up with devoutness, “Once upon the time, it was the Dragon ‘Wei’ who... ..”

“Who conquered the devil spirit ‘Nian’ to rescue our village.” I interrupted impatiently. The story of “Wei” and “Nian” would have made a good bed-time story, if it had not been converted into part of NaiNai’s structured, homogeneous conformity in nagging. To me, the “dragon Wei” was definitely not the most captivating one, but the pair of orange-headed “phoenixes” prancing after it – lilac crystal headwear, silver necklace inlaid with lustrous pearls – everything that young ladies dreamed of. And those feathers – turquoise luster embellished by some pistachio green, always reminded me of the sprouting buds of willow trees in springtime, the serenade of orioles, and the snow-bleached hillsides that would finally flame with azaleas after a whole winter of waiting.

The moon went above the hills surreptitiously. NaiNai was ready, dressing her most well-woven chaste robe, and clenching a pile of sutra³ in her hand. With every fibre of scrupulousness I could muster, I followed NaiNai into an

antiquated temple from which the holy chant came along with deep booms of bell, sacred and serene. A circe-like old lady, whose wrinkled face shared an immaculate resemblance to WaiGong’s⁴ terraces of camellias, sat on a roundish mat in meditation. Little whispered words escaped from NaiNai’s slightly parted lips:

“Dear our holly NaMo, please grant us peace for the upcoming spring, for we have suffered, and survived, the ordeal of winter.”

A fog crept over my mind: NaiNai always liked winter though, did she not?

Matin litany was chanted, with sensuous aroma of poinciana wood fading away from the pagoda. People were still in their slumberland after pulling an all-nighter of jubilation, whereas NaiNai had already gotten up to prepare refreshments for the first morning of Chinese New Year. Matinal sunshine flooded upon her face.

“NaiNai?” Murmuring in a tone of soliloquy, I tiptoed into the kitchen.

“Yes, YaTou⁵?” NaiNai’s voice came behind whips of smoke enveloping the cooker.

I remember, from a fading recollection of that peaceful morning of late winter, I was going to ask NaiNai if she had really cherished the “dancing fairies” – or deep inside her heart, she abominated the unrelenting wintry gale as much as I did. The thought did not manage to extricate itself from my half opened mouth, nonetheless. What came out instead was:

“I am just wondering...why is Spring Festival in winter, not spring?”

NaiNai giggled. “My dear YaTou, what is the difference anyway? You see, in winter, we pray, we wait, and brave girls like you keep hoping and smiling through the worst tempest. What is the difference between winter and spring, if we have hope in both? – And you remember dragon ‘Wei’? He will always help us through this... ..”

It has been eleven years since last time I celebrated Spring Festival with NaiNai. The memory of that bleak, Northern village which snuggled up near a frozen river at the other end of the world, has fainted to nothing but a blurred outline. Given the jewelled vision of a life that started anew in the glamour of Southern metropolises, there was no bridge of silver wings that stretched back to the dead ashes of an unforgiving wintry nightmare. I knew then, that dragon “Wei” has swaggered further and further away.

Eight years after bidding adieu to MoHe⁶, I came to live in a foreign country where calling it “winter” in January seemed rather profanatory for its unfamiliar warmth and sunshine. Yet everything felt colder – exotic cuisine, incomprehensible language, blonde hair and blue eyes, and most noticeably, paler skin. It was as if ferrying through an intangible yet seamless sea, with surges of night tide pushing me away into a condensed gloom of forlorn dreams. Obfuscated, I wondered: What am I swimming against? Where am I going towards? Will the island on the other side embrace, or ostracise me?

⁴ Maternal Grandpa in colloquial Mandarin.

⁵ An affectionate term used in colloquial Mandarin to address granddaughters, or girls of very young age

⁶ The most northern area of China, where NaiNai used to live.

Late into nightfall, I looked up at a lamp that was tossing a circle of golden light onto the shadowy ceiling. The silhouette of a childhood HongDengLong⁷ flashed through my mind – its tranquil radiance, distant yet solacing, subsumed my unrest into deep long dreams. Did dragon “Wei” come back? I pondered. Or has it long inhabited my soul like an anthill sprawling underground, notwithstanding my wilful disregard? In a trice of realisation it was unveiled that I had fallen pray, like many others whom I condemn, to my countless acquaintances with alienation-whenver solitude threatened to engulf me, whenever fear for lonesomeness bubbled like acid in my stomach, a quiet eruption sent both desperation and helplessness thundering in equal measure through my veins, urging me to declare nothing but utter allegiance with local western culture. As for the “dragon” in my heart, it was continually outshone by the temptation of social companionship: I absolved myself of any culpability for isolated individualism, by casting apathy bordering on callousness upon an identity that had been an inextricable thread in the fabric of my life. Was it effectual? Or was it an arrogant misapplication of social rules? I wished there had been an easy answer.

