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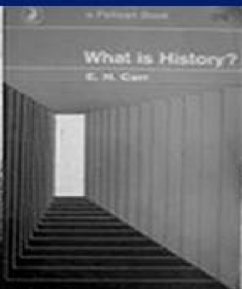

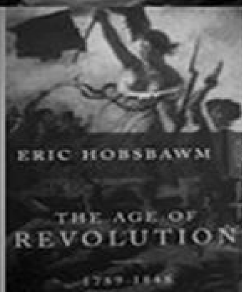

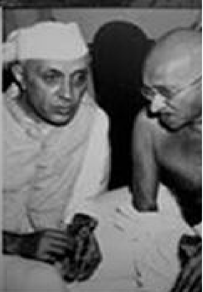

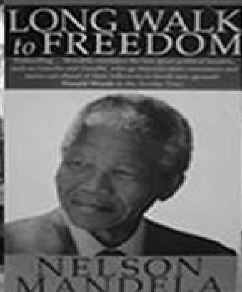

## Queen Mary University of London Undergraduate History Journal

In commemoration of the Centenary

of British participation in the First World War

4 August 1914 – 4 August 2014

# Editors' welcome

Hello and welcome to our second and final print edition of this academic year! This has been a long and successful year for everyone involved with the journal, most of which can be attributed to the fantastic contribution of our fellow historians. Your essay submissions and enthusiastic attendance at events has made our jobs not only easier but infinitely more enjoyable, so we all thank you!

As always, we had a huge number of essays submitted to be considered for this edition so unfortunately a large number of you will have missed out this time, however there will continue to be plenty of opportunities to have your work published in the next academic year, so fret not!

As mentioned in our first print edition of the year, this edition is dedicated to those who gave their lives 100 years ago during the First World War. They gave their lives to afford us the freedoms we are able to enjoy today.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

*John McCrae, 3 May 1915.*

Thank you for reading and thank you for a great year.

The History Journal Team.

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# Mandela is an 'idea'. Discuss.

*Cristina Laura Flores*

'I have always been unhappy with my depiction as a demigod.'[1]

Nelson Mandela.

Born in 1918, the son of a Thembu leader in the heart of the South African Cape Province, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela could hardly have imagined what was to become of his life, and the extent to which his name would come to symbolise a movement pivotal to the development of the 20th century. With anti-colonialism rising from the ashes of a world at war, Mandela was living in a time where change was becoming an attainable goal, where his own generation were starting to show the signs of unrest and reaction and whose lives were to be sacrificed for the future of a united South Africa. Nelson Mandela was made a figurehead at a time when global agencies sought to find a solution to the world's problems. His image, his name, his persona came to represent an idea, one of humanitarianism, equality and liberation. And yet, perhaps there was a limit to the depth of meaning behind his image in popular culture. As Mandela himself noted, his image had become something much larger than could have ever been expected, and perhaps a total idolisation of his persona was in fact an inhibiting factor in the projection of his true ideals across the world. What is certain, however, is the true extent of the Mandela 'idea' that has thrived, and still remains, prominent in the political arena of the modern world.

A webpage created by the Nobel Peace Prize organisation was set up following the death of Nelson Mandela in December 2013. Entitled 'The Mandela Wall', it created an opportunity for people of all backgrounds to express their beliefs in answering the question – 'What did Mandela mean to you?' The words 'humanity', 'unity' and 'freedom' appear frequently in the thousands of responses offered, with many making reference to 'Madiba- South Africa's father'[2].

Truly, this small memorial offers a vast insight into the depictions of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's most famous personality, from across the world. Furthermore, in studying opinions on Mandela, it is intriguing to note the symbolism captured within his name alone. Nelson Mandela has truly come to represent an 'idea' within this modern age, one which has altered and developed throughout his life time, and will continue to do so as his legacy continues to develop. To begin, the creation and origins of the Mandela 'idea' must be explored, taking note of his progression from an active member of the ANC, involved in the Defiance Campaign of the 1950s, to his imprisonment and the advancement of such a famous personality during his time on Robben Island. Having established this, the creation of the Mandela image as an international, celebrity symbol can be further explored, considering his influence on the global political front. Finally, comparisons to other notable figures must be drawn, establishing the uniqueness of Mandela as an 'idea'.

As noted previously, to truly understand the significance of Mandela as an 'idea', an exploration into the origins of the idea must first be undertaken. We begin with South Africa in the 1950s. The moment at which Nelson Mandela's role in active, front-line protest came to attain significance was during the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Through the organisation of masses of volunteers within key townships across South Africa, the 'Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws' set out in order to non-violently resist recent legislative changes further strengthening apartheid in South Africa. Groups of volunteers took peaceful action, marching on 'Europeans Only' venues without permits, rallying in large crowds, and so forth – all minor offences in the eyes of the law, therefore only punishable through fines and brief imprisonment. However, the government reacted aggressively, arresting national leaders of the campaign and charging them under the 'Suppression of Communism Act'. Mandela had been chosen as national volunteer-in-chief during the Campaign, and therefore was seen to be a central, authoritative figure in the movement, in the eyes of the government. However, some historians contest that Mandela took a more symbolic role at this point, with his appointment as volunteer-in-chief having been carefully thought out and planned alongside the roles of other Youth League members, such as Walter Sisulu. Mandela, in this case, was certainly significant, yet was still standing level amongst his fellow comrades. While this may be the case, this was certainly a momentous moment in the definition of Mandela as a global 'idea'.

Elleke Boehmer, a specialist in South African anti-colonialism, notes, 'as for Mandela, due to a series of banning orders in the decade following, he was never again, until his release from prison forty years later, so publically to be associated with a particular activist line.'[3] Boehmer highlights the extent to which Mandela as a public figure had come to reach notoriety, and further defines the significance of 1952 on the path to the creation of Mandela – the 'idea'.

While the impact on Mandela's image through his involvement in the Defiance Campaign may have had great influence within the ANC, and further in the wider South African psyche, it was in his address at the docks of the Rivonia Trial that he truly asserted himself on a global platform, at which point the name 'Mandela' came to find a symbolic position. Following Mandela's involvement in the armed wing of the ANC, 'Umkhonto we Sizwe', in the years following the Sharpeville massacre, his luck in so far as evading capture came to an end when he was imprisoned and sentenced to trial in 1962. It was to be almost two years before Mandela and other active members of the anti-apartheid movement would face charges. April 20th 1964 – the trial commenced. Mandela faced charges of sabotage and collaboration. In the lead up to the trial, the London Observer profiled Mandela as a 'freedom fighter'.[4] The world was watching as Nelson Mandela took to the docks in order to make one of the most influential and inspiring speeches the modern world had ever seen, and one which would assert his position as a symbol of peace and equality on a global scale. The famous words rang around the room, having defined his idea of a 'free society' and 'equal opportunities' he concluded, 'It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.[5] One need only look at the reaction from the world's media to realise the lasting effect Mandela's words were to have. Writing half a century on, the Washington Post published an article commending the impact of the 'An Ideal for Which I Am Prepared to Die' speech, stating, 'The man who emerged that day was ready to lead his people, black and white alike. But his character was publicly forged, his credibility indelibly established and his political platform clearly laid out.'[6] Mandela had truly become a global idea at this moment, one whose legacy would be lasting and influential.

Nelson Mandela, alongside seven others including Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathradra and Govan Mbeki, was sentenced to life imprisonment on the 16th June 1964.

He was to spend the next twenty seven years of his life developing his ideas of peace and equality while in prison, awaiting the day of his eventual release. But the Mandela image continued to grow. The 'idea' he represented had manifested itself into an international movement, and while Mandela as a physical figure was no longer there to guide it, his name and image was to take the central role. In London, the Anti-Apartheid Movement capitalised on the Mandela idea throughout the years to follow his imprisonment. Having officially established itself in 1960, in developing from a simple South African boycott scheme into a coordinated committee, the Anti-Apartheid Movement focussed on isolating apartheid South Africa from the wider world, condoning any economic interaction with the country and encouraging the creation of economic sanctions against South Africa through the United Nations. Most symbolically, the Anti-Apartheid Movement collaborated with the ANC to create the 'Free Nelson Mandela campaign' in the early 1980s. Elleke Boehmer finds, 'this represented a major departure from the tradition of asserting collective leadership only.'[7] Certainly, it was not just Mandela imprisoned on Robben Island, and yet it was his image that was now coming to represent the idea behind the whole movement. Roger Fieldhouse notes, 'During the 1980s the personality campaign was increasingly used to attract support [for the Anti-Apartheid Movement].'[8] The Mandela idea had taken over everything from politics to pop music. On June 11th 1988, in celebration of Mandela's 70th birthday, a concert was staged in London's Wembley Stadium. An estimated 500 million people were able to access the broadcast of the event, making it 'not so much a concert but an international television event.'[9] Furthermore, a Gallup poll taken at the time of the concert showed 92 per cent of the population knew who Mandela was compared with less than half of the British population who knew the name of their local MP.[10] The people of the world now understood the nature of the hardships being suffered in South Africa, and found a sense of community under one name – that of Nelson Mandela.

Perhaps the question that remains, having depicted the moments of definition in the Mandela 'idea', is why Nelson Mandela and not another figure? In reality, the history of the ANC proved there to be many individuals whose struggles could have led to their ascension into a symbol of equality, as Mandela did. The case of Oliver Tambo may shed some light on this matter.

As the leader of the ANC throughout many years of Mandela's imprisonment, Oliver Tambo worked tirelessly to spread the message of the ANC across the globe, having been exiled following the Defiance Campaign. Oliver Tambo, while not a wholly active force within the South African nation, came to represent the overseas movement. As many historians agree, the leaders of the anti-apartheid struggle were 'Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu in the country and Oliver Tambo overseas.'[11] There are undoubtedly a number of reasons why the name Tambo has never been a match to the Mandela 'idea', but perhaps two of the more obvious are in his early death and secondly in his absence at Robben Island. Tambo died in 1993, only three years after Mandela's release and during a time when a totally united South African was still a somewhat ambiguous idea. The Mandela 'idea' was still developing at this point, while Tambo's life had now given birth to a vast legacy. In addition to this, Tambo had perhaps been lost amongst the depictions of the brave men on Robben Island, Mandela and Sisulu included. While Mandela and his fellow inmates had started to embody a symbolic idea of hope, Tambo was himself a free man, and not so much a victim as he counterparts appeared to be. Other figures, such as Steve Biko and Chris Hani, were equally as unable to create their own level of symbolism due to their early demise, both having been assassinated during the years of unrest. While neither of their names have come to represent something as global as the Mandela 'idea', they have certainly gained status as martyrs of the struggle.

The first way in which the concept of Nelson Mandela as an 'idea' can be explored is through viewing the rise of celebrity culture throughout the 20th and 21st century, and discovering just how his name and image came to be familiar in households around the world. The seeming impossibility for a single man to be so real and attainable evolved, largely through the influences of the Free Nelson Mandela campaign. Historian Daniel Boorstin defined this phenomenon, citing 'celebrity personalities' as being celebrated not solely for their achievement but equally through an aspect of 'well-knowness'.[12] This is to say, Nelson Mandela was heralded as an innocent prisoner of an oppressive regime by the Anti-Apartheid Campaign, one whose release would come to signify a great victory. This was the extent to which many would have known the face they so often saw and the name so often heard – society had created an 'idea' of Mandela in order to represent the mass belief in equality so sought after in the late 20th century.

Speaking on Mandela's release from prison, Alec Russell notes, 'he embodied the world's hopes of a new, optimistic era…just three months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the collapse of tyranny in Eastern Europe, it was a time of dreams.'[13] Truly, the world believed change was now possible, and Mandela so greatly embodied this.

However, not all depictions of the Mandela 'idea' were so supportive. While the National Party continued to rule South Africa during Mandela's incarceration, his name in the South African press would continue to be shrouded by great levels of negativity. Following Mandela's imprisonment, a ban on the image of the man so greatly supported overseas was issued within South Africa. This continued throughout his time behind bars. The people of the nation had only photographs from his time as a leader of the ANC to hold on to – the current Mandela 'had become anonymous'[14], with the idea he represented only finding sustainability through the underground actions of the ANC, and the ripple of political anxiety caused through occasional uprisings such as the Soweto student uprising of 1976. In addition to this, Mandela continued to be associated with the Communist left, in an age where the Cold War's continuity meant any affiliation with such ideology would certainly encourage enemies. Historians such as Stephen Ellise have given this detail of Mandela's life much attention. Famously, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher expressed her beliefs in Nelson Mandela as a symbol of terrorist action, not to dissimilar to a movement which had made an attempt on her life in the Brighton hotel bombing of 1984. Anthony Sampson notes, 'the anti-communist crusade was gaining more support from the neo-conservative governments in London and Washington… they saw Mandela as an arch-enemy.'[15] An idea of Mandela as a radical was constantly circulating alongside the saintly image previously discussed. Upon his release in 1990, South African state television broadcast a profile of his struggle – airing a BBC interview he had done in 1961, this was the first time the South African public had heard him speak for over 25 years.[16] The creation of Mandela as a prosperous 'idea' had finally found its place amongst the people of South Africa.

While the significance behind the name Mandela has already proven to be immense, the importance of the idea behind the name 'Madiba' must also be addressed in order to understand the vastness in meaning the world attributed to Nelson Mandela throughout his lifetime.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation defines the name with the following – 'This is the name of the clan of which Mr Mandela was a member. A clan name is much more important than a surname as it refers to the ancestor from which a person is descended.'[17] The name Madiba made reference to Mandela's tribal background, therefore enhancing the significance of his life journey as man from humble, rural beginnings into a global symbol of equality. The point at which this fatherly term of affection for him came to be in popular use defines the moment at which the Mandela 'idea' was truly affirmed. Following his release in 1990, the world's media found themselves faced with a man whose strength and following could match no others. The name Madiba would truly define his position – as father of South Africa, leader of the continental African struggle and emblem of world peace and prosperity.

To truly understand the 'idea' that has so widely become to be epitomised by Nelson Mandela, a comparison must be drawn with the case of other individuals whose embodiment of an 'idea' on the global platform has come to represent more than just their name and face. As many across the decades have come to recognise, Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi have none too often shared qualities, and symbolised very close messages. Elleke Boehmer defines the three qualities which so lend themselves to both men – firstly, their work in creating 'popular mass movements'[18] within their respective countries, both using 'the power of the image' in order to enhance their following. Secondly, Boehmer finds them both to be 'products of the British Empire'[19], and finally she sees their similarities enhanced by their ability 'to translate their political relations from a hierarchical onto a lateral or fraternal axis.'[20] This is to say, they both had a desire to connect and create alliances with others of varying political stance. Certainly, all three of these statements can be categorised as aspects of the Mandela 'idea', however Boehmer does note a difference in their ideological aims – 'whereas Gandhi rejected violence, Mandela grew keenly aware as the 1950s wore on that Gandhi's passive resistance had become untenable in an increasingly more authoritarian South Africa.'[21] The symbolic meaning behind Gandhi and his legacy will perhaps be understood now in the context of Nelson Mandela's struggles and triumph, and the ideas he represented.

Nelson Mandela's life and struggle will go down in history as a story of boundless inspiration. While the 'idea' of hope he has come to represent may sometimes be lost amid the creation of his celebrity image, it is perhaps within world politics that the Mandela 'idea' remains most pure. President Barack Obama made a speech at the 2013 funeral of Nelson Mandela, in which he so poignantly stated, 'His life tells a story that stands in direct opposition to the cynicism and hopelessness that so often afflicts our world.'[22] It is here that we see the core meaning to the Mandela 'idea' – faith and courage in the face of a world constantly at battle, with one man defining a symbol of optimism in an age where many can only see a bleak future.

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4. Mary Benson *Nelson Mandela* (London: Penguin Books, 1986) P. 118.
5. Nelson Mandela 'An Ideal for which I am prepared to die' Rivonia Trial, Pretoria, 1964 cited in Martin Meredith *Mandela: A Biography* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010) P. 265.
6. Glenn Frankel 'The Speech at Rivonia Trial that changed history' The Washington Post (December 6th 2013) http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/when-mandelas-and-the-worlds-fate-changed-at-historic-rivonia-trial/2013/12/05/22033836-5e10-11e3-be07-006c776266ed_story.html [accessed 26/02/2014].
7. Boehmer *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* P. 57.
8. Roger Fieldhouse *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain* (London: The Merlin Press Ltd., 2005) P. 121.
9. Tony Holllinsworth, producer of the Mandela tribute at AAM Witness Seminar, Oxford, 1 May 1999 cited in Fieldhouse *Anti-Apartheid* P. 122.
10. Ibid.
11. Ed. R. Hunt Davis, Jr, Sheridan Johns *Mandela, Tambo and the African National Congress – The Struggle Against Apartheid, 1948-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) P.310.

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17. 'The Life and Times of Nelson Mandela – Names' http://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/names [accessed 28/02/2014].

18. Boehmer *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* P. 101.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Boehmer *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* P.103.

22. Barack Obama, 10 December 2013 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-

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# Compare and contrast municipal socialism in Birmingham, Glasgow and London

*Catherine Jones*

In 1874, the mayor of Birmingham, the reputedly radical and charismatic Joseph Chamberlain, justified his radical stance announcing, 'If I am an advanced politician and all the rest, it is because I don't believe that any means but political means deal effectually with these evils'.[1] The evils he was referring to were the poverty and inequality present in many industrial cities. A realization emerged among municipal leaders that active municipal government was the only adequate form of civic administration to deal with the systemic causes of poverty and, moreover, could provide the city with means to modernize and govern effectively. The differences within municipal socialism in Birmingham, Glasgow and London were affected by the environment in which each programme was conducted, the people leading each programme and the motives driving each programme. The similarities between the three were predominantly affected by each city's connection to the central state and consistency with national trends of modernization. This essay will initially analyse the development of municipal socialism on a national scale, then discuss each city's individual programme of municipalisation, before critically engaging with the distinct and similar themes that emerge from them. The comparison reached will be based on Glasgow's pioneering methods of efficiency and control, Birmingham's civic vision for a united city, and London's socialist endeavours to reconstruct the community.

It is unsurprising that three of the most prominent cities with effective and pragmatic programmes of municipal socialism were cities transformed by the industrialisation and urbanisation of the early nineteenth century. The 1851 census showed, for the first time, a larger proportion of the population living in urban rather than rural areas.[2] Consequently, municipal leaders enacted their responsibility to provide services, institutions and working conditions for the people that would relieve the extreme social problems of novel industrial cities. The fact that public

necessities and comforts, such as gas and water supplies, were vulnerable to monopolization by private owners was not believed to be acceptable governing from local authorities accountable for the civil rights of their citizens and maintenance of an adequate standard of living. Robert Millward has suggested that municipal concern for citizens' welfare explains the desire for municipal control of services and institutions but does not explain the desire for municipal ownership.[3] Municipal ownership, therefore, resulted from other motives.

Victorian British cities including Glasgow, Birmingham and London wanted to appear as modern, efficient and fashionable centres. The desire for municipal ownership and intervention resulted partly from a notion of civic pride and a desire to provide the highest standard of services in the most attractive of environments. This was seen in the urban layout and modern architecture of the cities and particularly in Birmingham's 'civic gospel' which displayed the city as a living entity breathing in motion with its people, industries and flow of the community. Municipal ownership would mean the Town Council, comprised of elected representatives, could determine the modern ethos of the city and compete on an international scale. Moreover, by serving on the Town Council it was possible for businessmen and industrialists to play out their selfish interests through municipal 'socialism'. In Birmingham in the years 1860-1891, 55% of town councillors were businessmen who undoubtedly would have advocated more efficient and cheaper water, gas and transport services to benefit their factories and industries, whilst ratepayers would have approved the decreased rates resulting from municipalisation.[4] Furthermore, the radicalism which Chamberlain in particular is labelled with, can not be used to insinuate that municipal intervention and ownership was discouraged by the state, in fact, as John Davis argues, 'The modern observer is struck by how little concern is expressed by the central state, at least until the 1890s, at the rapid expansion of the local sphere'.[5] The sentiment against centralisation in Britain in the Victorian period, influenced by the unnerving French Revolution, allowed scope for local councils to implement specific local policies.

Glasgow pioneered the municipal initiative from the 1860s onwards becoming a renowned modern city, whilst renouncing its impoverished reputation. Irene Maver comments that 'the city fathers were anxious to depict Glasgow as a bustling and business like urban entity, where the free flow of trade and commerce would not be impeded by disconcerting reminders of the past'.[6] The first major municipal act was

the opening of the Loch Katrine aqueduct providing the city with healthy and affordable water, followed by the municipalisation of gas in 1867. In 1862 and 1866 Glasgow's Police Acts were passed. These acts sought to deal with unsanitary housing, the regulation of factory pollution and the most interventionist programme ticketed extremely overcrowded homes meaning that inspectors could enter them at any time. In 1866, under Lord Provost John Blackie Jr., Glasgow began its urban improvement plan in an attempt to relieve densely populated slum areas. Visualizing a modern, orderly, and aesthetic landscape, evidence suggests that Blackie was inspired by the prime example of Haussmann's Paris; 'A civic delegation headed by Blackie visited the French capital in June 1866, the brilliant summer sunshine heightening the Glaswegian regard for Napoleonic urban planning'.[7] Glaswegian architect John Carrick's wide thoroughfares certainly resembled Haussmann's boulevards.