NaiNai once said: “Nothing is more unnerving than one cutting off his own root.” At the end of the day, she recapitulated, humans were no different from those sycamore trees wavering in wintry squall. But it seemed, after all these years, by mindlessly succumbing to an outright westernisation of beliefs and culture, I had placed myself forever and irrevocably beyond any splendid springtime bloomed out of those sycamore leaves. Yet in the never-receding blaze of HongDengLong, the muffled figure of NaiNai hobbled up the lane towards me once again, assuaging my torturing grief. In her warm arms I was not burdened of unwanted notoriety-neither for factors beyond my control, nor for decisions I made on my own will. Her stoop, her stoutness, her shuffling gait did not abate my excited trepidation tainted with relief: I was almost, almost home.

How deeply ingrained is our cultural identity? I asked NaiNai. As her lips trembled with the effort to from words, I heard a nonchalant sneer of lambasting coming from my forgone time absent of dragon “Wei”, ridiculing the saccharinity of such concept. Indeed, it was dark, in my wilderness away from the world – until there came a gentle remainder, by the memory of a cerise, lambent HongDengLong, of my ingrained sentimental attachment to the wintry snow and rain – the rigour that I have been used to; the waiting that I have been used to. Even now with the balmy breeze here flicking mischievously on my cheek, I wonder if I can be roared again by the gusts of wind in MoHe – thereby transport back to the time when grandmother still remembered the name of heroic dragon, repeating this cliched folktale to me over and over again.

⁷ Red Lantern used in Chinese Festival.

¹ meaning “Grandma” in English

² A dialectal appellation to Buddhist God

³ The Sutra is the Buddhist equivalence to the Bible.



The Memorial (reproduction courtesy Westminster School Archives)

Edinburgh Craftsmanship in the Heart of Westminster: Sir Robert Lorimer and the Westminster School War Memorial

David Critchley has researched the genesis and realisation of the memorial to Westminsters who had given their lives for their country. Initially conceived to commemorate wars in the 19th century, it was only unveiled after the heavy toll of the Great War

Introduction

Designed by the Scottish architect Sir Robert Lorimer (1864-1929), constructed by Edinburgh craftsmen, and unveiled on 29th October 1921, Westminster School's War Memorial was highly praised at the time. Lorimer's work, however, fell out of fashion

in the 1930s, and amidst so many other losses the destruction of the Memorial by fire in 1941 went largely unnoticed. Interest in Lorimer has now revived; and with so much archival evidence surviving at the school and in Edinburgh, the Memorial deserves re-examination.¹

¹ The Lorimer and Matthew archive is divided between Edinburgh University's Centre for Research Collections (CRC), Historic Environment Scotland (HES), with a few items in the RIBA Drawings Collection. I am grateful to Elizabeth Wells, Westminster School Archivist, for guiding me through the material at Westminster; to Louise Boreham for her advice on modelling and casting; to Juliette MacDonald, for sharing her knowledge of Douglas Strachan; and to the Centre for Research Collections, Historic Environment Scotland, and the Governors of Westminster School, for permission to quote from or reproduce material from their collections.

The Waterloo Memorial

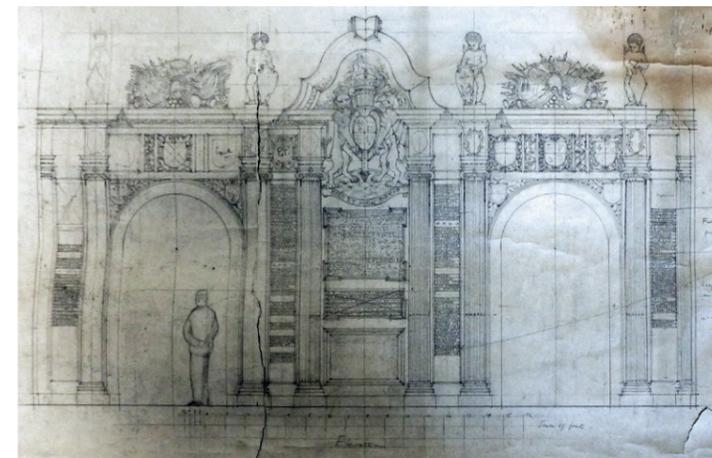
The Memorial's origins go back to December 1913, when the Elizabethan Club, formed of alumni of the school, decided to mark the centenary of the Battle of Waterloo with a memorial commemorating Old Westminsters who had taken part in the Waterloo and Peninsular Campaigns. The Club envisaged an addition to the panelling along the south wall of School, once the monks' dormitory, now the school's assembly hall.