In 1883, a magnificent ceremony laying the foundation stones of the City Chambers was conducted by Lord Provost John Ure, during which he reassured Glaswegians of the efficiency of their municipal leaders, stating that the Chambers would express 'a feeling of assured permanency and stability in our systems of local self-government'.[8] The 1880s saw further expressions of civic pride with the Kelvingrove Exhibition of 1888 enhancing the city's cultural reputation. By 1888, Glasgow had almost doubled in size, incorporating many suburbs to create what was proudly advertised as 'Greater Glasgow'. The additional inhabitants provided further revenue for municipal projects which continued into the 1890s including the municipalisation of the tramways. Glasgow's extensive municipal agenda was influenced by a Scottish political tradition of stringent authority, as Tristram Hunt notes; 'Within the Scottish burgh tradition, there was an expectation of strong control and civic order'.[9] Municipalisation was motivated by a desire for proficiency, affordability and to create a dynamic, modern city. Notions of efficiency and control characterized Glasgow, as opposed to the more socially concerned municipal programmes in Birmingham and London.

Birmingham's municipal socialism of the 1860s-1870s advocated the idea that only through a local political agenda could the social conditions be alleviated. During his mayoralty, from 1873-76, Chamberlain ignited the city's civic fervour. He was initially concerned with education being a founding member of the nonconformist National Education League. Birmingham's radical reputation was enhanced by its

Liberal Association, a caucus linked to the National Reform League promoting co-operation between the classes to produce a healthier political arena, as was achieved with the 1867 Reform Act. Birmingham's Town Council was transformed during the 1860s from a weak and ineffective body, to a prosperous and determined collection of individuals seeking to dictate the progress of the city. Derek Fraser explains; 'The status of councillors was low... In the late 1860s this began to change dramatically and Chamberlain was but one of several wealthy industrialists, business and professional men who significantly altered the social composition of the Council, augmented its organisational ability, and enlarged its vision'.[10] Birmingham's tight knit community of prestigious families, many of whom were nonconformist liberals, dominated civic life and provided their civilians with a coherent and comprehensive plan, in other words, they provided a 'civic gospel'.

The civic gospel was initiated by nonconformist ministers, most prominently George Dawson and Robert Dale. The gospel encouraged inhabitants of Glasgow to work collectively towards its modernisation and development. The tradition of conflict between nonconformists and the establishment was present in the gospel's advocacy of municipalisation, promoting the advancement of Birmingham as a self-sufficient political organism, whose inhabitants were a united force working in the interest of the public good. Of importance for innovators of the civic gospel, was active participation in the community as a means of enacting one's religious and civic duties. Chamberlain hoped that a union of the classes, along with the introduction of party politics into municipal elections, would help to shake citizens from their apathy and enhance their recognition of their value within the civic and political framework.

'Gas and Water Socialism', as it is commonly referred to, came later to Birmingham than many other cities. What was original about Birmingham's municipalisation was its transformation into a philosophy. Chamberlain 'elevated the policy above sheer pragmatism and invested in the dull business of utility ownership with a profoundly ethical dimension'.[11] Through the civic gospel the Town Council was active in all aspects of reform as opposed to merely addressing particular grievances. During the first year of his mayoralty Chamberlain acquired two Birmingham gas companies and formed the 'Municipal Gas Committee'. This acquisition had three main advantages. First, Chamberlain believed gas to be an excellent source of revenue which could be spent on municipal projects. After the first year of its municipalisation, profits far exceeded expectations standing at

£34,000.[12] Second, the price of gas halved in the first five years. Finally, working conditions for gas workers were regulated by the council, ensuring improved conditions. In contrast to gas, the municipalisation of water was motivated purely by it being a necessity of life. Chamberlain's belief in this, and his disdain for its position in the free market, is exemplified by his comment concerning water theft; 'They might as well be convicted of stealing air'.[13] Birmingham's Water Works Company was municipalised in 1875 with the aim of making water cheaper and easily accessible. Also in 1875, Birmingham's first Public Health Committee was established, administering health precautions. Chamberlain also undertook a large scale Improvement scheme clearing ninety three acres of the city. Slums were cleared whilst new streets were opened to relieve circulation. Although the effects of Chamberlain's municipalisation did successfully decrease Birmingham's death rate of 25.2 per 1000 between 1871-1875 to 20.7 per 1000 between 1880-1885, the Improvement scheme was not wholly considerate of its effects on the slum dwellers with many not being re-homed.[14] Municipal socialism in Birmingham was motivated by a desire to improve the city as a collective whole. The civic gospel turned the city into more than a space in which inhabitants lived and worked, but a place that was theirs to use, characterise, enjoy and govern. The municipalisation of utilities and city improvements, along with Chamberlain's cultural endeavours, gave Birmingham its reputation as the pivotal city for local, engaging government.

An analysis of London provides us with a programme of municipalisation geared most evidently towards socialism, largely a consequence of the Progressives' win in the 1889 London County Council election. London's municipal reforms were characterised by a desire to improve the position of the working class. The socialist Fabian Society campaigned for municipalisation to ensure a system of improved working conditions. London's labour injustices were largely caused by its abundance of casual labour, with the docks providing much of this underpaid and unregulated work, thus, the Fabians strove for their municipalisation. The language of the Fabians was taken up by the LCC councillor John Burns, who advocated the reorganization of labour by an interventionist council. His intentions included; municipal workshops, free transport to and from the workplace, farm colonies for the unemployed and shorter working hours. Although much of this municipalisation of industry was not achieved by the Progressives, an interventionist programme of municipal inspection in the everyday lives of Londoners was.

In 1892, the Progressives formed the Works Department providing well paid and regulated work for the unemployed. The Works Department took some construction work out of the free market; an initiative heading in the same direction as Chamberlain's municipalisation of water. As Susan Pennybacker wrote, 'The Works Department violated the Conservative belief in freedom of contract while nominally fulfilling Progressivism's pledge to provide employment for London's workers'.[15] Along with labour demands, the LCC sought to regulate London's sanitary, educational and moral deficiencies. The following are some examples of their interventionist regulations. With the 1892 Shop Hours Act, 25,000 shops came under LCC purview. Municipal parks and open spaces were created, within which there was to be no fighting, drunkenness or gambling. The 1897 Cleansing of Persons Act allowed the council to purify or destroy homes in which contagious diseases were found, whilst forced licensing of all lodging-houses, hairdressers and massage parlours was introduced as a provision regulating prostitution. The Education Act of 1902 endorsed one of the closest relationships between Londoners and the council through discussion of the curriculum, the maintenance of family records, providing haircuts and cleansing supervision for the children, and the intrusive eye of the attendance officer.[16] London's municipal programme challenged the extents to which intrusion and intervention could be used to provide welfare facilities and care. The city's position as the nation's capital and a business centre reliant on the free market limited its socialist character; 'while municipal reform failed to seize control of vital public utilities because of its principled opposition to state ownership and its own nested business interests, it did persist in the quest for greater regulation of everyday life even as the Progressives had done'.[17] By 1907, the LCC was passed over to the Conservatives and the hopes of the Progressives' municipal socialist agenda were largely restricted, although municipal welfare ambitions persisted into the twentieth century with a socially concerned outlook.

Whilst comparing municipal socialism in Glasgow, Birmingham and London, it is of importance to consider the timing of their municipal activity. Whilst Glasgow undertook a gradual programme incorporating municipal ownership, Birmingham's Town Council suddenly burst into action in the 1870s due to the energy and charisma of new councillors and their adoption of the civic gospel. Asa Briggs discusses Birmingham's delayed response; 'There was a long period of strict economy and of civic stagnation before the feeling of adventure began to dominate the men who mattered'.[18] In London the need for local government was not realized until a later

date: 'by the mid-1880s the embarrassing state of municipal government had seemed unworthy of the world's greatest city'.[19] The fact that the LCC was not created until 1888 meant that London's municipal capacity in the years of Glasgow and Birmingham's municipal expansion was small and decentralised, resulting in much of London's social and labour issues being absorbed by voluntary institutions and private owners. By the time the LCC was created, increasing working class influence and power, it helped endorse the socialist council of the Progressives.

The social composition of Birmingham highlights the advantages it had over Glasgow and London in becoming the most successful city to use 'gas and water socialism' as a political philosophy. Industry in Birmingham was carried out in small workshops. This produced close relationships between employer and employees as opposed to the impersonal factories of Glasgow and anonymity of vast London. Birmingham's labour structure helped fuel Chamberlain's vision of a united middle and working class. As Richard Cobden of Manchester stated in the 1860s, 'There is a freer intercourse between all classes than in the Lancashire town where a great and impassable gulf separates the workman from his employer'.[20] This novel and local connection between workers and the middle class envisioned by the Town Council was in contrast to the national divisions of the early nineteenth century, when class antagonism and proletarian distrust resulted in Chartism and the formation of the Anti-Corn Law League. The civic gospel attempted to build a shared future for Birmingham's inhabitants and, as Briggs notes, 'the economic and political philosophies which thrived locally were those which laid emphasis on 'mutual interests', 'interdependence', and 'common action''.[21] By seeming to provide for the collective whole, the Town Council – a trusted organization of liberals – attempted to unite the classes.

In the late nineteenth century municipal advocates enthusiastically promoted the advantages of having a flexible, local administration, which could provide for the unique and immediate needs of its locality due to its close relationship with, and representation of, the people. The Fabian and LCC councillor Sidney Webb describes the benefits of municipal government: 'a local administration of industries and services rests primarily on the consciousness among the inhabitants of a given area, of neighbourhood and of common needs, differing from those of other localities, and on the facility with which neighbours can take council together'.[22] Webb's idea that municipal intervention would most accurately fulfil the desires of the people,

including the working class, and prevent national legislation from blanketing diverse localities, was shared by Chamberlain. In 1874, whilst laying the foundation stones of the new Council House he stated, 'I have an abiding faith in municipal institutions … Our corporation represents the authority of the people. Through them you obtain the full and direct expression of the popular will'.[23] Language stressing the democracy within municipal government was commonly used by municipal leaders presenting it as the form of government most in tune with the needs of the people.

When examining the extent to which municipal socialism in the three cities was actually in adherence with the desires and needs of the masses, similar conclusions are found. Municipal habits of inspection, particularly seen within the LCC, can be interpreted as methods of regulating the lifestyles of the working class as opposed to allowing leniency for their independent development. This municipal intervention can be seen as a continuation of the moralizing tradition present among voluntary organisations, whose social work often undertook a paternalistic guise. Fraser has emphasised the element of social control also exercised in Glasgow; 'Housing improvement, ticketed houses, inspected lodging houses were all ways in which the municipal authorities could exercise control over the patterns of life of the slum-dwellers'.[24] The moral edification of the working class was also seen in the LCC's cultural programmes, especially in their campaign to license music halls. Pennybacker uses this example to demonstrate the conflict between some of the council's policies and the realistic desires of the masses, writing, 'Temperance groups, ratepayer associations, and religious bodies petitioned the council in support of its campaign; some trade unions and citizen groups… opposed it'.[25] Furthermore, whether people would be more trustworthy of their councillors in contrast to other private authorities is debatable. Although Chamberlain had a charismatic appeal, some of his policies received criticism from those who doubted his realistic understanding of the social conditions. When Chamberlain constructed Corporation Street in the heart of the city (imitating Haussmann), he was accused of taking advantage of the Artisans Dwellings Act of 1875. The act was introduced to improve the sanitary conditions of industrial cities not, as Chamberlain was accused of, to improve their aesthetic appearance at the cost of demolishing inhabitants' homes. This example demonstrates the sentiment Fraser describes when looking at working class organisations in contrast to some overestimated middle class councillors: 'The working-class organisations had, on the whole, a further grasp of the immensity of

the social problems and the need for a perspective that went beyond the town hall'.[26]

One similarity present in Glasgow, Birmingham and London is their reliance on central government. Although centralisation was deemed 'un-English' and the state encouraged local initiatives, devolved municipal governments were ultimately subject to state authorisation.[27] Municipal socialism's ability to thrive in Glasgow, Birmingham and London was affected by each city's status as wealthy, large industrial centres, which could afford the high interest rates and quick repayment conditions of central loans administered by the Local Government Board. The LGB was established in 1871 to administer local borrowing. The LGB's purpose was not motivated by a desire for central control, but rather to provide localities with adequate funding. Discussing the LGB's purpose the Second Report of the Sanitary Commission of 1871 noted the 'limits to the power of any Central Authority to remedy the evils produced by local inefficiency'.[28] The central government recognised the autonomy needed by local governments to dictate specific local policies, but ultimately influenced their government. For example, the Public Health Acts of 1872 and 1875 allowed for the straightforward purchase of gas and water supplies, whilst the Artisans Dwellings Act facilitated municipal Improvement schemes. It is possible to agree with Davis who describes the relationship between central and local government as such, 'The aim of central government in the Victorian period was not so much to bully local authorities into conforming with centrally prescribed policies as to ensure the observance of minimum standards in what were seen as national services at a time of otherwise undirected municipal expansion'.[29]

Birmingham, Glasgow and London were well positioned to benefit from the policies and funding of the central state, which each city took advantage of given the encouragement of municipal government in late Victorian Britain. A realization of the advantages and justices within public, as opposed to private, services and institutions, allowed municipal socialism to dominate each city at various times during the late nineteenth century. However, criticisms concerning the selfish interests of the Town Council and, on occasion, its paternalistic methods, do arise in each case. The comparisons within municipal socialism in the three cities can best be characterised as Glasgow's fixation with efficiency and order, Birmingham's civic pride and energy, and London's social concerns resulting in interventionist reforms.

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# Was Bill Clinton's character gravely flawed, and what role did his own character play in shaping his presidency?

*Ludovica Orlando*

When discussing the Presidency of William Jefferson Clinton, a disproportionate amount of attention has been dedicated to his perceived character flaws, and whether they had an impact on his presidency. More than any other American president, it is hard to draw the line between his personal problems and his work and, by extension, to assess the latter solely for its substance. A number of reasons exist for this: from his addictive personality, both in terms of womanising and his constant search for adrenaline, to his need to always be liked fuelling his indecisiveness and, finally, to his natural talents that made him so suited to politics. But to really assess Clinton's presidency one must become detached from increasingly superficial and narrow judgments of his personal habits, and look at the achievements and failures of his presidency in order to decide whether the character of the President did have an impact on his presidential performance. To do so, I will use the work of historians such as Klein, who assessed Bill Clinton as a 'natural'; Berman, who alleges that Clinton's compulsive philandering distracted him from his job; Hitchens, who attacked what he saw as a direct link between 'a crooked president' and his 'corrupt administration' and more.[1] Since Clinton's presidency was so recent, there exists a less rich and nuanced historiography as for a president like John F. Kennedy or Franklin D. Roosevelt, and there does not yet exist a clear-cut debate between revisionists and traditionalists. Therefore, an analysis of contemporary biographers and critics will be provided. This essay will demonstrate that Clinton's 'mythical weaknesses are entangled with [his] strengths,'[2] and that grave flaws are an inevitable part of the enormous and complex character that is required to make a great leader.

'Clinton became not a politician, but a character. Whether he would do something admirable or questionable, I would say the same thing to myself: well, that's Clinton.'[3] With this statement, David Maraniss opens *First in His Class*. It seems

Clinton had something like an addictive personality; his addictions varying from the urge for physical contact, to binge eating, and to a driving need for fame, glory and, consequently, power. When interviewed regarding the outcome of the family therapy he undertook when his brother, Roger Jr., was found guilty of cocaine possession,[4] he admitted that there are all kind of addictions and that drugs are only one of them. With this confession by the President one can draw the assumption, especially through looking at Clinton's personality and background of an abusive and alcoholic stepfather, that addiction was an integral part of his own life. Joe Klein sees his political drive as a manifestation of his own 'addiction to fame, success and glory.'[5] An example of this trait can be seen when we look at the night before the New Hampshire primary. In that day, hours after Clinton's last public televised appearance, he obsessively went from restaurant to restaurant to talk to prospective voters and shake hands. He did not know how to stop and the thought of not being in control of the situation left a bitter taste in his mouth. It was during that night that Klein realised how addicted and needy Clinton was of physical contact, as he would continuously 'lean up against' him.[6] But again, we are analysing the character of a man who was able to talk and relate to anyone. His obsession over never ending tours and talks was yes, an addiction, but was also what made him known as the president of the people.

In obsessively touring around the US on his campaign bus with his running mate, Al Gore, Clinton developed a sense of attachment with the American people, and they in turn with him. Such an achievement would have not been possible without an obsessive determination. An example of Clinton's compulsive pursuit of perfection was in preventing the passage of the National Defence Authorisation Act. He vetoed the Act several times because the result was not as he wished it to be. Despite describing it as a 'tough one,'[7] he felt that the act was not yet suitable for implementation, and that further work was required to perfect it as needed. When Bob Dole, on the 2nd of January, frankly confessed to Clinton that they 'made a mistake. We thought you would cave in,'[8] it was clear that Clinton's stubbornness played a vital role in a great political triumph. Any strong leader needs this quality, or else their presidency would be wasted or dominated by the influence of others. When JFK unquestioningly took other's advice over the Bay of Pigs, the results were terrible. When he went against the advice of the military during the Cuban Missile Crisis, he averted nuclear war and effectively saved the world.[9] Likewise, leaders across the world and across history, from Robert Peel to Margaret Thatcher and Aldo

Moro, showed a remarkable ability to resist taking the easy position and thus exercise the strong leadership their countries needed. This is a quality Clinton shares with these leaders.

But if Clinton was so addicted to fame, glory and power, why did everyone see him as an indecisive leader? The urge to always be liked limited Clinton's abilities to make the harsh and necessary decisions that a world leader must be able to make. This particular trait can be detrimental to a man in that position to the point that he was disrespected on many occasions. For instance, he was mocked by Jim Blair as a kid that 'wants everyone to love him.'[10] This desperate need for approval is maybe the biggest flaw in Clinton's character. Too scared to offend anyone, his policies were often too cautious and proved ineffective due to the never-ending negotiation process. He surrounded himself with advisors in order to delay as much as possible the moment to make a decision. The question of whether this trait of his character negatively impacted his presidency is debatable. On the one hand, Clinton's indecisiveness led to a dilatatory presidency, with special regards to the first eight months of it where meetings did not run on time and the whole office was terribly disorganised. Described by Klein as the 'White House Chaos,'[11] little work was done due to the fluid schedule. Those never-ending, unproductive meetings, always filled with advisers, created even more confusion in the already convoluted legislative process.

On the other hand, this inclusive attitude of the President proved to be a great asset during the campaign, and often after his election to office. An example of this was his rise in the polls after the Little Rock economic conference. Even if compromises had to be reached and Clinton's aspirations had to be scaled down - for instance, he felt frustrated about having to abandon his plan to cut taxes for the middle class - Clinton's presidency proved to be one of the most inclusive ones in history. As a matter of fact, between 300 and 400 people from all background attended this summit and were able to participate in planning to 'fix the economy', and all noted Clinton's ability and knowledge on the matter. After days of discussions a new aim was set and fixing the national debt became a priority of the Clinton presidency. By 1997, after promoting the Balanced Budget Act and Tax Relief Act, he had managed to balance the budget and create a major surplus by the end of his presidency. No other president had achieved such a result since Lyndon B. Johnson. Clinton's reliance on his advisors and inclination to negotiate did produce positive

results on notable occasions. Therefore, it can be concluded that the president's need to be liked had both good and bad results; while it often made the day-to-day running of government less efficient, it was also central to his vision of a presidency which could include, engage with and represent the concerns of all Americans, and was enormously productive when counterbalanced with his ability to administrate and bring people to agreement. This is not only an asset marking Clinton out as a uniquely good president, but also as a great democrat.

However, Hitchens, in his polemic *No One Left To Lie To*, accuses Clinton of far worse character flaws. He is portrayed as a liar, guilty of 'the betrayal of the poor' and of leading the left into a 'moral and intellectual shambles.'[12] Hitchens proffers the example of the passage of Clinton's flagship welfare reform legislation, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act. Hitchens cites former Clinton ally Robert Reich, who noted how the president's desire to 'end welfare as we know it' had by 1996 transformed from a plan 'to smooth the passage from welfare to work with guaranteed health care, child care, job training and a job paying enough to live on' into legislation which offered none of the above, not even the guarantee of a job, and removed 'many millions of mothers and children from the welfare rolls.'[13] But if Clinton's administration and character were as flawed as described by Hitchens and fellow historian Elisabeth Drew, how is it possible for him to have won the election of 1996 with such a landslide? Hitchens writes from a left-wing perspective, as a former Trotskyite, and as such his sense that the Clinton administration was insufficiently liberal was inevitable. Of course he would be dissatisfied with Clinton's welfare reforms. However, Hitchens' views could not be further from those of the average American, and as I have already said, Clinton was a president who above all represented the average American. Whatever Hitchens thought of him, Clinton's reforms were what Americans were asking for at the time. If the priority that emerged from the Little Rock Summit was deficit reduction, then sacrifices had to be made. The 1930s welfare state of Franklin D. Roosevelt was neither sustainable nor popular. This was an obvious sacrifice that had to be made in order to fix America's ailing economy.