The Club, remarkably, dispensed with a competition or short list and instructed its secretary, Lawrence Tanner, to approach Lorimer directly.² The completion of the Thistle Chapel in July 1911 had demonstrated Lorimer's skill at adding sensitively to historic structures, and he would surely have featured on a shortlist of suitable architects, but the instruction suggests that someone on the committee was a strong supporter of Lorimer.

One particular member stands out: Geoffrey Radcliffe, who had stood as a Conservative and Unionist parliamentary candidate for Edinburgh Central in 1911, and would do so again in 1918.³ Radcliffe will certainly have known the Thistle Chapel, and may already have known Lorimer. Doubtless, as a Unionist, Radcliffe was keen to offer a prestigious London commission to Scotland's leading architect.

Lorimer visited the school in early 1914 to discuss the details with Radcliffe. The design that he submitted on 16th March comprised a screen running the full length of the wall, with a central double-ogee pediment emphasised by supporting fluted pillars, and displaying the Royal Arms of Queen Elizabeth I, foundress of the School, with an open book above symbolising knowledge, and an inscribed panel below. On either side, flat pilasters would flank the two doors. A frieze would contain heraldic shields, with laurel wreaths over the pillars and pilasters. Further shields in the spandrels of the arches, and in the hands of four amorini over the pilasters, might display emblems.⁴ Above the frieze would be two trophies, depicting weapons of the period. Lorimer estimated the cost at £951, exclusive of his own fee.

In April, Lorimer simplified the design, omitting the trophies, the amorini, and the frieze of shields.⁵ The school additionally opted for cartouches over the doors, fluted central pillars, and panelled flanking pilasters, reducing



Design for the Waterloo Memorial (reproduction courtesy HES LOR XSD 59-1-3)

the estimated cost to £522.⁶

King George V agreed to unveil the memorial, but following the outbreak of war the scheme was put in abeyance: Lorimer rather presciently observed that there might be "a long list of names to add or incorporate in memory of the Westminsters who have fallen in the European War of 1914."⁷

Designing the 1914-18 War Memorial

In July 1917 the school set up a War Memorial Fund, one of whose objects was to erect a permanent memorial to Westminsters who had given their lives for their country.

An Executive Committee was created, including Radcliffe and others involved in the earlier project, and the Elizabethan Club made available Lorimer's earlier drawings.

Lorimer met Radcliffe at the school early in 1918 and

discussed the design. It was agreed that he would substitute a St George and Dragon in bas relief for the Founder's Arms, insert stained glass depicting the arms of Queen Elizabeth I and of five Westminster Field Marshals in the three windows above the screen, and provide suitable doors.⁸ The Committee had received his first sketch by 6th June, and resolved to take his proposal forward. Lorimer, it appears, had already conceived of filling the panels above the doors with assemblages of contemporary war material, and of placing emblems in the wreaths over the capitals.

Lorimer had incorporated a prominent St Michael and Dragon – in this context, effectively an equivalent – into Loretto School's South African War Memorial, and would again incorporate a prominent St Michael and Dragon at

Interest in Lorimer has now revived ... the Memorial deserves re-examination

² CRC Gen 1963/6/62, 16 December 1913.

³ G R Y Radcliffe OW (1886-1959): MA Oxon 1912, called to the Bar 1913, war service with 23rd London Regt. (Territorial Forces), Fellow of New College 1920, Bursar 1924, Governor of Westminster School 1942. I am grateful to Elizabeth Wells for these details.

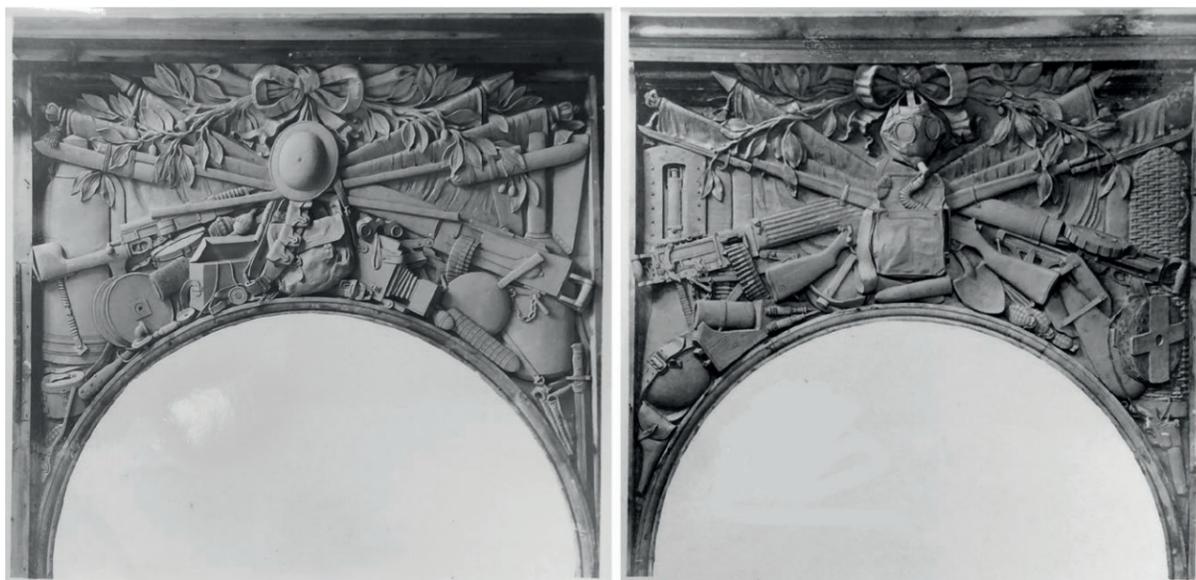
⁴ Lorimer to Tanner, 16 March 1914, Westminster School Archives.