Even after the failure of the health care reforms, the well-known eight months of 'White House Chaos', the compulsive philandering and his sluggish, unfocused attitude towards politics, Clinton managed to be 'the comeback kid' once more. The reason for this lies in his being a 'natural.'[14] To be a political leader, one's

personal morality, or the lack of flaws in one's character, are never the ultimate priority. An example can be found by looking at Jimmy Carter. Despite his strong personal morality, integrity, high sense of discipline and religious devotion, he did not manage to get re-elected, and is generally seen as a poor president. Leadership, charisma, appeal and a certain ability to seduce the electorate are fundamental. This idea, as shown in Thomas Reeves' book *A Question of Character,* is demonstrated if we look at Lyndon Johnson's presidency. Despite being a well-known 'man of deplorable morals,'[15] he was the president that, during the sixties, 'presided over more morally significant domestic legislative innovations than any president in any single session of Congress in this [20th] century.'[16] These views are contrasted with Harry S. Truman's, who argued that 'when there is a moral issue involved, the President has to be the moral leader of the whole country.'[17] Moreover, it is well known that Clinton had a great fixation on John F. Kennedy, a sexually compulsive man of questionable personal integrity himself. By having an idol known for such dubious behaviour, it is no surprise that Clinton did not find sex scandals real issues. When a cult of personality is built around supposed 'great men' like Kennedy, their personal shortcomings are often waved away as insignificant compared to their brilliance, and the idea of the tortured, flawed-yet-heroic soul is often romanticised. It is easy to see here how Clinton might lose sight of the real consequences of immoral acts. As a friend of the President suggested, right after the Gennifer Flowers scandal, Clinton believed he was not vulnerable.[18] Perspective had clearly been lost. The fact that stories are still emerging even now of his infidelities suggests that these were not just isolated incidents, but rather a concerted pattern of behaviour that is fundamental to Bill Clinton's character. This view can be argued if we consider that the American population had heard allegations of Clinton's relations outside his marital bed even before he was elected, and they still accepted his flawed character. But how much could the American people tolerate?

If we take into account his extramarital affairs, the question arises of whether he had a sufficiently good sense of morality to represent his country. From the 1992 Flowers scandal to the Lewinsky scandal in 1998 and impeachment trial, 'it is harder for his defenders to defend him on the substance of his work.'[19] This attitude towards the presidency shows how Clinton's problems could not be isolated from his actual work in the White House and how the scandals affected the mood of the population. Described as a 'personal presidency,'[20] the American people sensed the dangers of the scandals and lost touch with the achievements of Clinton's work. An

example can be seen in the economic reform where, although Clinton made a host of achievements including the heat and energy tax, the increase of the rich taxes, cuts to military expenditure, and the consequent federal government surplus, the public seemed not to see it or to care. Instead, lots of attention was placed on private issues of the President's life.

There might be numerous reasons for such behaviour. Firstly, the period of time when Clinton was the executive was a period of clear stability with no major foreign policy threats, thanks to the end of the Cold War, and no economic crises. Clinton appeared to represent the promise of American triumph, but was left with a period of so much stability that 'he might be remembered as the president who served…before life got serious again.'[21] Secondly, the Watergate incident had changed the way of doing politics. The new 'playing dirty' attitude moved politics from discussion of key issues and themes to constantly attacking ones' opponents on a personal front. A clear example during the 1992 campaign was when Bush started attacking Clinton on the fact that he had visited Russia during a holiday, directly suggesting sympathies with the former USSR. Moreover, what Watergate did in the long run was to ruin the private bond between presidents and press, destroying all mutual understanding of privacy. When we look at Kennedy's presidency, as a matter of fact, we will realise how his affairs became highly discussed posthumously. Despite being terribly interested in the life of such a glamorous president, this obsession with their sex life did not arise when they were alive, or worse, when they were in office. For Clinton on the other hand, such a luxury was not granted. There is also tangible inconsistency in how the media chose to treat different individuals' personal lives. Bush, after stating 'no-comment' regarding his affair with Jennifer Fitzgerald was left alone, but Clinton's indiscretions are still, as of today, in the interests of the media. This peculiar obsession is all too apparent given new rumours about his sex life have emerged in the past few months.

One might ask why there is such a difference in treatment. The answer might lie in Clinton's belief in openness towards the public. While Bush has always been a very reserved president, Clinton based his whole campaign and political persona on being 'the kid next door.'[22] Not only can this be seen in small episodes, such as the president confessing which colour of underwear he preferred, but also as his campaign strategy. In the second televised debate between Bush and Clinton, the latter adopted an attitude of being an ordinary Arkansan. When answering questions

about the crises, he used expressions such as 'I have seen', 'I know them personally' and so on. While this is an asset when campaigning, when in office, he may struggle to gain respect. Moreover, considering the presidency's dependency on public approval, it is not hard to believe that a great character quality during the campaign became a terrible flaw once elected.

Now that the reasons for such a high interest of the media have been established, it is time to look at the sexual scandals themselves. Why did they create such turmoil? As Christopher Hitchens points out, 'the judgment on someone's character is one of the few remaining decisions that an otherwise powerless and un-consulted voter is able to make himself.'[23] When looking at the record of sex scandals of the President, we can see a recurring stubbornness and arrogance manifest in an incurable tendency to feel immune to both the public outrage and moral questions of such scandals. From the perspective of a member of the electorate, considering that there is no guarantee of electoral promises being fulfilled, a candidate's character is usually central to their decision. Moreover, when in office the president can decide to respect his electoral promises and his policy strategy, but will never be able to change his nature. Therefore, character analysis is one of the few ways the public can assert their democratic rights.

During his public address to the nation, on 17th August 1998, Clinton admitted his inappropriate affair with Miss Lewinsky. Even during this admission, he stressed the fact that even presidents have private lives. While this is true, it becomes a state matter when someone in public office is accused of committing perjury in front of a grand jury, or when questions about potential abuse of power come to surface. The level of privacy that a President should have is arguable, but it becomes state business if abuse of power takes place. Moreover, he refers to the Lewinsky case as a 'critical lapse in judgment'[24] even though it is clear that extra marital affairs are a trait of his character and that they are not sporadic incidents. This supports Hitchens' accusations of compulsive dishonesty. Did this affect his presidency, though? If we look at the time spent on discussing the issue, the answer is obviously yes. The president was in a bad state of mind for months, and the investigation and near-impeachment harmed American credibility internationally; this is especially damaging considering the US' activities in Iraq in that same period. A world leader cannot lose focus over personal issues when conflicts are interfering with national security. As Hitchens points out, it is the duty of the president to lead a

country, not to spend all his time and resources defending himself from accusations.[25] Moreover, Clinton's dishonesty must be central to assessing the matter. Whether we agree that even presidents have private lives and deserve their privacy, dishonesty cannot be ignored, and Clinton terribly blurred those lines during the Lewinsky affair.

When looking at his success, and at poll ratings today that still show him to be considered 'a good president', doubts about which parameter to use to judge such a presidency arise. It is true that he did not have great moral standards when it came to monogamy and to extra-marital affairs, but does this make him a bad president? As pointed out by Klein, Clinton had no problem whatsoever in admitting that his marriage was not perfect. Another example is his admission of trying pot but 'not inhaling', as if this somehow made it more acceptable. Furthermore, he was the first president to admit publically that he went to therapy.[26] Such public admissions of character imperfections gave the public a sense of Clinton's humanity that made him more identifiable with the average man. Above all, he was an interactive president; from the minor details, whether playing the saxophone or openly discussing his choice of underwear, to major issues, like deciding America's economic priorities, through the Little Rock Summit. His greatest quality then, was his understanding of the power of intimacy, just as an excessive need for intimacy was one of his greatest weaknesses. He understood the power of television and of media, through which 'he would be taken into family's kitchens.'[27] If people had a question he would answer as a person and not as a politician, and this is one of the greatest assets a leader can have in creating an intimate relationship with his electorate. Clinton's ability of creating 'a different kind of Democrat,'[28] who found a third way between the 'either' and 'or' of regular politics was another strength of his persona.

In conclusion, Bill Clinton's presidency reflected a complex but passionate character, a man who despite being a leader, portrayed himself as one of the crowd and identified himself with that crowd. His humble origins made him much more able to emphasise, understand, and take the side of the ordinary person, unlike the privileged, sheltered and ultimately inferior President Kennedy. What he did have in common with Kennedy, as well as Franklin D. Roosevelt, was a 'larger than life' nature. Klein argued that any larger-than-life politician 'would inevitably, have mythic weaknesses entangled with their obvious strengths. In the end, it seemed obvious that a larger-than-life leader was preferable to one who was 'smaller than life.' As

strange as it sounds, it takes someone extraordinary to earn the trust of and represent the American people. Clinton really was 'too good a politician to be confined: he expanded the definition of a New Democrat to include 'anyone who might at some point vote for him.'[29] The dualism of this statement gives us two ways to judge Clinton's presidency. On the one hand, Hitchens would see this as calculated opportunism: the arch-sin of triangulation, selling your persona not for principle, but only for votes. On the other hand, we can also see this trait in a different light: as a manifestation of pragmatism and also of Clinton's 'average' origins, and desire to represent people 'like him.' In moving away from many of the Democrats' traditional tendencies, what might be dismissed as 'anachronistic Industrial Age liberalism,'[30] Clinton also set himself up as a representative not of the abstract ideals of the left or the right. Rather, he would represent the average American. By inventing a new kind of Democrat, he managed to be a better kind of democrat, more in tune with ordinary people than a snobbish liberal elite. Naturally, many who belong to that elite objected. That is because, in the end, Bill Clinton was not the president that the left wanted, but the president that the American people wanted.

## Notes

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3. David Marraniss, *First in His Class: The Bibliography of Bill Clinton* (London: Touchstone, 1995) p.1.
4. Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Random House, 2005)
5. Klein, *The Natural*, p.25.
6. Ibid., p.41.
7. Clinton, *My Life*, p.690.
8. Ibid., p.694.
9. Robert Dallek, *Kennedy: An Unfinished Presidency* (London: Penguin, 2003) pp.535-574.
10. Nigel Hamilton, *Bill Clinton: An American Journey* (London: Arrow Book, 2004) p.551.
11. Klein, *The Natural*, p.61.
12. Hitchens, *No-one Left To Lie To*, pp.16-20.

13. Ibid., p.21.
14. Klein, *The Natural*
15. Thomas Reeves, *A Question of Character: The Book that Finally Exploded the Kennedy Myth* (London: Arrow Books, 1991) p.415.
16. Ibid.
17. President Truman quoted in Glenn Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1983) p.36.
18. Elisabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Touchstone, 1994) p.387.
19. Ibid., p.427.
20. Ibid., p.19.
21. Klein, *The Natural*, p.217.
22. Bill Clinton, New Hampshire Acceptance Speech 1992
23. Hitchens, *No-one Left to Lie To*, p.74.
24. Clinton 17/08/98
25. Hitchens, *No-one Left to Lie To*, p.79.
26. Clinton, *My Life*, p.326.
27. Klein, *The Natural*, p.207.
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30. Ibid., p.16.

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# 'Historical films are more revealing about the time when they are made than about the time they portray'. Consider this view in relation to Gone with the Wind and Meet Me in St. Louis.

*Tracy Michelle Herrick*

Films, even historical films, neither "reflect" nor "represent" history.[1] Films evoke cultural memory of the past in order to provide meaning for the present. The history of film is a history of dialogue and tension between an industry and its audience. Historical films actually have little to do with the time they portray. When you make a modern film about Tudor England, it has no impact on the life of Henry VIII; he will not spring from a painting and have you executed for portraying him badly. The past is gone, irretrievable. The studios who agree to finance the film and the people who pay for theatre tickets and iTunes downloads are all in the present, which means the film has to have relevance in the present.

Cultural memory, like individual memory, is a complex mixture of fact and fiction. Moviegoers are not historians; most neither notice nor care if details of a film are historically accurate. They are too caught up in the narratives, the lights, the colours, the sounds and most importantly, in how the film makes them *feel*. These people are not academics; a lot of them may have fallen asleep in high school history classes. They do not go to the theatre to learn; they go to be entertained and to escape reality for a few hours. They empathize with characters they can relate to and idolize those who most resemble the kind of person they want to be. In order to make money, filmmakers have to know their audience and have to appeal to as large a crowd as possible.

Films like *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944) were wildly successful because they spoke to the hopes, dreams and fears of the time in which they were made. In this essay, I will explore some of the ways these two films use the past to provoke emotion and give meaning to the present, focusing heavily on characterization in *Gone with the Wind* and then moving on to finer details in *Meet Me in St. Louis* and argue that historians will learn more from analysing the complex relationships[2] between the studios, artists and audiences that make films possible than by producing tedious diatribes about their historical accuracy.

David O. Selznick's 1939 masterpiece *Gone with the Wind*, based on Margaret Mitchell's bestselling novel[3], was a colossal success 'earning over $60 million in box office receipts'; and thank goodness it did because it was also one of history's most expensive productions.[4] Selznick places his audience in antebellum Georgia and invokes an edited version of the Lost Cause myth to address the anxieties of a society brought low by a decade of economic depression. Bruce Chadwick outlines the four basic components that make up this myth:

> 1) All white Southerners were rich plantation owners and, in their personal lives, well-educated, romantic cavaliers; 2) white Southerners loved their slaves and their slaves loved them and they all just wanted to be left alone; 3) the North started the war, forcing the gentlemen of the South to fight the Lost Cause for four long years, to lose in the end, but lose gallantly; 4) the South was devastated by Reconstruction—imposed by the federal government—and never recovered.[5]

Audiences exit a reality of widespread poverty, hunger, race riots and anxiety about the future[6] in order to escape into an opulent past of larger than life mansions, elegant women in flowing gowns, gallant men and peaceful race relations. It was not a true past but it was a comfort; it was what people wanted to *believe* about the past at that time. The Civil War was supposed to be the triumph of an industrialized north over an agrarian south. Up until the Great Depression, the story had largely been told in that vein, with people believing that industrialization meant progress and a better future. In 1929, industrial capitalism failed and optimistic assumptions about progress crashed with the stock market. It was natural for society to look back at the road untaken and dream about what life could have been. There are two specific aspects of the film that highlight cultural tensions in this new environment: the presentation of the four protagonists and the portrayal of the black characters.

Ashley Wilkes and his wife Melanie live up to the traditional ideals of southern gender roles by embodying: honour, humility, loyalty, and family values. Many women idolized Melanie as the type of woman they wanted to be and scoffed at Scarlett O'Hara's indiscretions.

Ashley is the type of man who does the right thing, takes care of his family and keeps his promises in the face of temptations. For all of their protestant virtues, however, they appear weak next to fiery, individualistic Scarlett and straight-talking, opportunistic Rhett Butler.

The protagonists embody contemporary tensions between traditional ideals and the realism brought forward by the First World War and the Great Depression. The Wilkeses show what men and women are supposed to be, while the Butlers show what they actually are. It is important to note this realism could only go so far. Thanks to the influence of the Production Code[7], what sins Scarlett and Rhett commit, they pay for with the death of their daughter and the evidence of sexual union between Scarlett and her previous husbands, her other children in Mitchell's book, were erased in the film. Even so, Scarlett stands proudly as the ultimate survivor who rebuilds her life by whatever means are available.[8] When she rises from the dirt and vows to never go hungry again, it is not hard to imagine depression-era audiences cheering. America had been knocked down, and Scarlett provided hope and determination to get back up.

*Gone with the Wind* has received a great deal of criticism for its stereotypical depictions of black characters and morally these attacks are justified, but it cannot be ignored that this film is a product of its time. Historians must aim to see the film through the eyes of the original and, unfortunately, racist audience. The image of southern race relations that dominated cultural memory in 1939 came from D.W. Griffith's notoriously racist *The Birth of a Nation*, which, in 1915, had featured men in black face as rabid sexual predators chasing young white women off cliffs, and spawned so much controversy and racial protesting that filmmakers feared using black characters at all.[9] As he worked to adapt the film from Margaret Mitchell's thousand-page novel, Selznick claimed he had "no desire to produce any anti-negro film[10] and felt the Ku Klux Klan, the heroes of *The Birth of a Nation* who had recently swelled in membership and begun targeting Jews as well as African Americans[11], should be cut completely from the film. The word "nigger" and overtly racist watermelon eating scenes were also cut[12], along with anything that might resemble a sexual threat. Selznick essentially deletes history from the film in order to assuage the feelings of his contemporary audience.

What is left on screen is therefore indicative of what he felt they would be accept. Because white society feared their community and sexual space being invaded by blacks, it was only safe to show loyal, contented, asexual black servants in a film. The harsh realities of slave life are wiped out and all of the slaves are shown to be loyal and contented with their lot, with no desire to leave their white masters, freedom or no freedom. As the civil rights movement was beginning to stir, and the KKK was high in popularity, this image of blacks in their proper "place" made white audiences feel safe. Anything else would have led to a boycott of the film or worse, something Selznick could not afford. Still the film challenges the stereotypical black roles and gives black characters more depth and 'presence' than had been seen previously.[13]

Thomas Cripps argues that Hattie McDaniel, who had had a successful career during the previous decade and who went on the win an Academy Award for her role as Mammy, was cast as a symbol to tell blacks hers was an important role; one of authority and respect that would lead them all to better opportunities in the industry.[14] Mammy knows Scarlett better than her own family and she stays on to run Tara long after many of the other freed slaves had abandoned devastated plantations to build new lives.

Jennifer E. Smyth asserts that the degradation of Scarlett's physical appearance after returning to Tara and taking up menial tasks normally given to slaves in order to rebuild her home represents a blackening of her character; 'her skin darkens from sunburn and exposure, her thick, black hair frizzles in the heat [and] her clothes [become] patched and filthy'.[15] By "blackening" Scarlett, Selznick breaks the typical Hollywood convention of keeping the leading lady beautiful and puts all of his characters on the same level as they work their way out of poverty together, another relevant message during the Great Depression.

Still, the uncomfortable characterization of the whiny and troublesome Prissy, and the overwhelming audience support for Scarlett's slapping of her for her laziness and negligence in trying to find the doctor for Melanie and her lie about knowing how to birth babies, serves as a reminder that even a producer with progressive intentions and liberal sympathies can only go so far in a time of Jim Crow laws and burning crosses.

Moving forward in time to 1944, I will now argue that *Meet Me in St. Louis* uses a mixture of mise-en-scène[16], music, and Christmas themes to draw its wartime audience into a turn-of-the-century time of optimism, excess, and togetherness to critique the capitalist-industrialist ideal of progress mentioned in the previous section and emphasize the value of the community and the family.

The film takes place in St. Louis in 1903, the year before the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The decades leading up to the outbreak of the First World War were a time of immense optimism in most of the western world. The Louisiana Purchase Exposition was just one in a long line of exhibitions that had taken place around the world, the most famous being the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. These exhibitions were all about progress and showing off human achievement. Industrialization was supposed to be a mark of civilization. It was supposed to propel us forward into a better future. This was before the First and Second World Wars proved that civilized, democratic, progressive societies were still capable or horrific acts of senseless violence; and before the Great Depression proved capitalism could fail; and before cynical realism was let loose upon the world. *Meet Me in St. Louis* allows the audience to reset the clock and escape into a time before this cold reality set in, both for the purposes of emotional comfort and critique.

The mise-en-scène of the film, particularly set decoration and costuming, emphasizes a theme of excess which dramatically contrasts with a contemporary wartime period of rationing, self-sacrifice and delayed gratification.[17] The interior of the Smith home, like the exhibitions of the era, is brimming with pieces of art, with trinkets, with colours and patterns. In each scene, every surface—from the wallpaper to the curtains and the surfaces of different pieces of furniture—has something going on, has some interesting detail to offer. The walls, windows and floors hold patterns. Grandpa's room is filled with hats and trinkets from different places in the world. Every corner and every surface is bursting with excess. All of the costuming is finely detailed and overflows with excess fabric in the form of ruffles, bows and dangling lace. The narrative reinforces this theme when, at the family dinner, Mr Smith scoffs at the idea of corned beef being shaved to "make it go for two meals"[18] During wartime excess is safe within the environment of a film.

Women especially can spend two hours living vicariously through the characters, imagining themselves in fancy gowns, surrounded by pretty things and not worrying about the stresses of factory work or supporting a home without their

husbands. Outside of the theatre, however, even though many families were considerably better-off financially than they had been in the 1930s, civilians on the home front were meant to be doing their part in the war effort by conserving food and vital materials and "hoarders" were objects of suspicion and significant distaste.[19] Audience members draw comfort both from imagined wish fulfilment and from comparative pride; next to the Smiths almost any wartime family would feel conservative. Not only do they get to live the fantasy, they get a little ego boost that assures them even the tiny sacrifices, even if they are not as great as their neighbours and/or do not involve sending a loved one to war, still count. At least they are not as excessive as the Smiths!

Music and mise-en-scène advance the late nineteenth and turn-of-the-century ideal of progress and highlight its defeat as a prerequisite for both the film's final happy ending and contemporary society's benefit. Firstly: the 'Trolley Song' combines the steady motion and mechanic rhythm of the trolley with an upbeat love song to tie the optimism of industrial progress with the exuberant rush of falling in love with the boy next door. Secondly: a beautiful sculpture of a woman pointing upward is a symbol of progress in two key scenes. After Mr Smith has told the family they will be moving to New York and everyone but his wife have abandoned the scene, he moves from the dining room to the family room and sits in a chair at the left of the frame, complaining that he is trying to make more money to help his family, while the statue is featured right in the centre of the frame, pointing up and to the right. She points to the future he is striving for. His wife approaches from his left to comfort him. The picture created is of a man who must work hard for his family and a wife at his side who must be his comfort and help mate. Together they are meant to progress onward and upward toward a better future.