⁵ CRC Gen 1963/6/100, 17 April 1914.

⁶ CRC Gen 1963/6/81, 27 April 1914; AC019/D7MD3, Westminster School Archives.

⁷ Tanner to Lorimer, 11 November 1914, CRC Gen 1963/6/145; Lorimer to Tanner, 24 November 1914, Westminster School Archives.

⁸ Radcliffe to Lorimer, 17 May 1918, CRC Gen 1963/6/151. The Field Marshals were Lord Anglesey (1768-1854), Lord Combermere (1773-1865), Lord Strafford (1772-1860), Lord Raglan (1788-1855) and Thomas Grosvenor (1764-1861).



Clay Models for the Trophy Panels (reproduction courtesy Westminster School Archives)

the Scottish National War Memorial. The assemblages of contemporary war material were a natural progression from the trophy groups that Lorimer had planned for the Waterloo Memorial, and others would use the same motif at the memorial to the Yorks and Lancaster Regiment in Sheffield (1923, by Roy Smith and G N Morewood), at Ipswich War Memorial (1924, by Edward Adams), and in the Guards' Division Memorial (1926, by Harold Bradshaw and Gilbert Ledward).

There are echoes also of the double-ogee pediment in the gable of one of Lorimer's last works, Edinburgh University's Institute of Animal Genetics (now the Crew Building of the School of Geosciences).

Lorimer asked Douglas Strachan to make the stained glass; John R Sutherland, the Shetland-born heraldic artist whose studio was on the top floor of Lorimer's office, to produce the necessary heraldic drawings, and to design the trophy panels and the St George and Dragon;⁹ Thomas Beattie, who had recently modelled Adam-style trophies for the saloon at Marchmont, to model the trophy panels and the St George and Dragon;¹⁰ and Messrs Nathaniel Grieve, fresh from their work at the Thistle Chapel, to take responsibility for woodwork and construction.¹¹ Sutherland and Beattie were Instructors, and Strachan had been Head of Crafts, at Edinburgh College of Art.

Strachan's task required particularly fine judgement.

Strachan has been described as "Scotland's greatest 20th-century artist."

After visiting the school, he reported to Lorimer,

"The glass (whether stained glass or left as it is) does not affect the readability of the inscriptions below. The shadowed nature of their portion is of course the result partly of the absence of side lights and partly of the light from the window overhead coming into one's vision along with the wall space below. The said space would appear much lighter if there were no window above. This points to a deep-toned treatment of the glass: but the hall as a whole cannot stand that. I would suggest a slight, and broken, dulling of the lower part of the lights. That would help the eye in reading the inscriptions and would not reduce the lighting of the Hall."¹²

Strachan has been described as "Scotland's greatest 20th-century artist."¹³ This window may have been his first London commission. It was followed by windows for St Andrew's, Frogna (1922), the Guildhall (1931), St Columba's, Pont Street (date unknown), and St Paul's Cathedral (1932); but with the exception of the windows for St Andrew's, all were destroyed in the war.

Lorimer explained to the Committee that the St George and Dragon would be "carved out of oak, about 4 inches thick and coloured proper," and that over the archways he had worked in "modern trophy panels entirely built up of things used in this war:- Gas masks, Lewis guns, trench mortars, cartridge belts, bombs etc."¹⁴ The names would be gilded; the recessed background between the letters would be coloured red; and a carving of the Pelican in its Piety would feature at the head of the central inscribed

¹² Strachan to Lorimer, 2 August 1918, CRC Gen 1963/6/156.

¹³ 'In Praise of Douglas Strachan (1875-1950),' by Peter Cormack, in *The Journal of Stained Glass* XXX (2006), p. 116.

¹⁴ Minutes of Executive Committee dated 14 November 1918, Westminster School Archives.

⁹ For Sutherland (1871-1933), see 'The Uncommon Talent of John R Sutherland,' by David J Critchley, in *The New Shetlander* 288, Summer 2019.