Mr. Smith's attempt to live up to the ideals of capitalist progress and make more money for his family is the main source of conflict in the film. Esther's excited hopes of love come to a crashing halt with news of the move. Mr. Smith is forced to confront the possibility that despite what he has been led to believe, a better job and more money may not actually make his family happier. It is only when he abandons progress and chooses to stay where he is that the conflict is resolved, two of his daughters are engaged and his wife is so happy she weeps. In the scene where he announces his revelation to his family, the sculpture stands in the foreground, pointing toward him, assuring us he is now on the right path to a better future.

This emphasis on family would resonate with a war time audience who had lived through the Great Depression and spent years struggling for food and basic comforts that capitalism had promised to provide and who had lost loved ones to wars "civilized" nations were never meant to fight.

Community and togetherness are also emphasized in music numbers as well as in the use of Christmas as the catalyst to conflict resolution to comfort a society torn apart by international wars and domestic migration. In 'Skip to My Lou' and 'Meet Me in St. Louis' Judy Garland is not performing alone but rather is joined by other members of the cast in order "to demonstrate communal unity".[20] During the Second World War, America saw unprecedented family mobility. According to Richard Polenberg, '12 million men left their homes to enter the armed services and better than 15.3 million civilians moved across county lines, most of them in search of jobs',[21] and argues that the 'sense of impermanence' and tension caused by migration and the breaking up of the family unit produced 'a good deal of instability'[22]. The Smiths had everything film audiences of the time were yearning for, provided Mr Smith did not mess it up by moving to New York. A sense of belonging is a key ingredient in human happiness. When you are uprooted from home or your home is being overrun by an influx of strangers, it feels good to escape to a place where everyone knows each other's names and is happy to sing and dance together. The stern but ultimately loving and malleable Mr Smith also makes a convenient temporary substitute for fathers away at war. Most of the men in the film are so ineffectual and lacking in unique character that they can act as stand-ins for any males fighting in Europe or the Pacific.

Finally, it is significant that it is Christmas Eve when Mr Smith finally realizes he cannot move his family to New York. Christmas is about family and togetherness, the very thing contemporary audiences may be lacking in their own lives. In the film, that togetherness, not to mention Esther's long sought marital bliss, is threatened by Mr Smith's pursuit of money and career prospects. As Esther sings 'Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas' emotion is heavy in her voice; she is anxious about being separated from her home, longing for happy Christmases gone by and desperately hoping for happiness in an uncertain future.[23] It is during Christmas, the symbolic pinnacle of togetherness and family joy, that Mr Smith can most clearly see his is in danger and that he must reject progress, modernity and the "urban world"[24] in order to salvage his home life.

Having followed the emotional uplift and excitement of Esther and Rose's new love, and been stirred to despair by Esther's melancholy singing, the audience is ready to cheer his decision and are rewarded for their agreement with beautiful closing shots of the Exposition. Ultimately, love and family are what matters. Excess and materialism are nice but superficial and will come to you if your heart is in the right place; there is no need to leave home to chase them. In 1944, this is what audience are most hoping for, that their loved ones will return soon from war and that they will soon feel connected and at home in their new communities.

In conclusion: *Gone with the Wind* uses cultural mythology drawn from the past and relatable characterizations to speak to the needs of those suffering through the Great Depression; *Meet Me in St. Louis* uses mise-en-scène, music and a Christmas motif to assert the value of family and togetherness over materialism during the Second World War. When a person leaves a theatre, the prominent thoughts on their mind are about how the film made them feel, what it has revealed to them about themselves and their life. Historical pedants who criticize minute details are usually politely ignored in conversation. If the film is enjoyed it will be recommended and seen again. If it gets good reviews and makes a lot of money, filmmakers will create more films like it. Observing only what is presented in a film and analysing its accuracy is like listening to only one half of a conversation. Filmmakers create complex works of art that are meant to be seen and interacted with. They exist in a symbiotic relationship with the other artists who help them create their work and the audience that funds and consumes it. The historical value of films can only be ascertained by analysing all of these relationships. Together they create movie magic.

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2. Koppes, Clayton R. & Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped American World War Two Movies* (New York: The Free Press, 1987) pp.3-5.
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4. Chadwick, Bruce *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film* (New York: Knopf, 2001) pp.187-188.

5. Ibid. p.189.

6. Polenberg, Richard *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980) p.131.

7. Koppes & Black (1987) p.15.

8. Chadwick (2001), p.194.

9. Smyth (2006) p.165.

10. Ibid. p. 163.

11. Chadwick (2001) pp.195-196

12. Ibid. pp.183-211.

13. Chadwick (2001) p.198.

14. Cripps, Thomas *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p.361.

15. Smyth (2006) p. 158.

16. Gibbs, John *Mise-en-scène* (London: Wallflower, 2002) pp.5-26.

17. Polenberg (1980) pp.131-136.

18. *Meet Me in St. Louis*, dir. Vincente Minnelli, (USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1944)

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20. Cohan, Steven (ed.), *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 14.

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22. Ibid. pp.144-145

23. Glancy, H. Mark 'Dreaming of Christmas: Hollywood and the Second World War', in Mark Connelly (ed.), *Christmas at the Movies: Images of Christmas in American, British and European Cinema* (New York: I.B. Tauris 2000) p.70.

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# Did every army on the Western Front experience a 'learning curve'?

*Sandip Kana*

A 'learning curve' was experienced by every army on the Western Front, but the lessons each army learnt, was dependent on their experience of each battle. The phrase learning curve was coined to refer to the process of improvement that the armies went through, based on their battlefield experience. However, a curve which implies a steady process of improvement is not an accurate representation of the lessons learnt on the Western Front. Instead, the learning process had many ups and downs; the use of new technologies may have been better suited to certain conditions and not others. The process of adjustment to new technologies was a complex matter; learning was never a steady progression in all the armies on the Western Front.[1]

The armies on the Western Front did experience a 'learning curve' in the use of aerial technology. The first notable example is in the British army, and its use of aerial photography. Before this technology had been applied, information on the enemy position was collected by night patrols, or the use of periscope observation. However, by 1915 air observation became a crucial component to help reassure the artillery commander, as to the accuracy of his own and the enemy's location. During the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, the Thornton-Pickard camera arrived in France during February.[2] Though the camera's image quality was low in resolution, and slanted in presentation, it was a great step forward. The camera was soon attached to aircraft to gain aerial shots of the entire battlefield. This enabled the infantry to identify and fix not only their own location, but also that of the enemy's on large scale maps. However, this was a learning process, and the downside to the use of aerial photography was that the photos did not show whether the trenches were occupied or abandoned by the enemy; for instance at Neuve Chapelle a bombardment was wasted on a flooded trench.[3] Nevertheless, aerial photography soon became an integral and principal component to intelligence. The photographers were able by

late 1915 to locate where the enemy guns were positioned, what type of gun, and the best route to disarm them.

The advancements in aerial photography in the British army were matched by advancements in the work of the surveyors and their connection with the artillery. The work of the surveyors was to locate a fixed point of an enemy battery, which could not be seen, onto a map. In this branch of aerial observation, the artillery commander was able to be reassured that the artillery fire would be accurate in hitting the enemy targets.[4] The learning curve experience is evident in the work of the surveyors. For example, the problem that the surveyors soon faced was not the quality of the aerial photographs, but the scale of the maps to locate the fixed positions. The scale that was needed was of 1/20,000 or 1/10,000, but in 1914 the scale was 1/80,000. The scale used in 1914 decreased the accuracy of locating a fixed position. The surveyors did learn to increase the scale to the ones that were required, but this system was only matured by 1917.[5] Other problems soon surfaced for the surveyors, which added to their 'learning curve' experience. For example, at the Somme the surveyors had accurately located the enemy positions on the map, but failed to ensure that the bearings of each of their guns were precise. The smallest of errors would mean missing a target by a number of yards. Once again, it was only by 1917 that the surveyors began to use precise angular and positional data for the guns. From this the surveyors developed the bearing picket; this meant that the guns were placed on their precise angle to an accuracy of five minutes to the bearing, which ensured greater collective accuracy of the artillery fire.[6]

However, the 'learning curve' process was not yet over for the surveyors, as they encountered a problem in the collective accuracy of the artillery. The problem was in the factories, where 'one gun emerged different from its neighbour.'[7] The two problems of this were the velocity of the muzzle and the stability of the shell in flight. This problem of variations in gun measurements was not purely the fault of the factories, but during battles after prolonged firing the muzzle velocity of each gun would decline at different rates; depending on the amount of fire, this also reduced the stability of each gun in terms of its barrel.[8] Shelford Bidwell argued that, this problem first surfaced at the Somme, where bombardments were wasted because of inaccurate map shooting, where the gun fire just missed the target.[9] However, the surveyors learnt from this experience, and learnt to measure each gun individually. By 1917, they had developed the use of special screens, which allowed them to

record the muzzle velocity, and flight of each gun, as it fired shells. The work of the surveyor's showed that a 'learning curve' was experienced. However, their work in locating enemy batteries would be wasted if commanders ignored the co-ordinates and angles, and some traditional commanders did. Nevertheless, despite the resistance, by June 1917 their work was locating 75% of enemy batteries.[10]

Ian Passingham argued that 'the evolution of air warfare took a giant stride forward in 1916.'[11] 1916 was indeed a momentous year for the German Air Services. Like the British, the German commanders also began to rely less on ground reconnaissance, and increasingly began to rely on their evolving air forces – in particular aerial photography, which like the British gave them accurate information on enemy positions and troop concentrations.[12] This led the Germans to develop the Fokker plane, which had a synchronising gear which allowed machine-guns to be fired through the propeller. Initially, the Fokker had been designed to protect reconnaissance flights – therefore they had a defensive role.[13] The British development of their own pusher aircraft by March 1916 meant that the war in the skies had begun. By September 1916, the Germans moved to an aerial offensive doctrine. The development and formation of the German Jagdstaffeln, specialist fighter squadrons such as the Albatross DIII, gave the Germans temporary domination of the skies, with their 'flying circus.'[14] However, the allies, with the British at its head, learnt from the German example, and at the Battle of Messines retook their lead with their 'tanks of the air.'[15] The allied deployment of aircraft as low-level fighter bombers were soon integrated into battle tactics, and played an important role in the remainder of the war. The armies on the Western Front experienced a 'learning curve' in the application of aerial technology; whether it was the combination of photography and firepower (artillery), or the use of aircraft bombers, there was clearly a learning process evident.

The 'learning curve' concept can be applied to chemical warfare. One of the weapons the German pioneers developed was the use of gas. The Germans first used gas at Ypres in April 1915. At Ypres the Germans released 5730 cylinders of chlorine gas, on the surprised, and unprepared French troops of the 45th Algerian Division. The German army at Pilcken Ridge had successfully deployed gas, but in exposing this new weapon, removed the opportunity for a really decisive exploitation of gas in the future.[16] News of the innovation spread as quickly as the gas amongst the Allied armies, and gas masks, were designed, manufactured, and issued very quickly. The

British first used gas at Loos later in 1915, and once again it took the enemy by surprise. But in both cases problems of using gas were identified. At Loos the use of gas was dependent on the strength and direction of the wind, which meant that the gas had to be released at the precise moment when the attack was being launched, with the consideration of the wind.[17]

After learning the limitations of the use of gas, the German War Ministry changed the tactical approach of using gas. The War Ministry ordered the development of artillery and trench mortar shells, which would be capable of delivering different types of gas.[18] The learning experience was not just occurring on the battlefield, German chemists were developing deadly gases in small quantities, so that a few cubic centimetres of gas, within a certain projector, would have the desired effect on the enemy. In terms of tactics, the Yellow Cross shells were developed by the Germans, this shell contained a mustard gas, which could inflict hours of temporary blindness, and this was used on the flanks of the enemy, to reduce their ability to participate in a counter-attack. This soon led to the development of the Green Cross shells which contained diphosgene, the primary killing gas for the final two years of the war.[19] However, by 1917 the allies, as had the Germans, had developed effective gas masks to protect against the effects of a gas attack. But for the Germans this was just an obstacle, which they learnt to overcome. The Green Cross shells, were combined with Blue Cross shells which contained 75% high explosives and 25% diphenylchlorarsine. When the two shells were combined collectively they caused the victim to sneeze violently, thus ripping of his gas mask, and exposing himself to the deadly fumes.[20] The Germans in their use of gas have shown to have gone on a 'learning curve' because as they developed using gas as a weapon they learnt to overcome problems such as the gas masks, and learnt which gas shells were best suited to each type of attack, for example blue shells on their own were used in barrages, to suppress the enemy infantry.

The German pioneers also developed the flamethrower as a tool to aid the limited objective. Though there had been a successful assault in achieving the limited objective at Vregny Plateau in January 1915, the German colonel von Seeckt became increasingly aware that German infantry tactics needed modification.[21] This was because the infantry though able to take the first enemy trench, when the infantry tried to push on further, it found itself at a great disadvantage, and the attack became disorientated in unknown enemy territory.[22] The pioneers solution to the

problem was the formation of a special unit (Flamethrower Detachment) equipped with flamethrowers, which was formed in January 1915. The new weapon, the Groff, was a formidable weapon which could spit fire at a distance of 40m.[23] However, problems were experienced, the Groff was a heavy weapon, with a long installation time, and its fuel tank could only hold a minute's worth of fire. The pioneers learnt from their experience of the Groff, and developed a light-weight, smaller flamethrower, the Klief. It is evident from this example that the German army did experience a 'learning curve' because with the Klief the German infantry was able to attack and penetrate further into the enemy position, whereas before the advance stalled. This was evident at the attack near Malancourt, a village near Verdun in 1915. In this battle the German infantry equipped with the lighter flamethrowers, were able to penetrate deeper into the French position.[24]

The Germans also advanced the use of grenades and mines in the battles of the First World War. Once again, in an attempt to push beyond the first enemy line, the German pioneers argued that the grenade could clear a trench more effectively than the use of the rifle and bayonet. These innovations continued with the use of underground mines on the enemy position. This weapon was used as early as December 1914 when they blew up a French position in the Argronne. This shows the introduction of a novel tactic onto the battlefield by the German army.[25] The significance of these weapons was that they showed that the Germans had learned from their experiences in battle; problems they encountered were overcome through the use of old weapons in new tactics.

The 'learning curve' was also present in the German army's development of tactics. Before the summer of 1917 the Germans had adopted a static positional defence system. The strategic aim of the German army on the Western Front had been defensive; therefore it was viewed as a matter of honour to hold ground, thus the firing line was required to be inflexible. By 1915 this tactic had developed considerably, as the German army added depths to their defences. This tactic did have successes such as in September 1915 in an attack near the town of Ypres, where the British infantry attack after passing the first German line was caught between a battery of field guns and machine guns in the second line.[26]

The Germans continued to learn and due to their defensive strategic aim, developed the tactic known as the flexible defence. This new defensive tactic unlike its predecessor was based on the idea of a deep flexible defence, where the ground

formations were backed up by strong reserve forces. The enemy were drawn into the defenders position, but unbeknown to the attacker, the defender had strong forces which had been held back in reserve, located just beyond the range of the artillery of the attacker but close enough to counter-attack.[27] The formation that was created for this role was the Eingreif. The attack of the Eingreif was launched automatically, triggered the moment when the attacker broke the first defensive line.[28] The significance of this was that the Germans had learnt to integrate their rear defensives into the overall defensive effort of the whole formation. The adoption of the flexible defence tactic shows that the Germans did experience a 'learning curve' in their tactical approach to the battles, because by 1917 their defence was a full flexible co-ordinated affair, as before it had been static and ineffective.

There was also a shift in French tactics by 1916. In 1914 the infantry charges were considered indispensable, however as a result of experiencing battle conditions, in 1916 the French infantry regulations held the view that the infantry charge 'simply raised casualties.'[29] By the battles of Verdun in 1916, the logic of tenir (holding-on) had been implicitly included in army regulations. Leonard Smith argued that by 1916 the logic of tenir had 'developed the excessive offensive into an excessive defensive.'[30] The 1916 manual stated 'All troops assigned to the defence of a piece of terrain must never abandon it.'[31] The significance of these statements was that from the battle of Verdun, the tactics of offensive and defensive became blurred. The priority had been the defensive, but if the Germans took any territory, then the offensive or counter-attack would be launched to regain the lost territory.[32] As in the German army, the French army also experienced a 'learning curve' in its tactical approach to the battles. Most significantly, the lessons learnt by each army were centred on the defensive tactic, but both armies to an extent differed in their approaches to this, due to the different lessons they learnt.

The 'learning curve' model when we consider the tactics of the BEF is best associated with the lessons learnt after the battle of the Somme in 1916. Bidwell argued that, 'out of the disaster of July 1916 came the success of the creeping barrage.'[33] The advantage of using of a barrier of fire in front of the advancing infantry, Bidwell argued resulted from the 18th Division in the XIII Corps under Major -General Ivor Maxse. Under his command the division used the barrage to push to their final objectives, and the barrage, Bidwell argued, was the reason for their success.[34] There was a greater shift here in the tactical approach in the BEF, from

using the artillery to destroy the enemy, to using the artillery to neutralise the enemy fire until the infantry could close in. The shift from destructive fire to neutralising fire had become commonplace in tactics in the BEF by September 1916.[35]

This shift and acceptance could be seen in the *SS 135 Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action manual*.[36] The significance of this manual was that it showed how far the BEF tactical approach to war had come since 1914. By 1917 there had been an acceptance of the creeping barrage followed by closely grouped assault troops. There is also a second significance of this manual in showing the learning process, it stated that if the advancing infantry failed to take the German first line of machine-guns, then the infantry would fight on by use 'of a combination of Lewis guns, Stoke mortars and smoke barrages.'[37] This implies the application of an all arms approach; the manual showed the use of a range of modern technology as a combined tool. The *SS 135* manual shows the progress that the BEF made, but whether this was implemented is another matter for consideration; this can also be applied to the French manuals on the tactic of tenir. The *SS 135* attempted to instil a uniform doctrine to get the army performing at its best. However, there was never a perfect solution of a procedure to follow for each battle; the manual does not take into account conditions, weapons available, troop concentrations, or the enemy position. Therefore it has to be argued that there is the possibility that the progress made in the manuals was not transferred to the battlefield, where its tactics proposed may not have been best suited.

However, if we examine the Third Battle of Ypres the application of *SS 135* is evident. In this battle the creeping barrage was more effective than before, as the infantry began to adopt flexible fire-tactics in the barrages, and began using fewer men in the waves. To counter the German front line machine-guns, the BEF learnt to use several lines of fire in each barrage, the infantry would in their advance be shielded, by smoke shells.[38]

However, the application of an 'all arms-approach' is clearer when we examine the Battle of Cambrai. By the summer of 1917 advances in technologies such as air, gas, smoke, artillery fire was all ready for use, and they were all deployed at Cambrai. Accurate artillery fire as a result of aerial surveys neutralised enemy batteries and the link between the tanks and the infantry resulted in the penetration of the Hindenburg line.[39] However, breaching the German line through a use of a combined arms approach was one achievement, but being able to sustain the

momentum to turn the attack into a breakthrough, was a lesson that had still not been learnt. Going into 1918 and the final year of the war the BEF had learned how to tactically integrate its modern weapons, and by November 1918, it had learnt how to achieve through greater cooperation a constant break-in. Between 1917 and 1918, there was an evolution in the BEF tactics, where by 1918 it was seen that the barrage should be linked with an infantry attack, which would combine rifles, bombs, grenades, Lewis-guns, Stoke-mortars and even the tank when necessary. By 1918 the BEF 'ordinary soldier was well armed in mechanical power.'[40]

The 'learning curve' model can be applied to all the armies on the Western Front, but the degree to which they learnt depends on the conditions that each army experienced. The armies were transformed due to the complex nature of warfare experienced, and this led to an evolution and not a revolution of their performance. For example, there were major developments in air, tactics, gas and the combined arms approach. However, holding back these innovations were traditionally oriented commanders, who in some cases did not allow the transfer of new developments and tactical doctrines onto the battlefield. The application of the 'learning curve' model does have faults. As we have seen from the examples in this essay, the learning process had many ups and downs; the challenges that the armies faced were not only on the battlefield of the Western Front, but back at home in the factories. These challenges were overcome, but in relation to the 'learning curve' model, it was not a steady upward progression. In some cases learning for example in the application of gas, after the development of effective gas masks, when went from a steady upward progression to a downward motion. The German learning process then took the application of gas back to a steady upward progression. This is just one example of the learning process on the Western Field that the armies underwent that show that the 'learning curve' model, though accurate in its suggestion of learning and development, is misleading, when the model suggests that learning on the Western Front, had a steady and constant upward motion.

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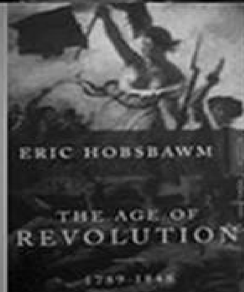

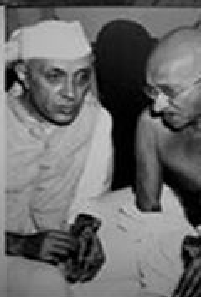

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