¹⁰ For Beattie (1861-1933), see Lorimer and the Edinburgh Craft Designers, by Peter Savage (1980), *passim*. His son, Major William Francis Beattie MC, a promising young artist responsible for the sculpture in Hawick, Roxburghshire, commemorating the 1514 Hornshole skirmish, died of wounds on 3 October 1918.

¹¹ For Nathaniel Grieve, see 'Woodwork,' by Louise Boreham, in Robin Blair and others, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-53.



04: St George and Dragon. Cartoon (left, 40" scale at foot, reproduction courtesy HES LOR XSD/59/1/10); Clay Model (centre, reproduction courtesy Westminster School Archives); Carving after Colouring (right, reproduction courtesy HES LOR XSD/59/6/5)

panel. Lorimer estimated the cost at £3,500, exclusive of architect's fees at £350 and of the doors.

Radcliffe wrote privately to Lorimer in May, addressing him as "My dear Lorimer," assuring him that the Committee would soon formally adopt the design.¹⁵ The Committee approved the design at its next meeting, while suggesting that the Field Marshals' arms might be replaced with something symbolising the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.¹⁶ Funding however was tight and it was agreed to drop the doors and delay work on the glass.¹⁷

The school now compiled the first version of the list of the 220 names to be commemorated, and although Strachan seems already to have drawn cartoons incorporating the Field Marshals' arms, the school suggested that the central window should contain the arms of King George V above the arms of the school, and the side windows the arms of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Christ Church, Oxford, both closely connected with the school. Emblems of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force might be introduced into the side windows or into the wreaths above the capitals. John Sergeant, who had been Master of the VIth Form 1890-1918, was asked to compose the inscription.¹⁸

Lorimer incorporated these changes, inserting the emblems of the three armed services into the four wreaths. For the fourth wreath, Lorimer suggested the Women's Service, and proposed to represent the Service by "a flaming heart and crown emblematic of enthusiasm," but accepted Tanner's suggestion of the Royal Army Medical Corps, as being "almost a separate service;"¹⁹ and regularly thereafter, when four emblems were required, Lorimer used the Medical Corps' emblem. The Committee's financial position also allowed a return to the question of the doors, estimated to cost £166.

¹⁵ Radcliffe to Lorimer, 13 May 1919, CRC Gen 1963/6/73.

¹⁶ Minutes of Executive Committee dated 22 May 1919, Westminster School Archives.

¹⁷ Minute, July 1919, CRC Gen 1963/6/94.

¹⁸ H F Manisty to Lorimer, 11 February 1920, CRC Gen 1963/6/171; Minutes of Executive Committee dated 23 February 1920, Westminster School Archives.

¹⁹ Tanner to Lorimer, 6 March 1920, CRC Gen 1963/6/175; Lorimer to Tanner, 12 March 1920, CRC Gen 1963/6/89.

By March 1921 the windows were largely complete.²⁰ The Memorial was given Lorimer's grey treatment, designed to make the oak blend in with the surrounding stonework, and was installed on 15th September 1921.²¹ The doors, which were also given the grey treatment and whose ironwork had been designed by Edinburgh's leading blacksmith, Thomas Hadden (1871-1940),²² were installed on 31st August 1922.

Modelling and Casting

The manufacture of the three oak panels is recorded in some detail.

Sutherland began the process by drawing full size cartoons. The cartoons were then passed to Beattie, who ordered three fibrous plaster plates fixed on frames from David Fisher and Sons, plasterers, as bases on which to form his clay models.²³ David Fisher then took plaster casts of the completed clay models, using the waste moulding process, in which the original model is sacrificed. The casts were then taken to Messrs Whytock and Reid, Edinburgh's prestigious furniture manufacturers, who used a carving machine to reproduce the cast in oak, enabling a very considerable saving in labour costs.²⁴ The rough finish left by the machine required further attention by a skilled carver; and on 19th October 1920 we find an employee of Messrs William and Alexander Clow, Edinburgh's foremost carvers, at Nathaniel Grieve's, carving the St George and Dragon. One of the two trophy panels was at that date completely finished: the other was still with Whytock and Reid. The St George and Dragon was then coloured. A photograph shows the fully coloured panel at Nathaniel Grieve's.

²⁰ Strachan to Lorimer, 11 March 1920, CRC Gen 1963/6/187.

²¹ Messrs Nathaniel Grieve to Lorimer, 16 September 1921, CRC Gen 1963/6/127. For Lorimer's grey finish, see *The Thistle Chapel Within St Giles' Cathedral Edinburgh*, by Robin Blair and others (2009), p. 51.

²² Messrs Nathaniel Grieve to Lorimer, 16 September 1922, CRC Gen 1963/6/128. For Hadden, see 'Iron, Lead and Embroidery,' by Elizabeth Cumming, in Robin Blair and others, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-3.

²³ Fisher's to Beattie, 19 July 1920, CRC Gen 1963/6/121.

²⁴ CRC Gen 1963/6/110, 1 July 1921. For Whytock and Reid, see Louise Boreham, *op. cit.*

“... in a spirit of reverent and grateful pride ... to dedicate ... a visible token ... of the happy and affectionate remembrance in which those names were held.”

Interpretation

The thoughts of those responsible for the Memorial are best conveyed in their own words.

Sergeant's inscription said that the fallen had “repelled an unprecedented threat to their fatherland and to the free peoples,” they had “won a victory,” and in dying “they had exchanged mortal life for immortality.”²⁵ At the same time, the prominent carving of St George and the Dragon made it clear that the war had been a victory of Right over Wrong: the Pelican, with its implicit link to Christ, symbolised self-sacrifice, but was less prominent, perhaps because the Memorial was designed for an assembly hall not a chapel.

At the unveiling, the Headmaster, Dr James Gow, who himself had lost his son in the war, said that the school had assembled

“in no spirit of sadness, but rather in a spirit of reverent and grateful pride ... to dedicate ... a visible token ... of the happy and affectionate remembrance in which those names were held.” He hoped that the memorial would remind the boys that “just as they would never shrink ... from drawing the sword if needed in the defence of God, the King, their liberties, or their motherland, yet at the same time they would be encouraged ... to show that spirit of mind which would more and more obliterate the cause, and, therefore, the cruelty of war.”²⁶

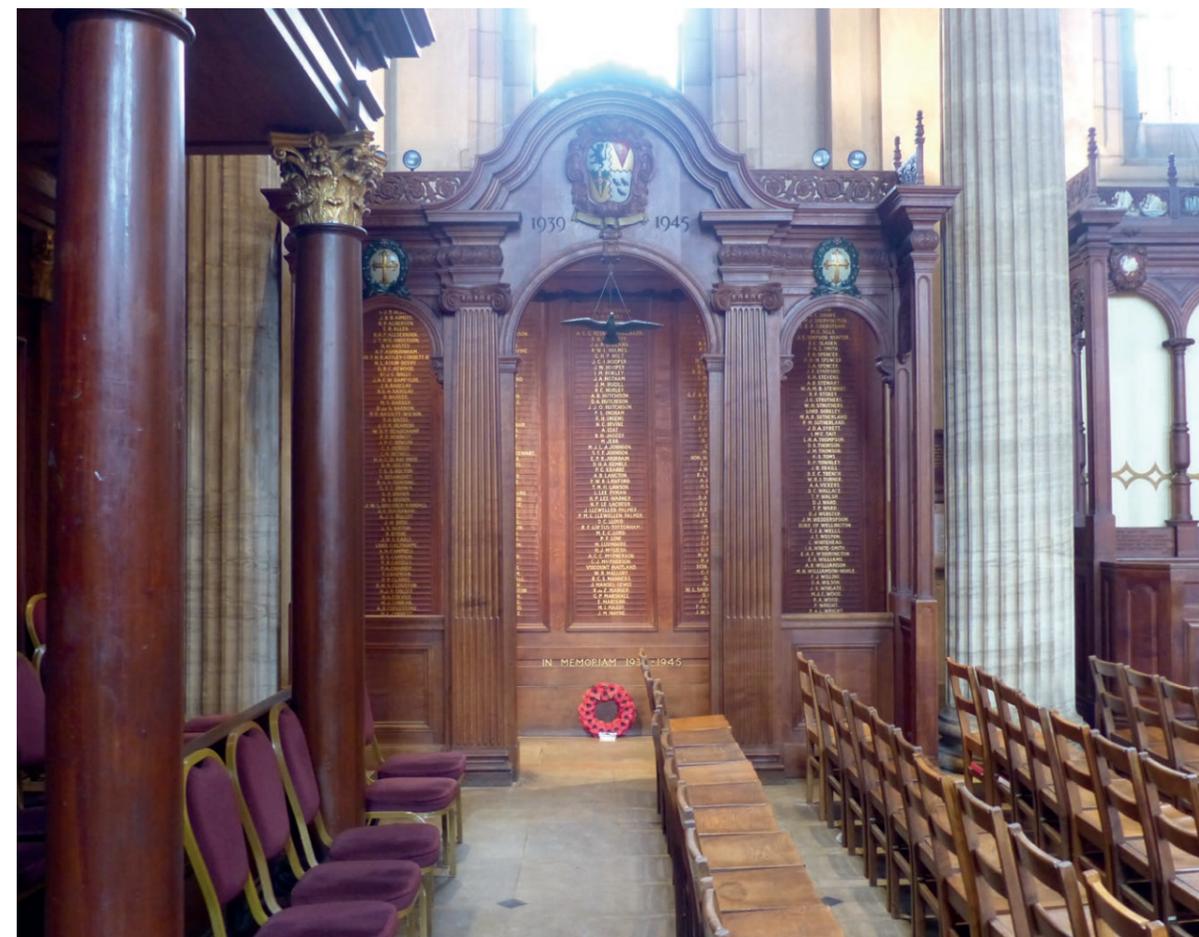
The Committee, in a circular dated February 1925, referred to the potential of the new Memorial to teach lessons of patriotism, duty, and *noblesse oblige*.²⁷

²⁵ Westmonasteriensibus / qui in bello omnium maximo / periculum inauditum / a patria populisque liberis depellentes / mortali immortalem immutaverunt vitam / victoria reportata / monumentum dedicavimus / illorum fortitudini acceptam referentes / quacunque ipsi ceterique fruimur felicitate / AS MCMXX

²⁶ *The Elizabethan* XVI No. 20 (December 1921), pp. 185-6.

²⁷ Westminster School Archives.

School after the fire of 10 May 1941 (reproduction courtesy Westminster School Archives)



Stowe School War Memorial (photo: the author)

Destruction and Aftermath

On May 10th 1941 an incendiary bomb fell on the school, whose staff and pupils had been evacuated to Herefordshire. School, which was being used for storing furniture, was burnt out, and the Memorial was completely destroyed. St Columba's, Pont Street, with another window by Strachan, was destroyed in the same raid. The Westminster Memorial was not mourned as it might have been, partly because the problems of lighting in School had never been solved and it had rarely been seen to its best advantage.

Remarkably, in 1945, when J F Roxburgh, Headmaster of Stowe School, asked Lorimer's partner, John F Matthew, to design a Memorial to commemorate Old Stoics killed in the Second World War, Matthew incorporated a modified version of Lorimer's Westminster design, adding to it a shrine and a set of panels bearing the names of the fallen. He suggested a standing St George for the pediment, but Roxburgh, whose austere sensibility rejected even colouring the background between the letters on the list of names, insisted on a heraldic device instead, thus unconsciously reverting to Lorimer's original proposal.²⁸

²⁸ See 'The Headmaster and the Architect: J F Roxburgh, J F Matthew, and Stowe School War Memorial,' by David J Critchley, in *Records of Buckinghamshire* 59 (2019), pp. 249-60.

The War Memorial and Edinburgh Craftsmanship

In reporting on the installation of the Memorial, *The Scotsman* noted proudly that whereas previously anything good was supposed to have come from London, London had now come to Edinburgh; and *The Glasgow Herald* paid tribute to the school's conviction that excellent craft work was being produced in Edinburgh as well as in London. Coverage elsewhere, however, did not always show as much interest in Lorimer's Edinburgh craftsmen.²⁹

Those craftsmen, however, are now of much greater interest. Strachan, as we have seen, was starting to become known in London, but it seems that no architectural work in London involving Hadden, Sutherland, Beattie, Nathaniel Grieve, the Clows, or Whytock and Reid has yet been identified. Had the Memorial survived, it would surely have been London's most complete example of the work of Edinburgh's architectural craftsmen of the 1920s.

²⁹ *The Glasgow Herald*, 1 November 1921; *The Scotsman*, 27 October 1921; contrast *The Times*, 29 & 31 October 1921; *Country Life*, 29 October 1921; *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, 4 November 1921.

Endpiece

Patrick Derham addressed the School in Latin Prayers in mid-January. Whilst the words were delivered before the pandemic struck, his message remains as valid and as urgent as ever



The Head Master in his study

The political climate of recent years has been fractious and insular and that is true throughout most of the Western world. Our world is in danger and some miracle or bucket loads of wishful thinking are not going to save us. The solution is in our human hands and above all our behaviour.

Naomi Klein's new book, *On Fire*, addresses the insular politics of the last decades by quoting Thatcher's words: 'Who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families.'

Klein describes Thatcher's words as a barrier to confronting the major emergency facing us, namely the need for immediate action on climate change. This extract from Klein's book, responds to Thatcher's view that there is no such thing as society:

That bleak view of humanity has had a stranglehold over the public imagination for a very long time. But more than thirty years later, as surely as the glaciers are melting and the ice sheets are breaking apart, that free market ideology is dissolving too. In its place a new vision of what humanity can be is emerging. It is coming from the streets, from the schools, from workplaces, and even from inside houses of government. It's a vision that says that all of us combined, make up the fabric of society. And when the future of life is at stake, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

In the summer of 1883 the then Prime Minister Mr Gladstone and Lord Halifax walked on the hills above an industrial town and looked down on the smoke and smog.

Gladstone wondered aloud what sort of legacy all the smoke and smog would leave to future generations and to the environment. The smog and smoke were indicative of the wealth and work in nineteenth-century Britain but at a cost to not only the health and lives of the workers but to subsequent generations.

The cost of our prosperity has had a price and this generation has to pay that price. The need for global and local action on climate change is essential and has suffered from the insular approach that has marred our political discourse. A slogan from my teenage years springs to mind; 'think global, act local'. The climate change emergency as well as our politics need us to act in a less selfish and insular way. The climate change emergency is humanity's fault. Act local, do what you can do: in 2020 I hope we will all embrace that message.

In John Lanchester's powerful book, *The Wall*, set in the near future just after a climate change disaster, the response of the government is to build a huge wall around Britain to keep the others out. It is a hellish vision of two current trends – a determination to move towards a drawbridge up mentality and the failure to respond to climate change. In *The Wall* there is a chilling passage where the hero, a young man in his twenties, goes to visit his parents:

None of us can talk to our parents. By 'us' I mean my generation, people born after the Change. You know that thing when you break up with someone and say, It's not you, it's me? This is the opposite. It's not us, it's them. Everybody knows what the problem is. The diagnosis isn't hard – the diagnosis isn't even controversial. It's guilt: mass guilt, generational guilt. The olds feel they have irretrievably f***ed up the world, then allowed us to be born into it. You know what? It's true. That's exactly what they did. They know it, we know it. Everybody knows it.

I do worry about what sort of society we are bequeathing our children and grandchildren. We owe it to future generations to do all we can to prevent this crisis. Shouldn't we, couldn't we live more simply so that others can simply live?

At Westminster we try to be a place where 'liberal values' are evident in what we present to the public and how we act and behave. The American poet Mary Oliver, who died last year, was a wonderful observer of the natural world. We could do worse than follow her very succinct instructions for living. Instructions that require us to observe not only our natural world but also the way we humans behave:

*Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.*

List of Contributors

Joe Bell is in the Remove. He considers himself principally a scientist, but studies English to protect against boredom.

Sharon Chau is a keen debater and has broad interests in History, Philosophy and current affairs. She has a place to read PPE at Oxford.

David J Critchley taught Classics at Westminster under Theo Zinn (1983-4). After teaching at Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood, and Stowe School, he has now retired and is currently focused on the work of Sir Robert Lorimer.

Tom de Csilléry is in the Remove. He is going to study Arabic and Persian at university, and is fascinated by the languages and history of the Middle East, particularly in its relationship with Europe across the centuries.

Patrick Derham OBE is the current Head Master.

Caspar Griffin is in the Sixth Form. Outside the classroom, he enjoys reading, writing, and rowing, although not necessarily in that order.

Sybilla Griffin left Westminster in 2018. After a year spent studying and working in a gallery in New York, she is currently studying art history at Cambridge.

Ben Heyes has a keen interest in current affairs.

Laetie Hosie is in the Sixth Form. As co-chair of French Society and aiming to study Spanish at university, languages are a particular point of interest. A keen performer, she is also passionate about theatre and its relation to literature and history.

Suzie Huang (CC) is in the Remove with a place to read Mathematics at Cambridge next year. She has published three books in Mandarin (the publication of the third one funded by College Society Award), with all royalties dedicated to philanthropic endeavours.

Coco Kemp-Welch is currently in the Sixth Form and enjoys literature, whether it be in English, Spanish or Latin. She particularly loves Beryl Markham, author of 'West with the Night', the horse-race trainer-turned-pilot-turned-writer.

Hamish Kennedy is an aspiring young writer with an interest in US politics and the issues surrounding journalism and its impact.

Gloria Marmion OW lives in Paris.

Johan Orly is in the Sixth Form. He is fascinated by early modern History, Architecture and Westminster politics, and he is an avid cellist.

Liberty Osborne is in the Sixth Form, currently studying Philosophy, Mandarin, History, English and definitely not Maths. In her spare time, she enjoys arguing, under the veil of 'Debating'.

Titus Parker is interested in competitive debating, playing the cello and tennis. When he is not sleeping, he is usually found in the shower thinking about sleeping.

Peter Rusafov is in the Remove. He is passionate about discovering unfamiliar cultures, particularly through the lens of Art History. His other interests include literature, photography, and anything that gives rise to fresh perspectives.

Sahil Shah OW is a second year Orientalist at Oxford and has just spent half of an abridged year abroad in Beijing.

Zoe Turoff is currently making the most of the opportunities afforded by taking a gap year to travel and see art all over the globe, including Canada and Eastern Europe. She enjoys having more time to focus on creative pursuits that she has been wishing to develop since being at school, in particular drawing and playing the viola. She is excited to be going to read History of Art at Cambridge next year, and hopes to consolidate her love of art and music even further!

Rachel Zerdin is in the Remove and has a place to study Modern Languages at Oxford next year. She has a passion for literature and is particularly interested in the relationship between politics and the Arts.